Introduction: Interrogating Iconic Design

by Grace Lees-Maffei

'Have you noticed how iconic everything is these days? I'm iconic, you're iconic, we're all iconic.' [1]

—Craig Brown, 'The Word "Iconic"'

By no means reserved for design, today the terms *icon* and *iconic* are not only applied remarkably liberally, but they are also used to describe a surprisingly wide range of things, from the music of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony to the fragrance of Chanel No. 5.[2] Both of these things—a symphony and a scent—may be described, to some extent, as designed, but iconicity is perceived not only in objects, images, sounds and scents which are manufactured. It is a status also accorded to natural products such as the pumpkin,[3] which are rendered iconic not through designers' intentions, but through their consumption (both literal and symbolic) and mediation. And, of course, people are described as icons and as iconic, too, as are their utterances in the form of sound bites.[4] So, anyone wishing to understand what these words mean by looking at the various phenomena to which they are applied would have difficulty finding some common characteristics in their physical properties (although a discussion of some formal properties of iconicity appears later in this introduction). However, it is possible to understand more about iconicity, the quality of being iconic, by referring to the history of icons. This introduction begins with the roots of iconicity and examines identifying characteristics shared by religious icons and design icons alike as functions of reception, representativeness, recognition and reverence. It then goes on to examine the words *icon* and *iconic* and the processes of iconization by which iconicity is conferred. The final part introduces this book, its approaches and its structure of thematic parts and chapters which are representative of wider issues in design discourse.

Roots

Today's design icons form part of a long history of iconicity. Rooted in the Greek *eikon* meaning a 'likeness, image or picture', from the fourth century 'icons became more and more part of the everyday life of the faithful'. By the medieval period a holy eikon was consolidated as 'an image used for Christian purposes' such as saint's portrait, to be venerated, or a narrative icon telling a story.[5] The history of icons forms part of a broader history of the religious uses, abuses and rejection of visual images in which some faith groups, such as Judaism, ban any 'graven image' of god or saints and idolatry altogether. Mid-nineteenth century design reformer John Ruskin promoted the special value of handmade artefacts, writing of the 'soul' imbued into the stone-carving in medieval cathedrals through its imperfections, as opposed to machine-made perfection.[6]

Theological debates have examined the extent to which icons are perceived by believers as embodying the saints they depict or whether they are simply souvenirs, reminders or records of a saint's time on earth. This important distinction does not, however, obscure the function and mechanics of icons and iconicity. The power of icons is shown not least in the conflict between iconoclasts and iconophiles in the years from 730 to 843 when damage to icons was declared as heresy by the Orthodox Church.[7] French philosopher Jean Baudrillard has recognized that 'the iconoclasts, who are often accused of despising and denying images, were in fact the ones who accorded them their actual worth, unlike the iconolaters, who saw in them only reflections and were content to venerate God at one remove.'[8] Because icons have the capacity to be viewed as embodying or containing saints, iconoclasm has been compared with the crucifixion; to destroy an icon is to destroy Christ or the saint depicted.[9] Baudrillard has referred to the 'murderous capacity of images': images 'murder' the real by standing in for it. He contrasts this position with Western faith in 'the dialectical capacity of representations as a visible and intelligible mediation of the real' based on the belief that 'a sign could *exchange* for meaning'. Religious icons and the practices which surround them suggest that:

> God himself can be simulated, that is to say, reduced to the signs which attest his existence. Then the whole system becomes weightless, it is no longer anything but a gigantic simulacrum—not unreal, but a simulacrum, never again exchanging for what is real, but exchanging in itself, in an uninterrupted circuit without reference or circumference. [10]

If, according to Martin Kemp, the icon of Christ defines 'the iconic species' and is 'what biologists call the "type specimen"',[11] then what of the icon today, when sociologist Bjørn Schiermer asserts, following founding French sociologist Émile Durkheim, that 'the religious fetishes are dead' and 'religion, in the sense we normally understand the word, might disappear'?[12] Schiermer makes a claim for the 'quasi-religious forces in modern society—and their presence in secular areas where we are unaware of them, or where we do not expect to find them'.[13] Are today's icons not only replacements for religious icons, but also replacements for religion itself? Olga Kravets and Örsan Örge have written about how iconic 'brands get reformed into repositories of cultural myths and ideals, historical events, achievements and aspirations, particularly when traditional cultural symbols become problematic.'[14] What else can we take from the history of icons as religious artefacts to help us understand today's nominal design icons? Several characteristics of the iconic tradition are also seen in the mass-manufactured commodities that are today deemed iconic.

Identifying Iconicity

Reception

To label a designed object as iconic places it within a 'canon' of good design, a group of designs also deemed iconic. A canon is a list of saints. The term has been extended into the field of culture so that literature has a canon of celebrated works and design, too, has a canon of artefacts which are generally agreed to be excellent and which receive a disproportionate amount of attention. Scholars have been extremely critical of these cultural canons even as they have perpetuated them. If religious icons can *become* the saints they depict, so the application of the terms *icon* and *iconic* today is self-fulfilling. To call a thing iconic sets in train a process of iconization, albeit with the caveat that there must be a shared consensus about iconicity. A designer may consciously set out to produce a distinctive design which will be recognized and be deemed iconic. Some clients brief their architects to produce iconic buildings. Design icons attract significant media attention and therefore have the capacity to function as advertisements for their designers, architects and owners. However, some designers resist the processes of iconicity: ultimately, iconic status is not a product of ideation, design, production or manufacture but, rather, of reception. The extent to which a designed object is considered iconic is a result of how it is presented in media channels such as the design press, the popular press, in film, television, advertising and online, and of how it is consequently perceived by consumers. Iconicity is a matter of *reception*, encompassing mediation and consumption. It is a quality which derives from the people who interact variously with the object, person, sound, image or scent in question.

Jay Boulter and Richard Grusin used the influential term *remediation* to describe the ways in which new media mimic, pay homage to or replace old media.[15] But another sense of the term might refer to the way in which ideas and images are circulated and recirculated, mediated and remediated, in the media. Design is mediated to audiences through such means as advertising and marketing, magazine publicity, museum and gallery display, retail promotions, word-of-mouth and personal recommendation etc. Iconic designs receive more attention during this process of mediation, they occupy the mediation stage for longer and they achieve a higher profile than designs not considered to be iconic. In today's social media world, iconic designs take on lives of their own as they are mediated and re-mediated, like Richard Dawkins's 'memes'.[16] This process does not leave the design in question in a pristine state; rather it picks up further references along the way in the form of homages, imitations, fakes, pastiches and parodies. A rich example is found in Shepard Fairey's iconic Hope poster for Barack Obama's US presidential campaign in 2008. It achieved extensive media exposure, prompting a number of related cover designs for magazines *Time*, *Esquire* (and *Dog's Life*), and the US National Portrait Gallery acquired it for display in Washington DC. However, after protracted legal negotiations, Fairey admitted that he had based it on a 2006 photograph by Mannie Garcia for Associated Press and had lied about, and destroyed evidence of, this fact.[17] The meme continues unabated: Tony Ward adapted Fairey's poster for the British tabloid *Sun* newspaper to express support for UK Prime Minister Conservative David Cameron on General Election day, 6 May 2010 with the headline 'OUR ONLY HOPE'.[18] This meme, this iconic design, has been mediated, remediated and appropriated regardless of political differences, but in all cases the iconic design has remained propagandistic.[19]

Just as memes adapt, or are adapted, as they are circulated and recirculated through the media, so iconic designs are modified by their consumers in various ingenious ways, from adapting or 'hacking' a Swiss Army knife (chapter 44) to hold an office key (see Fig. 0.1) to distressing Levi's jeans (chapter 43) and modifying a tuk-tuk auto rickshaw with painted mud flaps and a variety of other decorative treatments. The most iconic of the multitools—and representative of the civilian adoption of military items such as the Zippo lighter, the Jeep, Dr Marten's boots, and Ray-Ban Aviators—the Swiss Army knife's various combinations now include LED lights, MP3 players and laser pointers. Although modification, whether by consumers or manufacturers, might be seen to damage the iconicity of the objects modified, arguably it contributes to their semantic richness and enriches their iconicity.

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Representation

We can add to the importance of *reception* the fact that religious icons and design icons are commonly *representative* of an idea of some significance, whether intentionally or as a result of mediation or reception. Icons are symbolic, they traditionally depict a saint or retell a story about a saint or a biblical episode. Art historian Robert Cormack's assessment that '[t]he icon is indeed art, but it is also representative of a way of life' provides a route to understanding design icons specifically.[20] Few design icons are considered to be art, but most are representative of, or associated with, a particular lifestyle which is often aspirational, as this book will show. Ray-Ban Aviators might represent American cool, Italian design is often associated with *la dolce vita*, etc. Each design featured in this book was chosen as a representative of an idea or a story drawn from the history of design or representative of a wider group of designs. For example, the Eiffel Tower (chapter 1) is a globally recognized symbol for Paris and France, echoed in both Blackpool and Las Vegas, which also exemplifies relationships between design and engineering and between iconic design and iconic architecture and, having been built for the 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris, it also represents the design historical importance of World's Fairs. The final section of this introduction, 'Themes, Parts and Chapters', reviews in more detail some of the ways in which the icons examined in this book are representative.

Recognition

Icons are always recognizable. In the case of religious icons, they are recognizable as a specific saint or religious story or episode. Icons are recognizable because they are memorable.[21] This has been important in the history of religious icons, which have needed to speak to an illiterate congregation in the past. Stained-glass windows and religious vestments speak as effectively to an illiterate audience as they do to a literate one. The recognition upon which religious and design icons alike rely operates principally without

words. Today, when various things are described as iconic, from perfume to people, and from music to mackintoshes (and Macintoshes), iconic designs distinguish themselves from other related objects through particular visual flourishes, such as the whistling bird on Michael Graves's kettle for Alessi. Visual differentiation can secure iconic status: Norman Foster's Swiss Re Building, at 30 St Mary Axe, London (known as the 'Gherkin' for its pickle-like shape) refuses the rectilinear norm for tower blocks, adopting instead an ovoid silhouette. Typography, as the visual manifestation of the linguistic, may be considered iconic (see chapter 14), but the words the typesetter sets are less often celebrated as iconic (see the discussion of semiotics that follows).[22] However, this is not to say that words are not considered iconic; many are, from the Magna Carta and the Declaration of Independence to the Hollywood sign and the currently ubiquitous 'Keep Calm and Carry On'.[23] In one sense, *all* logo and branding design is iconic because it all needs to be recognizable and memorable and, ideally, revered or at least regarded as attractive. When we call an item of product design 'iconic', we attribute to it qualities which are routine in graphic design. The characterization of iconic design as recognizable and memorable fits in with the use of the term 'iconic image' to describe the after-image which remains in the eye when a pattern is briefly seen and then disappears.[24] This lingering image is a metaphor for the impact of iconic design.

Iconic design often relies for its distinction on a unique or unusual shape or silhouette, albeit mass-produced in most cases. Silhouettes emerge in the analysis of design icons as fundamental indicators of iconicity, and the silhouette is a popular mode for communicating visually about design more broadly.[25] The distinctive Eiffel Tower (chapter 1) is one of a number of equally characteristic national identifiers, such as the Sydney Opera House, a UNESCO World Heritage Site (chapter 5) and the London Eye (chapter 9). The latter forms part of a city skyline packed with iconic architecture, such as Tower Bridge, the aforementioned Gherkin, St Paul's Cathedral, Big Ben, the Shard and the Post Office Tower. Just as distinctive, but less famous, is the parabola roof of the former Commonwealth Institute, the new home of the Design Museum.[26] Iconic architecture is also characterized by buildings of extraordinary height combined with distinctive silhouettes, for example, the Seagram Building in Chicago, the Burj Khalifa in Dubai, and Taipei 101. Some iconic buildings have a distinctive footprint, from the Pentagon in Virginia to Tower 42 in London, with a footprint resembling the logo of NatWest bank. The footprint of Dubai's Palm Jumeirah (chapter 10) is visible to air traffic and is perhaps most striking when seen from the international space station (itself an iconic design, generating hundreds of iconic images). Conversely, seen from below, while in flight, an elongated nose cone and ogival wings made Concorde (chapter 8) the pre-eminently iconic aircraft. Its shape may be compared with that of the Shinkansen (Hideo Shima, 1964–), or Bullet Train, named for its tremendous speed and curved nose.

At a smaller scale, McDonald's Golden Arches (chapter 6) function in silhouette as well as in their 'golden' yellow. Philippe Starck's Juicy Salif lemon squeezer (chapter 39) enjoys a silhouette at once utterly distinctive *and* rich in associations (jet age, science fiction, arachnid). Juicy Salif is arguably the epitome of iconic design, due to its infamously poor functionality and its allusive appearance. Like many other iconic items from Alessi S.p.A, such

as Michael Graves's whistling bird kettle, this conversation-starter has achieved success through its suitability as a gift as well as its unique silhouette. Marie Reidemeister, Otto Neurath and Gerd Arntz's Isotype (chapter 11) uses serried ranks of silhouettes. The Coke bottle's curvilinear shape (chapter 47) is ergonomic, keeping a cold drink snug in your hand, recalling the cocoa bean (as opposed to the kola nut) as well as the 'Coke- bottle curves' of one feminine physical ideal. Coke's relationship to the body is invoked by company president Robert Woodruff's oft-repeated 1923 saying that a Coke should always be within an 'arm's reach of desire'.[27] Indeed, Virgin Cola attempted to borrow some of the Coke bottle's iconic power in 1996 with a bottle modelled on the figure of actress Pamela Anderson. The distinctive visual cues of many icons allow them to remain recognizable even as they are mediated in a variety of forms. The popularity and ubiquity of the Hello Kitty identity (chapter 48) depends on branded imagery being applied to more than 20,000 products and counting, which are not independently iconic. They enjoy iconicity by association, as do products featuring Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa, whose ambiguous half-smile has held public attention for five hundred years,[28] and Katsushika Hokusai's 'The great wave off shore of Kanagawa' (c. 1826–33), popularly known as the 'Great Wave', with its distinctive and yet versatile shape (see Fig. 0.2).

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The 'Great Wave' is a woodcut, designed to be reproduced in multiple editions. It is part of a series, 'Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji', and Hokusai's oeuvre displays a concerted interest in the depiction of waves. As a print, it arguably has no original (the woodcut is not the 'original', it is simply a tool used in the manufacture of the finished print), and it therefore lacks the aura that Walter Benjamin attributed to original works rather than mass manufactured ones.[29] It exemplifies the copy without an original that Baudrillard theorizes in his work on simulacra.[30] And this is surely a distinguishing feature of design, even iconic designs: whether mass-produced or made as part of a limited edition, design icons are very rarely one of a kind (see chapter 24 for an exception). However unique their shapes or other qualities might be, in the case of design icons specifically, this uniqueness is usually shared by all examples of the same design. In the same way that the production of Hokusai's wave woodcut is characterized by multiplicity rather than uniqueness, so Christine Guth explains, its reception is also varied:

> … the image still does not enjoy the same canonical status at home as it does abroad. Its recognition as a masterpiece of world art in Europe and America is bound up with the role that Japanese woodcuts, and Hokusai's in particular, are assigned in the development of European modernism. [31]

In Japan waves have signified a ring of protection around the island of Japan, and divine agency.[32] As Guth concludes, 'Paradoxically, the aura of alterity that it confers on the products it promotes is dependent on its status as a global icon.'[33]

While not all design icons rely on a distinctive shape or silhouette, all icons should be recognizable, even those that are hidden in plain sight. Some designs are considered iconic because of the extent of their market-saturation. The Bic Cristal pen (chapter 25) has an unremarkable but recognizable shape and is a mainstay of those design surveys which champion everyday design and technical and/or commercial success.[34] Robin Day's polypropylene chair (chapter 26) is also used globally, in classrooms, community centres and canoes, as a result of its low cost and durability, while its curves and colours have helped to make it iconic. Some objects are iconic because of their rarity value and high prices; they hark back to an earlier age of handmade goods produced by expert craftspeople. Others goods are iconic partly because they are affordable and widely available, associated with mass production and consumer culture. The fifty icons examined in this book are all recognizable, whether through exposure and sheer ubiquity (sameness) or due to a unique shape or other distinctive formal device (difference).

Reverence

A final connection between religious icons and contemporary design icons is that both are *revered*, whether as embodiments or depictions of religious import or as cultural artefacts regarded as excellent. The designs featured in this book have all enjoyed considerable success, critically or in terms of their longevity, and are therefore revered to a greater or lesser extent. Describing a person or thing as iconic is, usually, praise. Ubiquity is a quality of many of the icons examined in this book; it goes hand in hand with fame and recognition. However, the ubiquity which results from copying risks turning icons into clichés. Icons and clichés have their high media profiles in common, but the former are approved and the latter are dismissed.[35] The production, mediation and consumption of imitations of iconic designs is seen by some members of the design cognoscenti to cheapen or otherwise threaten the original designs and designers, as shown in *Elle Decoration* editor Michelle Ogundehin's Get Real campaign with Sir Terence Conran and the Conran Shop. The campaign succeeded in amending UK copyright laws to protect designers so that '"artistic" designs of manufactured goods (including certain furniture, lighting and jewellery) created prior to 1987 would now be protected from unauthorized copying.'[36] But, however harmful fakes are to the business of design, they are also manifestations of desire and indexes, therefore, of iconicity.

Icons are not revered without exception, however. In some contexts the adjective *iconic* can be used in a derogatory way. It can be regarded as unfashionable to be too noticeable in design: it is not desirable to be seen to be straining for recognition. Both design that typifies the qualities associated with iconic design and the word itself have been the subject of some criticism from design and architecture critics, sociologists, environmentalists and advocates and practitioners of sustainable design, among others. (For an example, see Jilly Traganou and Grace Tuttle's discussion of the London Eye, chapter 9.) This criticism may well increase

as more and more people tire of the overextension of the terms *icon* and *iconic* and as these terms fall foul of the perpetual motion of fashion, to be replaced by new buzzwords.[37] In the meantime, *icon* and *iconic* are still used as terms of reverence.

Words

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *icon* as: 'an image, figure, or representation; a portrait; a picture'; 'a monumental figure; a statue', 'a small symbolic picture of a physical object on a VDU screen, esp. one that represents a particular option and can be selected to exercise that option' (chapter 16); in Eastern Christianity, a 'representation of some sacred personage, in painting, bas-relief or mosaic, itself regarded as sacred, and honoured with a relative worship or adoration'; and in philosophy, 'icon' has a semiotic function as a sign. In semiotic theory, pioneered by Charles S. Peirce and Ferdinand de Saussure, iconic signs resemble the thing or idea being signified, such as a scale model. They are distinguished from indexical signs, in which a part stands in for the whole (for example, a pen for literacy and, by extension, reason) and symbolic signs, in which meaning derives from a learned convention rather than any inherent resemblance, such as the word *tree* for the thing, tree.
[38]

Iconic signs to have become design icons include Milton Glaser's rebus I ♥ NY, a logo for the New York State Department of Economic Development (1977) termed 'the Coke bottle of graphic design' by Kemp,[39] Paul Rand's Eye-Bee-M poster for the Golden Circle Award announcement (1981), national flags, road signage and Mark Allen's weather symbols for the BBC. Icons in the semiotic sense are not the primary focus of this book, but examples discussed here range from Marie Reidemeister, Otto Neurath and Gerd Arntz's Isotype (International System of Typographic Picture Education, c. 1935), which communicates complex data through simplified, standardized pictograms (chapter 11) to computer 'desktop' icons (chapter 16) and the Portland Vase viewing ticket (chapter 31). While the urban myth that McDonald's Golden Arches (1962) represent an 'M' made of French fries is persuasive— in which case the sign is iconic, not symbolic—D.J. Huppatz relates an architectural root in chapter 6. With 'billions and billions served' the Arches symbolize not only the USA and fast food but also globalization and 'McDonaldization', in sociologist George Ritzer's critiques of the increasingly homogenous nature of global culture.[40]

In 2001, the *OED* added a new meaning for *icon*: 'A person or thing regarded as a representative symbol, esp. of a culture or movement; a person, institution, etc., considered worthy of admiration or respect'.[41] The quotations provided in the *OED* as exemplars of the new usage of the word *icon* range in date from 1952 to 2000, and all concern the United States. Iconic design is dependent upon a historically specific understanding of design based on the heightened appeal of so-called 'designer' goods in increasingly consumerist Western societies during the final decades of the twentieth century. From the late 1970s and into the 1980s, designer goods from Gloria Vanderbilt's jeans to Calvin Klein's underpants popularized an idea of design among mass consumers as something produced by recognizable designers or personalities or under the auspices of well-known brand names. In Britain in the 1980s, design was politicized by Thatcherism as a tool of business and promoted for its benefits in driving sales, as it had been in 1930s America. The legacy of this

approach is seen in today's UK Design Council which aims to place 'design at the heart of creating value by stimulating innovation in business and public services' and publicizes success stories of its work with business.[42]

Iconography is 'the description or illustration of any subject by means of drawings or figures … also, the branch of knowledge which deals with the representation of persons or objects by any application of the arts of design'.[43] Cultural historian Peter Burke has described iconology as the historical study of 'the meaning of images, a visual hermeneutics' which gained ground around 1900 as a 'reaction against the stress, in the art criticism of the later 19th century, on form as opposed to content'. A subsequent turn away from the iconographic emphasis on content followed.[44] In the most recent study of contemporary icons, Kemp is concerned only with 'static' icons and 'flat representations', in other words, still images rather than film or three-dimensional objects. He distinguishes between 'general' icons, such as the lion and the heart, and 'specific' icons, encompassing brands such as Coke and the face of Che Guevara.[45] Launched as a health tonic containing cocaine and caffeine in the 1890s (and now cocaine-free and available with or without caffeine), it is the Coke bottle (designed in 1915), the dynamic ribbon device logo and the serif 'Coke' logo that are iconic rather than the product, a concentrated syrup bought by bottling plants around the world.

Iconic Designs deals primarily with branded goods from the period 1850 to the present, but generic type forms can achieve iconic status too. Most icons discussed in this book are specific, but general icons examined include chopsticks and flip-flops. Chopsticks (chapter 41) are used across East Asia with etiquette varying between regions. While huge quantities of used disposable chopsticks represent a waste and sustainability issue, some people follow a traditional practice of carrying their own chopsticks with them. Based on traditional Japanese zōri sandals (chapter 42), with fabric straps attached to soles made variously of rice straw, wood, or cloth, cheaply mass-produced flip-flop sandals were popularized in the West after World War II, with branded versions ranging from Havaianas (Brazil, 1962) to the 'Fit-Flop' (UK, 2007), which references the Masai Barefoot Technology sole (Switzerland, 1996).

So much for what the words *icon* and *iconic* mean, how are they *used*? Rather than signifying inherent formal qualities, these increasingly ubiquitous and now relatively long-standing buzzwords seem to meet a need for praising and—ironically, given their overextension—distinguishing whatever is deemed to be excellent and peerless. They are victims of their own success in expressing what people want to say about design, among other things. Logically, iconicity should imply singularity and be an accolade reserved for only the very best, but in practice media discourse is crowded with icons.

The use of the word *icon* resembles that of the term *genius* in that differences of opinion exist about its application; the latter is reserved by some for Einstein and a select group of scientists, and by others it is applied to people ranging from musician Jack White to entrepreneur Richard Branson, with its use having received some justifiable criticism on the grounds of gender.[46] Men's work is more visible in the public sphere because it better fits the criteria and norms by which outputs are evaluated. Just as far fewer women than men are lauded as geniuses, so women are under-represented in the discourses of iconicity. In this

book, we see the work of Marie Reidemeister on Isotype (chapter 11), Coco Chanel's suit (chapter 46), architect Grete Lihotzky revolutionizing the kitchen under the influence of home economist Christine Frederick (chapter 34), Ruth Handler inventing the Barbie doll (chapter 38), Jann Haworth co-creating the cover image for the Beatles' 'Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band' with Peter Blake (chapter 15), an iconic design composed of depictions of many iconic figures, Susan Kare's central role in the development of the Apple GUI (chapter 16) and Julia Barfield's success as co-architect of the London Eye (chapter 9). However, whereas the term *genius* is usually applied to a person (with exceptions),[47] *icon* and *iconic* are applied to people and products alike. A product described as 'genius' attracts that quality for its designer, whereas 'iconic' relates back to religious roots in which the object or image may stand in for the person or entity it represents. Iconic designs can eclipse their designers entirely: the Jaguar E-type car is generally regarded as iconic— featuring, for example, in a fiftieth-anniversary display which saw the car placed in a tank on the waterfront outside the Design Museum in London (see Fig. 0.3)—but its designer Malcolm Sayer is barely known except by automotive historians and design enthusiasts.[48]

Like the term *genius*, then, the words *icon* and *iconic* have attracted criticism for the way in which they have been overused and misused so that their specific meanings and initial power are lost. The *Guardian* newspaper style guide epitomizes this backlash, describing the word *iconic* as being 'in danger of losing all meaning' and 'employed to describe anything vaguely memorable or well-known … Our advice, even if our own writers rarely follow it, is to show a little more thought, and restraint, in using this term'.[49] The words *icon* and *iconic* might be described as having the widespread success and 'stickiness' of memes[50] and might themselves be considered iconic.

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The strangely tautological usage of *icon* and *iconic* is perhaps at the root of some of this criticism. A painting of a saint produced in the Byzantine Christian tradition is an icon, but to describe other cultural artefacts as iconic is to assert such status for the things concerned and to begin to make them so, whether or not they were previously. It is a commonplace of journalism to affirm that the subject of an article is an icon, or is iconic, as a way of insisting on its importance, to secure the attention of readers. The check and balance to this subjective iconicity is the necessity for *recognition*. Today's iconicity is both *subjective* and *shared*. Contemporary uses of the terms *icon* and *iconic* are often lazy assertions, overextended, unhelpful and reductive. However, it is too early for eulogies for these terms; even as they become clichéd, they show no signs of abating.

Iconization

Iconicity is conferred, communicated and reinforced through a process of iconization, like the process of canonization by which saints are made. Sometimes the iconization process occurs through special rituals, such as the burial of a time capsule featuring designs selected by the London Design Museum's 'Design Circle' members Zaha Hadid, Paul Smith, Norman Foster and Cecil Balmond, as well as Sir Terence Conran and John Pawson to mark the breaking ground on the Museum's new premises at the former Commonwealth Institute.[51] Prizes, like the European Design Awards and the Design Museum's Designs of the Year, form yet more iconizing rituals. So do editions of national postage stamps featuring design, for example the United States Postal Service's 'Pioneers of American Industrial Design' (2011), Royal Mail's 2009 'Celebrating 20th-century British design classics', and Canada Post/Postes Canada's 1997 Canadian Industrial Design stamps.[52]

Museum and gallery exhibitions are a key ritual of iconization. They form part of the mediation of design to the museum-going public and readers of media reviews and make history, and art, from their exhibits. A controversial example was a twenty-fifth anniversary exhibition of fashion designs by Giorgio Armani at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, which transgressed categories: 'Soon questions arose as to the merits of such an exhibition, whether the museum was for rent—or worse, for sale—and what role fashion had within an art museum.'[53] John Potvin has emphasized the Armani exhibition as a chance for the designer himself to regain control of the discourses surrounding his work,[54] noting that the controversy sparked by the exhibition suggests that Armani did not maintain control for long, if at all; mediation is not that straightforward.

Another iconization ritual is that of the auction house sale. In 1996, Deyan Sudjic reported on 'the creation of an important new sale category: modern design', noting however that Bonhams had been auctioning design for several years before Christie's joined in, selling a 1963 Lambretta scooter and a Dieter Rams radio among other celebrated artefacts.[55] Even as recently as 2011, British *Vogue* design editor Nonie Niesewand reported that 'contemporary design is becoming increasingly highly prized—and priced— with galleries increasingly putting designers' work on a pedestal'.[56] She cites the twice- yearly design fair Design Miami/Basel, sister to a leading contemporary art fair, as evidence of the market's buoyancy in recessionary times.

Prize-winning design is, of course, just one small part of the enormous category of design. Designed goods are ubiquitous in everyday life, and in the twenty-first century Western world, most are mass produced and anonymous. Design with a capital 'D' often denotes the products of celebrity designers or objects, which draw attention to themselves as designed through extra-functional tropes such as anthropomorphism or biomorphism, and attempts at narrative (see, for example, chapter 39). The definition of design applied in this book is sufficiently broad to encompass quotidian and anonymous design and works of architecture. Within architectural discourse, iconicity has been extensively critiqued. For example, Leslie Sklair has argued that 'iconicity plays a central role in promoting the culture-ideology of consumerism in the interests of those who control capitalist globalization, namely the transnational capitalist class, largely through their ownership and/ or control of transnational corporations.'[57]

One of the mediating discourses which contribute to the iconization process is the large group of books about iconic design. They include studies focused on one icon, such as the aforementioned pumpkin, the Hollywood sign, the Eames Lounge Chair, and Carl Jacob Jucker and Wilhelm Wagenfeld's Bauhaus-Light (the latter is part of the design publisher Verlag form's Design Classics series).[58] They range from national surveys, such as *Made in Russia: Unsung Icons of Soviet Design* by Michael Idov, which features designs as diverse as the Sputnik and Misha the Olympic bear,[59] to surveys of specific design typologies, such as the London Design Museum's series of miniature canons, including *50 Bags That Changed the World*, with additional titles on hats, chairs, cars and shoes,[60] and design fields, such as graphic design.[61] Steven Heller and Mirko Ilic's *Icons of Graphic Design* is one of a number of titles to tell a history through iconic designs, as does Josef Strasser's *50 Bauhaus Icons You Should Know*, part of Prestel's 50 Series, which also includes *50 Fashion Designers* and *50 Buildings*.[62] Prestel's Icons series includes *Icons of Fashion: the 20th Century* by Gerda Buxbaum (2005) and *Icons of Design: the 20th Century* (2004).[63] Of the eighty-three 'icons' featured in the latter, twelve are also discussed here. A longer, related, history is told by British Museum head Neil MacGregor in his *A History of the World in 100 Objects*, a canon of objects with particular historical value.[64] MacGregor's book begins with the earliest objects of pre-history and is primarily archaeological in focus, so the time period which is normally the focus of design history is given relatively short shrift. Hazel Clark and David Brody's *Design Studies: A Reader* examines, for example, the Eames Lounge Chair, the Tube map and Helvetica.[65] Iconicity has received attention from writers with marketing and business expertise, such as Douglas B. Holt, who has examined 'brands whose value stems primarily from story-telling' rather than those known for 'superior product performance, innovative product designs, advanced technologies, or a superior business model'.[66]

Some books on iconic design exist simply to provide inspiration for design enthusiasts and consumers. Charlotte Fiell and Peter Fiell's *Tools for Living: A Sourcebook of Iconic Designs for the Home*, showcases the 'ultimate' examples of 'aesthetically pleasing' designs, selected for their function and quality, while their substantial *Design of the 20th Century* was abridged for Taschen's Icons series (2001).[67] Books on iconic design veer between celebrating already canonized *Cult Objects* (to use the title of Deyan Sudjic's 1985 book)[68] and promoting under-recognized icons (a contradiction in terms!) David Hillman and David Gibbs' *Century Makers* examines 'one hundred clever things we take for granted which have changed our lives over the last one hundred years', while Paola Antonelli's *Humble Masterpieces* discusses '100 everyday marvels of design'. But while the project of shedding light on these 'Hidden Heroes', to use the name of an exhibition by the Vitra Design Museum,[69] is a valuable one for design history, the masterpieces and heroes they examine are not always as hidden as we might be led to expect. Antonelli's *Humble Masterpieces* begins with the Swiss Army knife, which is also one of Sudjic's *Cult Objects*.[70]

This Book

Approaches

Iconic Designs joins a crowded bookshelf of surveys of iconic design, but several strategies are adopted here in order to avoid, as far as possible, the sense that this book forms and reinforces a canon of good design.

Firstly, *Iconic Designs* adopts a critically questioning approach. It responds to the ubiquity of the buzzwords *icon* and *iconic* by asking: What do we mean when we say that a design is 'iconic'? How does that term aid our understanding of design and of iconicity? In so doing, it emphasizes the processes by which design is mediated and explores what design is taken to mean. It is not proposed that the fifty objects discussed here are the most iconic of their era, and the chapters do not necessarily seek to assert the iconicity of the designs examined. However, each of the fifty designs is representative (for example, as discursive or narrative objects or images), recognizable (distinctive and memorable) and revered, whether as the subject of significant discussion and debate or internationally celebrated as excellent. The chapters contextualize the production and consumption and legacy of their focal designs alongside similar or contemporaneous objects. Examination of fifty different iconic designs would reveal different stories and preoccupations. The choice of examples is less important than the fact that the designs included in this book are united by what they contribute to our understanding of iconicity, and they represent important design historical questions and themes.

Secondly, this book features a historically, geographically and typologically diverse group of objects, selected to characterize iconic design. With the exceptions of the Portland Vase (chapter 31), chopsticks (chapter 41) and zōri sandals—precursors to flip-flops (chapter 42)—all of the designs featured in this book date from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. This emphasis is not meant to imply that iconic designs did not exist before that date. On the contrary, we noted above that the attributes of iconicity are derived from religious icons, with more than a millennium of history. Rather, this periodization is consistent with the spread of consumer society and print media in the West and the core period of design historical study. Techniques of mass production have increased the capacity for both things and images to achieve iconic status, as they have enabled objects and representations to be circulated among greater numbers of people. The geographical coverage of this book ranges across continents, predominantly focused on the United States and Europe, but with several chapters concerning the Asia-Pacific region and the closing chapter treating a product developed for use and ultimate manufacture in Africa. Inventor Trevor Baylis OBE developed his wind-up radio (chapter 50) as a tool of information to help curb the AIDS epidemic in Africa. It won the BBC Design Awards for Best Product and Best Design in 1996. A smaller model began production in South Africa in 1997 and a solar panel was later introduced. The Freeplay radio demonstrates that designers are not only perpetrators of climate change; they can also provide solutions and regions of the world need to collaborate in this process.

The designs demonstrated here range typologically from architecture, engineering and industrial design to graphic design, digital design and fashion. *Iconic Designs* provides fifty answers to the questions: What is a design icon, and what is iconic design? It includes some celebrated examples and others which are hidden in plain sight, due to their ubiquity and demotic status, from anonymous goods such as chopsticks (chapter 41), and everyday designs such as the Bic pen (chapter 25), to the extraordinary aesthetic flourishes of, for

example, Marcel Breuer's Model B3 'Wassily' chair (chapter 35) and David Carson's *Ray Gun* magazine (chapter 18). Designed at the Bauhaus, the B3 chair represented a radical departure for domestic furniture both technically, in the use of metal tubing and leather strips in place of wooden carcass and sprung and cushioned fabric upholstery, and symbolically, as it introduced the machine aesthetic into the home. As a visit to the Vitra Design Museum in Weil am Rhein, Germany, will show, the history of chair design is crowded with examples which aimed to reinvent the type form and are therefore distinctive and iconic, including Charles and Ray Eames' Lounge Chair and Ottoman of 1956.[71] Sociologist and professional surfer David Carson was untrained as an art director when he began work on *Ray Gun* and rejected a modernist emphasis on legibility and neutrality, which has softened in his later, large-scale advertising campaigns for companies such as Microsoft.

Thirdly, the book's catholic and critical approach is demonstrated in the images chosen to illustrate the chapters. Most are contextualized, and avoid the 'white cube' approach in which a design is iconized by being set apart from all others, isolated on a white background.[72] The iconic status of the objects examined here and the online access that roughly 39 per cent of the world's population enjoys[73] mean that if you want to know what the London Eye looks like, a web search will show you, immediately. This book is therefore liberated from the need to show our fifty designs in conventional modes. Many of the images selected for this book emphasize the mediation of the designs in question, showing sketches and diagrams, templates, patents, prints and a ticket, advertising and marketing images, appropriations, documentary photographs and portraits.

Contributing authors have approached their subjects in a range of ways, too, of course. Each chapter necessarily addresses an example of design work, whether material or visual and the iconicity which has accrued around that design. Some authors have focused on that iconicity, while others have provided broader accounts, in which iconicity is one story among several to be told about the designs in question. Some have emphasized the history of their focal iconic design, where this is relevant. For example, Carroll Pursell's chapter on Edison's light bulb (chapter 23) explains how Edison drew on earlier technologies and previous attempts to produce a cheap and reliable light source. Writing on Coca-Cola (chapter 47) and McDonald's (chapter 6), Finn Arne Jørgensen and D.J. Huppatz respectively address the negative associations of brands which remain hugely popular. Although it has been heavily criticized on nutritional and ethical grounds—by, for example, award-winning investigative journalist Eric Schlosser—McDonald's remains extremely prevalent. As Ritzer put it, 'I think it unwise to hold our breaths hoping that Eric Schlosser will replace Ronald McDonald as an international icon.'[74] *Iconic Designs* follows the example set by poststructuralist cultural theorist Roland Barthes[75] in providing concise analyses of popular cultural artefacts which are of interest to a general readership and specialists alike. Because it emphasizes representativeness as a quality of iconicity, this book functions in part as an accessible introduction to design history through expert discussions of fifty remarkable designs, telling fifty design historical stories.

Themes, Parts and Chapters

Iconic Designs is divided into five parts, each addressing a thematic place or site, arranged in

a sequence from the public to the personal. It opens with design icons in the urban spaces which surround us and the transport infrastructures which service those places and travels through the virtual mediating worlds of page and screen, to the worlds of work and the home, before finally examining those icons which are worn or carried on the body, upon which we rely to function and for a sense of self. As Sherry Turkle put it, 'Objects are able to catalyze self-creation.'[76] We therefore return full circle, because objects worn on the person are also displayed and seen in the city. The book's structure of increasing degrees of intimacy communicates the ubiquity of design icons: they are all over the place. From the awe-inspiring public scale of the city and transport infrastructures, iconic design infiltrates the intimate personal realm of the body and self-identity and everywhere in between. Within the five sections, the objects are arranged chronologically by date of design.

Part One, 'Hot in the City', addresses internationally recognized design icons which dominate the urban landscape from Times Square to Red Square and those that have enabled us to get around, and between, cities. The Palm Islands (chapter 10) may be compared with other iconic city planning initiatives such as the futuristic Brasilia, Brazil (Lúcio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer, 1956–), a UNESCO World Heritage Site influenced by Le Corbusier's ideas about city planning published in *Athens Charter* (1943) and *Ville Radieuse* (1935), including his ideas about separating cars and people. As a group, cars are disproportionately iconic, from the globular Volkswagen Type 1, aka the Beetle or the Bug (1938) to the Mini (1959) and the glamorous Jaguar E-type (1961). Notwithstanding its ideation in Germany at the behest of Adolf Hitler, the Beetle became a symbol of the hippy counterculture and its continuing popularity is shown in its 1998 relaunch. Iconic vehicles are represented here with the Ford Model T (chapter 2), which introduces issues of mass production, and the tuk-tuk, or auto rickshaw, a small taxicab developed from the Piaggio *Ape*, or bee (chapter 4), which was itself developed from the Vespa scooter. Versions of the tuk-tuk are found throughout the world, particularly in developing countries. In the West, aging populations and rising obesity rates have meant that the mobility scooter (chapter 7) is increasingly visible in urban centres. Neither a car, nor a stigmatizing wheelchair, the mobility scooter is a tool of bodily freedom, integral to personal identity and posing a challenge to existing urban layouts.

The second part, 'Page Turners and Screen Sirens', explores the public sphere of ideas and the imagination, from design for print to screen-based media and the virtual worlds of cyberspace. Fritz Lang's film *Metropolis* (chapter 12) has influenced subsequent iconic and futuristic visions of the city, from Norman Bel Geddes' utopic *Futurama* (1939) to Ridley Scott's dystopic *Blade Runner* (1982). Several design fields contribute to the cinema, including production and set design, costume design, titles, film publicity and marketing, while fashion design feeds into the celebrity culture that surrounds film stars and to high street versions of red carpet designer gowns and celebrity style. One perhaps unanticipated side effect of digital culture is to imbue printed artefacts with special appeal, such as the much-collected Penguin Books (chapter 13) launched by Allen Lane in 1935 as a new category of publishing, the affordable paperback book. Max Miedinger and Eduard Hoffman's typeface Helvetica (chapter 14) is both a popular success and the subject of derision by the design cognoscenti, like Verdana (Matthew Carter, 1996), which was

designed to work well for reading on the screen and Comic Sans (Vincent Connare, 1994). Critical debate has also surrounded Oliviero Toscani's advertising campaigns for Benetton (chapter 17), which have ranged from challenging taboos about race, religion and disease to promoting Benetton's microcredit initiatives in Africa, as in the 2008 campaign 'Africa Works'. The billboards crowding our cities—with exceptions such as São Paulo, Brazil, where outdoor advertising is banned—can provoke thought as well as sales. The web (Tim Berners-Lee, 1989) is now the principle medium for learning about and communicating about design. eBay (chapter 19) is iconic by stealth; its browsers look *through* it to the visual and textual content supplied by the sellers of millions of other designed goods, some iconic, some not. Social media sites such as Facebook (chapter 20) are free, but require users to commoditize themselves. The curated self exhibited on Facebook by 1.11 billion monthly active users (according to Facebook's own figures of March 2013) may be compared with the use of avatars in other socially alienating as well as connective theatres for the hyper-reality theorized by French sociologist Jean Baudrillard[77], from *Second Life* (Linden Lab, 2003) and *Sim City* (Will Wright, 1989) to iconic video games such as *Tomb Raider* (Core Design, 1996) and *Grand Theft Auto* (Rockstar Games, 1997–2005).

Iconic Designs' third part, 'Genius at Work', examines objects variously associated with the workplace. While the many compartments of the Wooton desk (chapter 22) have been replaced by computer memory space, the mythical nature of the paperless office is shown in the enduring popularity of the paper clip (chapter 21), of which Steven Connor has written that 'no object, not even the elastic band, is more allied to active contemplation'.[78] An excellent starting point for understanding the work of the industrial designer, Raymond Loewy's streamlined pencil sharpener of 1933 (chapter 24) has exerted an immense influence on the history of design without ever moving beyond the prototype stage. This static yet aerodynamic object highlights the aesthetic role of streamlining in making goods more desirable to purchasers. Lightweight and portable like a transistor radio, the bright red 'Valentine' typewriter (chapter 27) appears to have been designed for the same youth market as the radio. In applying a pop sensibility to office technology, Sottsass prefigured the iMac G3 (chapter 30), which introduced fashionable globular forms and bright translucent casings to the relatively expensive personal computers sector. The category of executive toys, including, for example, Newton's Cradle, perhaps owes more to marketing than it does to office conduct. Rubik's Cube (chapter 28) is not an iconic form; rather its coloured grid pattern is, which is why it can be applied to so many different products and still be recognized. 3M's Post-it Note (chapter 29) can also be applied to many products, but in this case with low-tack adhesive. Like the personal computer (chapter 30) and the Sony Walkman (chapter 49), the Post-it Note determined a new kind of behaviour in offices and homes alike. It is currently marketed to teens as social stationery as much as it is aimed at office administrators.

Part Four, 'Home Rules', ranges from spaces of domestic labour to objects associated with leisure. It begins with Josiah Wedgwood's copy of the Portland Vase (chapter 31), a classical treasure produced in Rome, Italy in AD 5–25. As well as ceramic inventions such as his 'Jasperware' (1775), Wedgwood was an innovator of marketing techniques, for example cultivating celebrity endorsement of his ceramics among royalty and the aristocracy.

Following in the footsteps of the branding innovations of Lever's Sunlight soap, Heinz products have been exported to sixty countries: by 1999, the Heinz 57 brand (chapter 32) was the world's fourth biggest food brand after Coke (chapter 47), McDonald's (chapter 6) and Nescafe. Heinz's iconicity depends on the consistency of food (based on canning, which revolutionized the food industry along with freezing and chilling), and its logo and packaging design, including its trademarked turquoise,[79] as well as diversification with, for example, tie-in foods such as Hello Kitty (chapter 48) and Disney Princess pasta shapes. Character tie-ins, including Star Wars and Harry Potter, are also integral to LEGO's recent business model, which incorporates a shift from the interchangeable iconic bricks developed by Ole Kirk Christiansen (chapter 37) to dedicated discrete building kits such as LEGO Architecture. The LEGO Friends range, aimed at girls, has attracted controversy not least for the fact that its mini-dolls are not compatible with the main LEGO line. Like LEGO Friends, Barbie (chapter 38) exposes young girls to an appearance-oriented, even sexualized, model of femininity. Barbie's shortcomings are revealed when compared with the greater physical flexibility of action figures such as G.I. Joe and Action Man. Options such as Architect Barbie (2011), complete with black-rimmed glasses, hard hat, architectural model and tube carrier for plans, leave critics unmollified.

An iconic figure himself, William Morris worked across a very wide range of fields from literature and politics to embroidery and furniture design. Some of his textiles designs as still in production, such as 'Strawberry Thief' (chapter 33), which is manufactured by Sanderson under the Morris & Co. brand, and today they seem comparatively elaborate. However, as Nikolaus Pevsner made clear, critics of the kinds of designed goods shown at the Great Exhibition of 1851 rejected illusionistic depth in surface design, preferring a pared-down, stylized naturalism.[80] This approach has influenced subsequent landmarks in British printed textiles, such as the work of the Festival Pattern Group, Lucienne Day's 'Calyx' and abstractions such as Barbara Brown's 'Reciprocation' (the latter was reissued in 2010 to celebrate UK manufacturer and retailer Heal's bicentenary).

Simplification of Victorian models of domesticity also informed Grete Lihotzky's kitchen for Ernst May's public housing developments. Credited with being the first fitted kitchen, the Frankfurt kitchen (chapter 34) was influenced by Taylorism—an early form of what was later termed scientific management, which applied time-and-motion studies to improve mass production—as filtered through the work of Christine Frederick. The Princess telephone (chapter 36) combined communications technology with fashionable styling, promoted in its advertising slogan 'It's little, it's lovely, it lights'. Representative of post-WW2 US consumerism, a new teenage culture, American industrial design, colour and gender, and the personalization of technological apparatus, the Princess telephone's range of colours prefigured products such as the iMac G3 (chapter 30). Engineer-inventor James Dyson innovated stylistically and technically with his bagless dual-cyclone DC01 vacuum cleaner (1993). His desire to place himself within an iconic tradition is exemplified by his book, *Contemporary Design Icons selected by James Dyson*,[81] while his resignation from the board of London's Design Museum, citing as his reason the museum's exhibition about flower arranger Constance Spry, put him at the centre of a debate about the nature of design in 2004.

The final part, 'Personal Effects', demonstrates the extent to which iconic designs are incorporated into the design of the self by examining icons which are worn and carried on the body. When we carry a drink with us, from Starbucks coffee to Evian mineral water, we 'wear' it just as we wear jeans, a t-shirt or a bag. Clothing is the most obvious opportunity for branding the self, but Hello Kitty (chapter 48) appears on all sorts of consumer goods, from wine, a passenger jet, a maternity hospital, to theme parks. Chanel's skirt suits (chapter 46) have evolved slowly from Coco Chanel's first suits of 1913 to her relaunch in 1954.[82] Like Levi's jeans, the Chanel suit has enjoyed remarkable longevity, its iconic status secured by Karl Lagerfeld's efforts to keep the brand current: Chanel suits are copied to the point of becoming generic. Unlike Levi's, however, Chanel suits are priced for the rich. The tools we carry are extensions of the self from pens such as the Bic Cristal (chapter 25) and multitools such as the Swiss Army knife (chapter 44) to paperback books (chapter 13), magazines (chapter 18), maps (chapter 3) and chopsticks (chapter 41). The Brownie camera (chapter 45) was instrumental in the international development of photography as an amateur leisure practice,[83] and is therefore a forerunner of the smartphone camera. The Sony Walkman (chapter 49) followed the transistor radio in changing the way people behaved by enabling them to listen to music on the go. Initially launched for audio cassettes, with some models also offering radios, the Walkman was succeeded by the Discman for compact discs (CD), and the Walkman brand name has also been used on video players and Sony Ericsson–branded mobile phones. The iPod and iPhone are perhaps its most visible successors.

Many of the icons discussed here could be placed in parts of the book other than the one they currently occupy. The Bic pen, for example is not only a 'Genius at Work'; it is also carried on the person and therefore fits in part five, 'Personal Effects'. Similarly, even though one effect of the light bulb is to extend working hours, it is of course also found in homes and across cities, where it is massed to breathtaking effect. Alternative arrangements for the book might have included a purely chronological structure without thematic sections; a geographical approach organized by region; a typology, grouping objects of the same types or categories together; and a sequence based on design fields, such as clothing, transport, toys etc.[84]

Just as the book might have been differently arranged, so it has been compiled in the knowledge that readers will want to add and subtract design icons from the selection. There are countless other design icons that warrant a place in this book, from Brazil's Crist Redentor to Mickey Mouse, from the Great Pyramid at Giza, Egypt, to the clay cliff-side homes of the Bandiagara plateau, Dogon Land, a UNESCO World Heritage Centre in West Africa (see Fig. 0.4) and from the iPhone to the erstwhile World Trade Center Twin Towers in New York, the very mention of which invokes heavily remediated images (still and moving) of the towers and passenger planes and the poignant iconic image of the falling man. By providing insights into iconicity in design, this book aims to inform understanding of design icons beyond those explicitly discussed here.

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Conclusion

This introduction has looked briefly at the history, function and language of icons, the rituals and discourses of the iconization process and the approaches and structure of this book. It has established that contemporary design icons (by which I mean things new and old which are currently accorded iconic status) have in common with their religious forebears the qualities of being representative of a concept, recognizable and revered, and that these qualities are conferred on design through the reception process. Therefore, while iconicity seems to have become largely a subjective sentiment as the terms *icon* and *iconic* are applied to things we like a lot, and one woman's icon is another woman's bugbear, a simultaneous criterion of iconicity is consensus. Iconicity is a shared subjective judgment. While the fifty design icons featured in this book may not be the ones each reader would have chosen, there is sufficient agreement about each to warrant their inclusion. Yet, the authors of the chapters which follow do not write about their subjects as though their iconicity is a given; rather they ask why each design icon is considered iconic, with illuminating results. Iconicity is a hegemonic quality; iconic designs are granted an elite status, however quotidian they might be. Iconic designs stick together, as shown in, for example, Turner Duckworth's Coke summer promotion can featuring flip-flops, LEGO Architecture's Sydney Opera House, a London Underground map made of LEGO and Havaianas' ad campaign featuring the flip-flops in front of the Eiffel Tower. The assertion and attribution of iconicity is mutually reinforcing. This book forms part of that reinforcement, part of that canonization, even as it critiques it.

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[9] *Cormack,* Icons, *p. 11.*

[10] *Baudrillard,* Simulations, *p. 170.*

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[12] Bjørn Schiermer, 'Quasi-Objects, Cult Objects and Fashion Objects: On Two Kinds of Fetishism on Display in Modern Culture', Theory Culture Society 28, no. 1 (2011): 81–102, 88.

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[26] *On the design and display strategies of the former Commonwealth Institute in Kensington and its transformation in the Design Museum, see Tom Wilson's blog,* http://designingcommonwealth.wordpress.com/ . *Accessed 1 July 2013.*

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[32] Christine Guth, *'Hokusai's Great Waves in Nineteenth-Century Japanese Visual Culture '*, Art Bulletin 93, no.1 (2011): 468–86, 468.

[33] *Guth, 'The Local', 29.*

[34] Paola Antonelli, Humble Masterpieces: 100 Everyday Marvels of Design (London: Thames and Hudson, 2005), p. 69 ; Jonathan Woodham, 'Bic "Crystal" [sic] Ballpoint Pen', in Volker Albus, Reyer Kras and Jonathan M. Woodham (eds), Icons of Design: The 20th Century (London: Prestel, 2004), pp. 106–7.

[35] See Alice Rawsthorn, '*When Cliché Grows Out of Distinction*', NYTimes.com , 2 July 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/02/arts/02iht-design02.html?_r=0 .

[36] http://www.conranshop.co.uk/get-real/ . *Accessed 17 July 2013. As I write, the bill awaits royal assent. UK Parliament, Intellectual Property Bill [HL] 2013–14,* http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2013-14/intellectualproperty.html . *Accessed 11 April 2014.*

[37] *When children develop language, they may display what linguists call 'overextension', the use of a single term to describe a broad category of things, so that, for example, all four-legged animals are called 'dogs' (underextension is the opposite).*

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[69] *'Hidden Heroes', Vitra Design Museum in association with the Hi-Cone plastic packaging company, Weil am Rhein, August/September 2011* http://www.hidden-heroes.net/ *; 'Hidden Heroes – The Genius of Everyday Things' Science Museum, London, 9 November 2011 to 5 June 2012.*

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