Make it Bigger

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Paula Scher

This book is dedicated to the profession of graphic design and to all the talented wits, intellects, and humanists who are its best practitioners.

"Any jackass can kick down a barn door. It takes a carpenter to build one."

OVER the past thirty years the design field has not changed all that much. The basic motivating factors that fire up designers and push them to produce their best work remain the same. Designers want to make things, or make things up, and have those things that they've made or made up seen, used, and appreciated by lots of people.

The things designers make may help someone decide to read a book or a magazine, buy some recorded music or candy, see a play or a ballet. They may help someone navigate a building or a Web site, understand technology, or vote in an election. The things designers design may be powerful, provocative, funny, obsessive, or elegant. But they are all created with the express purpose that other people will use them in some way.

For designers to have the things they make, or make up, get made (and seen, used, and appreciated by lots of people), they must necessarily collaborate with editors, publishers, retailers, and businessmen—the people who have some stake, and therefore an important say, in the very things that are being made by designers. This book is about that collaboration.

In rereading this text I realize that in only a few instances do I make reference to the massive technological changes that occurred in the graphic design profession during the last three decades. While I acknowledge that technological changes have influenced design style and methodologies, have created new disciplines, and have certainly affected design production, they have had little to do with the way I approach design. It's not that I'm a Luddite—I don't have anything personal against the computer. I feel about computers the way I feel about cars: I need them, I drive them, I'm fond of them, but I don't want to hang around and talk about them.

I've never been interested in technology. I'm interested in people. If technology has changed during the past thirty years, people have not.