

This Page is Intentionally Left Blank

4

The components of design problems

It seemed that the next minute they would discover a solution. Yet it was clear to both of them that the end was still far, far off, and that the hardest and most complicated part was only just beginning.

Anton Chekhov, *The Lady with the Dog*

It has long been an axiom of mine that the little things are infinitely the most important.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*

Above and below the problem

Designers are traditionally identified not so much by the kinds of problems they tackle as by the kinds of solutions they produce. Thus industrial designers are so called because they create products for industrial and commercial organisations whereas interior designers are expected to create interior spaces. Of course, reality is not actually quite so rigid as this. Many designers dabble in other fields, some quite regularly, but most designers tend not to be quite so versatile as some writers on design methodology appear to think. We have already seen that this is to some extent the result of the range of technologies understood by the designer. Architects for example need to understand, amongst a great deal else, the structural properties and jointing problems associated with timber. It seems likely, then, that most architects could turn furniture designer to design a wooden chair, although a furniture designer would probably claim to be able to recognise architect-designed chairs. This is because most architects are used to handling timber at a different scale and in a different context and thus have already developed a 'timber language' with a distinctly architectural accent. The imposed loads and methods of construction of buildings are rather different