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Preface

This book now has far too long a history for my liking. It is frightening to think that it was first published now nearly a quarter of a century ago. It has been in continuous print ever since and many people have been kind enough to say how it has helped them with their studies, research or just developing their design process. Needless to say there are many others who have been rather more critical of some of the ideas and most of their arguments have been taken into account as the book has progressed through previous editions to this fourth one.

The book was not originally intended to be prescriptive and that continues to be the case. It is an attempt to draw together much of what I know about designing. That understanding has, of course, come from many years' research. But this understanding also comes from teaching designers from a wide range of backgrounds. I have taught students of architecture, interior design, product and industrial design, urban design and town planning, landscape, graphics as well as those who develop virtual worlds such as websites and animated films. I have also taught in the areas of ergonomics, systems design and computer programming. These students have repeatedly amused, surprised and entertained me. They have always taught me new things and occasionally astonished me. That they do not realise some things are thought to be difficult is often the charm and advantage of such novice students and every now and then they show that it is possible to make the complex simple and to resolve the intractable. This is why design is such a drug, so fascinating and yet of course so frequently frustrating and infuriating. I have been privileged to meet many wonderful designers, some of them very well known and others less so. We have discussed the ideas in this book. Often highly successful designers warn me at the start of these discussions that they can more easily describe their designs than their processes. Actually, it usually turns out that they can say a great deal more about their processes than they had previously realised they could. It may