

### 3 LESSONS FROM DESIGN

#### FOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT DESIGN

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In this chapter, we will use four questions to guide us on a quick run-through of contemporary design practice. In answering these questions, we will encounter salient aspects of design, as they have been described and explained within design research. Then we will briefly dwell on the anatomy of design, creating an overview of design practices that helps position the particular practices we will focus on in the rest of the book. In the last section, we will draw five key lessons from these design practices. These lessons inform the frame creation approach that will be introduced in chapter 4. But first: the four questions.

#### WHAT IS DESIGN? MISUNDERSTANDING DESIGN

The reader will have noticed that in speaking about “design practice” in chapter 2 we moved far beyond the prevalent interpretation of “design” as merely the creation of beautiful things. The design professions have developed dramatically over the last twenty years, and design practices have matured into a real alternative to conventional problem-solving strategies. Unfortunately, the way design is presented in popular culture and in the media doesn’t do justice to the new reality of contemporary design practice. The design professions themselves have not worked very hard to dispel the old, self-servingly romantic, mysterious, and heroic images of the designer. For the purposes of this book, we need to clear up a few common misconceptions before we can begin to describe what design really is.

*Design is not just about creating beauty*

In many design professions, a pleasing visual aesthetic is important but is just one factor among many that need to be taken into account in the creation of