

is it good

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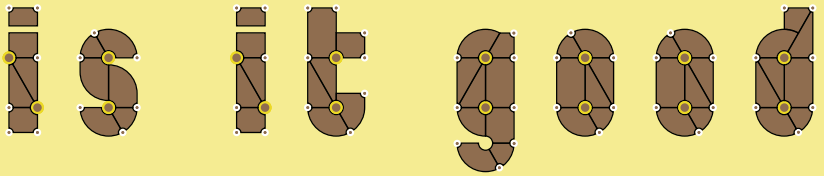
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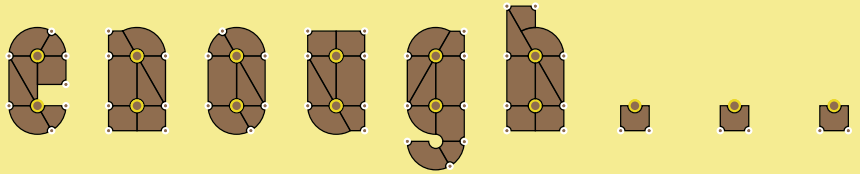
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Jeroen van Erp





# Introduction

In recent years, design has been a hard topic to avoid. Just look at all the books out there about design thinking. They could give you the idea that you are a nobody if you are not familiar with agile, scrum or methods like contextmapping. The design trade has professionalised massively in recent decades, progress which can only be applauded. We have seen huge advances in all kinds of areas, from materials to dealing with organisations, behavioural change, emotions, data and technology.

'Mijnheer  
de Rector Magnificus,  
leden van het  
college van bestuur,  
collegae hoogleraren  
en andere leden  
van de universitaire  
gemeenschap,  
zeer gewaardeerde  
toehoorders.  
Dames en heren.'

In 2016, the renowned landscape architect Adrian Geuze was interviewed in Dutch newspaper NRC Handelsblad<sup>1</sup> about a project he was working on in Maastricht. For almost half a century, a motorway had run right through the city. Geuze and landscape architects West8 were asked to design a solution for this hard-to-shift problem. The quote which drew my attention was this: 'The idea to stack the two tunnels came by intuition.'

When the idea was originally suggested by the very experienced Geuze, he could not rationally oversee its implications. The challenge was far too complicated. But one way or another he felt that the concept was much more than promising. Naturally, a process of checks and balances followed, but the King Willem-Alexander Tunnel finally opened on 16 December 2016. All this took place with amazingly little fuss.

I guess most of you know the song Thriller by Michael Jackson. But the original title was Midnight Man. It was written by Jackson with Rod Temperton. When Temperton had nearly finished writing the song, he suddenly envisioned that the title Thriller and the accompanying storyline would

1)

Carlijn Vis (2016).

*Zo ontwerp je*

*een reusachtig*

*verkeersknooppunt.*

In *NRC Handelsblad*.

the passenger flow at Schiphol Airport) and the design of the actual solution itself.

What is a concept? For me, it is the initial formulation of a design solution, often represented by a metaphor, an analogy or a different type of condensed thought. The fact that it is unfinished – as you see in the drawing for Schiphol – and contains a lot of uncertainties is what makes ours a profession that values the quality of concepts.

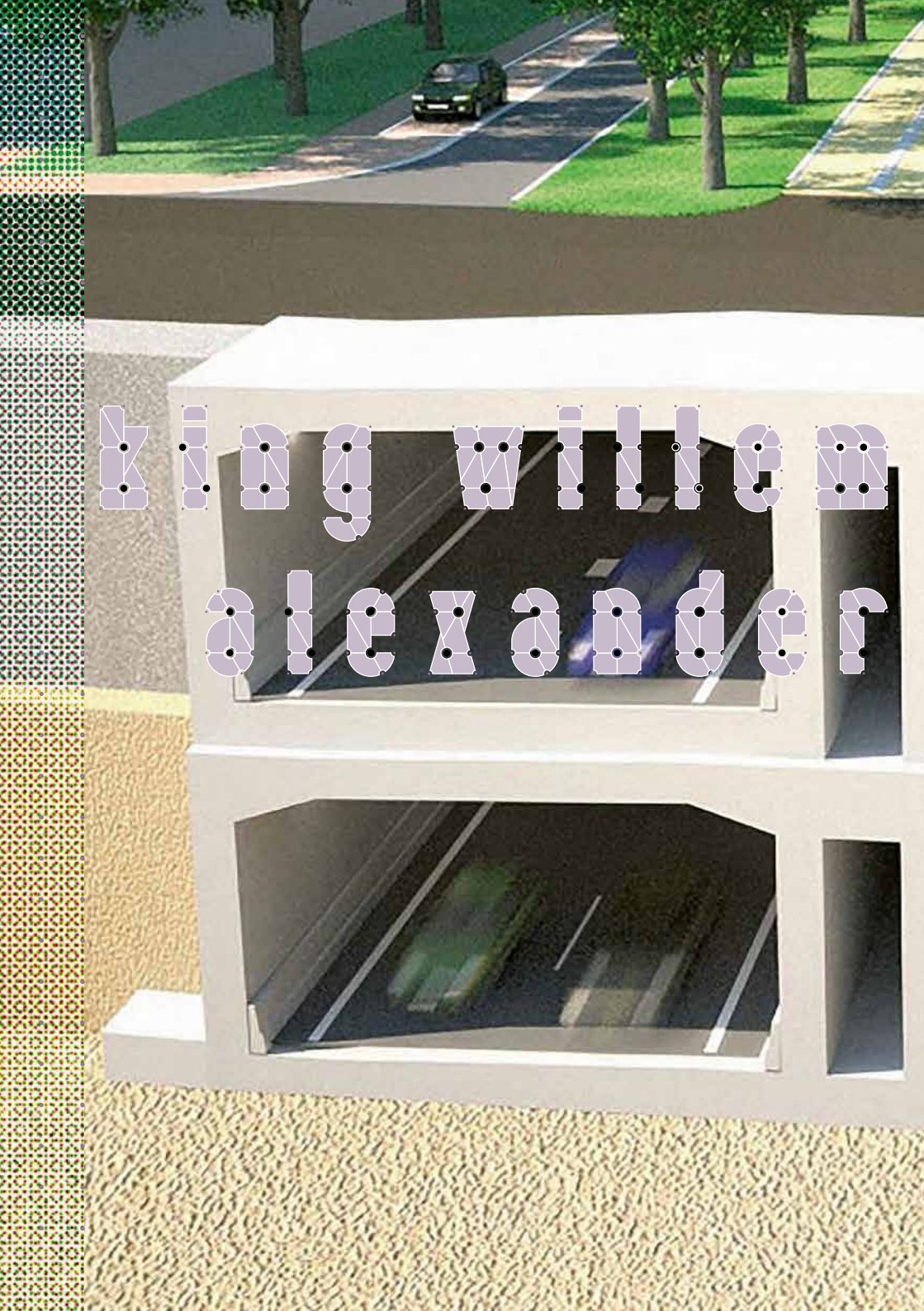
In my view, great concepts as drivers of change are going to become more relevant and important because of the ever-increasing complexity of design challenges. I would now like to share a few observations in support of this argument.



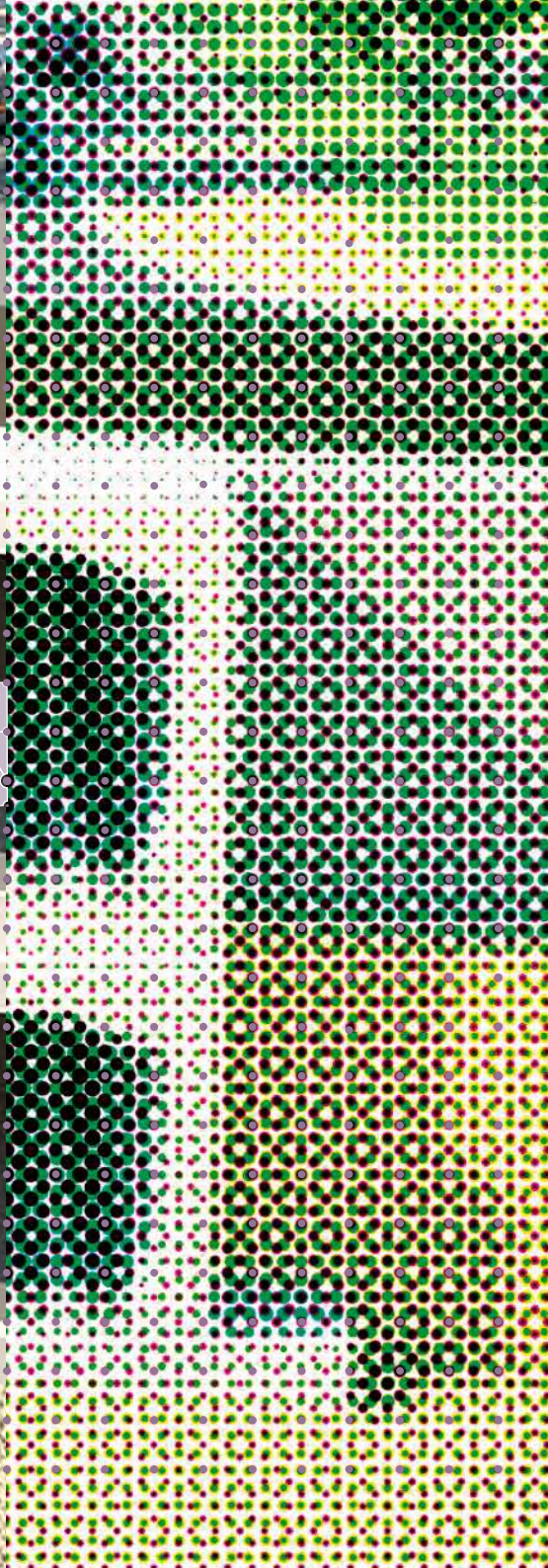
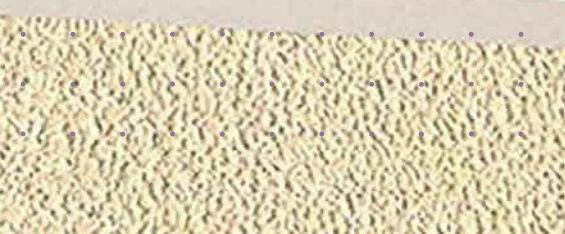
king willel  
alexander tunnel

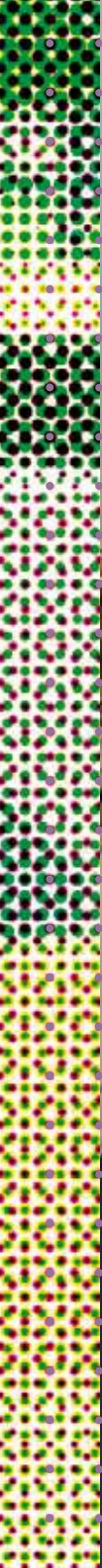
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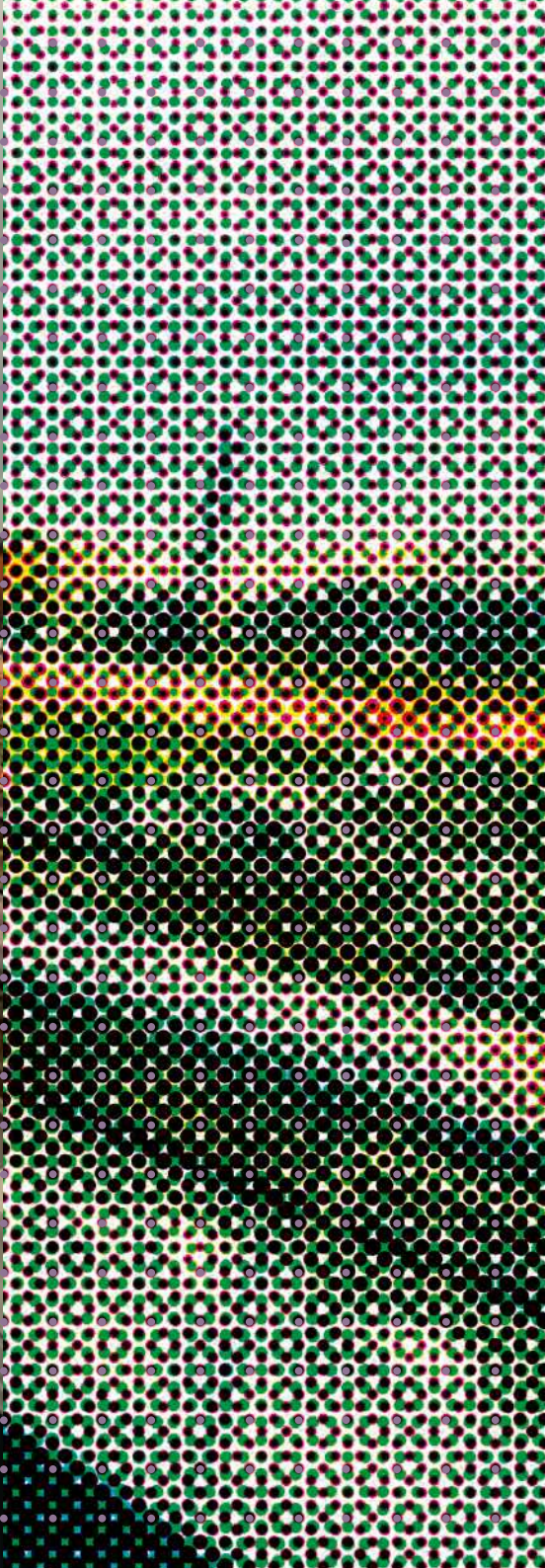
thriller

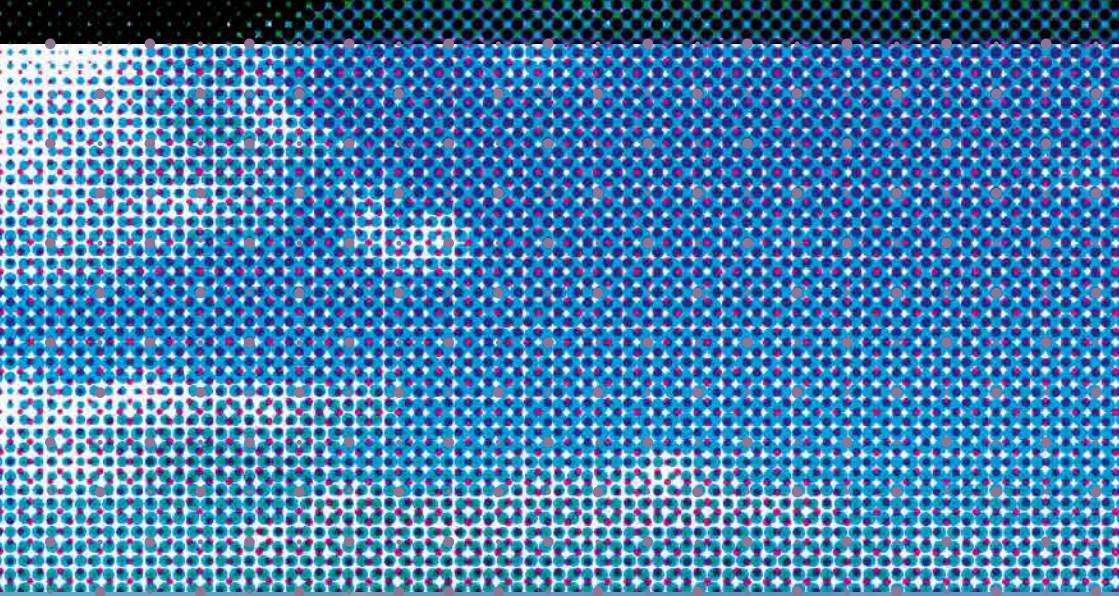


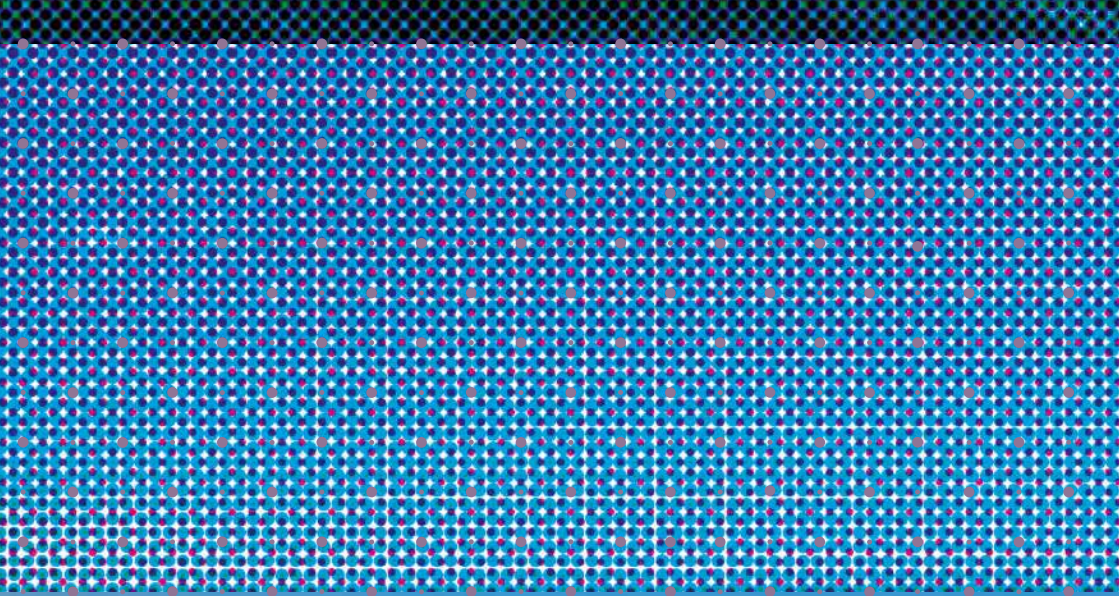
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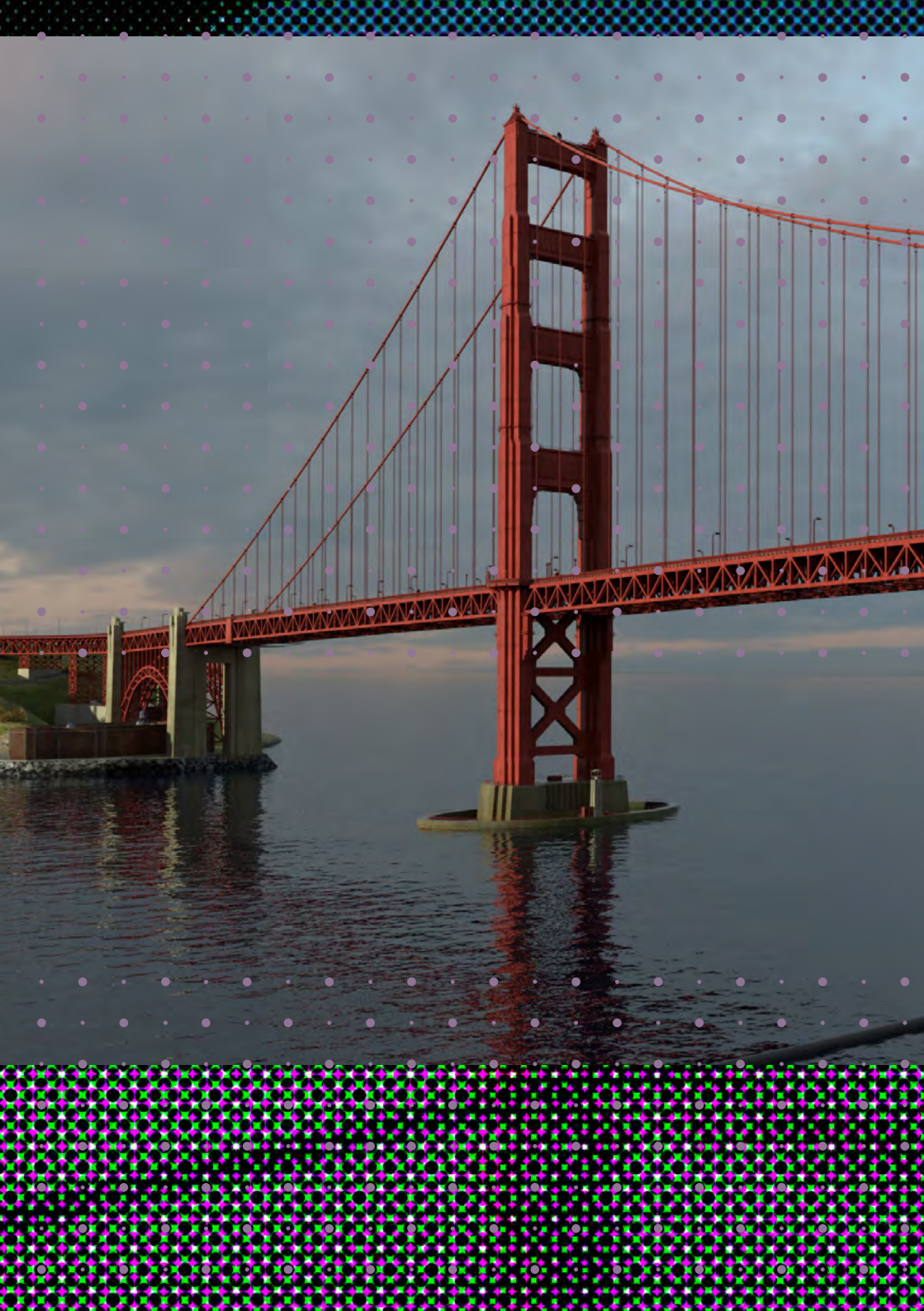


















## How to judge concepts?

Designers follow a constant learning curve when it comes to taking the right decisions about concepts. What we need to do in design education is steepen that curve.

We learn to trust our intuition on the basis of experience and knowledge, combined with a sense of what is happening in the world. Teaching future designers how to use and develop knowledge in education should be low-hanging fruit for us as educators. However, this aspect definitely needs to be emphasised more in design education

But what about the intuition part? I believe that this sensitivity can be trained through 360-degree reviews of your ideas and by attending and joining in debates. Sharing different reference frameworks by hearing and seeing other people's reasoning raises awareness, feeds your own knowledge and helps in modelling your intuition.

This might lead to new approaches in education – for instance, different ways of assessing design projects. Why not have them judged by users, entrepreneurs, product owners, fellow students, teachers or even politicians?

Is it good enough . . .

This monograph is about developing and evaluating design concepts, and why that skill is crucial in tackling complex problems. It shows how the strength derived from trusting your intuition can result in relevant concepts and solutions, for everyone from Schiphol Airport to elderly people living with dementia and the engineers trying to rid the oceans of the 'plastic soup'. The central message: keep asking yourself 'Is it good enough?'

Jeroen van Erp is the co-founder of international strategic design agency Fabrique and professor at Delft University of Technology.

