

*boom*—a loud deep sound with much resonance

. . . as of a distant cannon or

an earthquake

a rapid advance in prices

or a sudden bound of activity in any business

truth and the consequences that follow from it, as when

one “lowers the boom”

the effective launching of anything upon public attention

an impetus given to any movement or enterprise

a long beam from which a microphone is suspended

to capture conversations in a crowd

a spar run out to extend a ship’s sail

a pole set up to mark the course

of the deep water

the cry of the bittern

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On the cover: A detail from one of the award winning entries in the 2011-12 California Architectural Foundation's William Turnbull Competition. Part of the Drylands Design Conference, the competition challenged designers to consider water-smart design innovation at a range of scales, from building systems to infrastructure and landscape spaces. Thomas Kosabu of ORE Design + Technology's winning design retrofitted the LA River with a zero energy desalination system, which harnesses ocean wave energy to pump cold sea-water inland. Check out the other winners and the interesting debates from the conference at [dryland-conference.org](http://dryland-conference.org).

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## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Steve Jobs died as this issue was going to press. As many people know, or have recently learned, the cofounder of Apple was a California native whose life, work, and vision helped shape not only the personal computer industry but also the way many of us live today. That's a pretty big claim. What does it mean to shape the way people live? And what kind of role could one person play in a change of such magnitude?

Answers to questions like these aren't simple. Indeed, they're not the kinds of questions most of us will spend time pondering. When it comes to the objects of the designed world, the questions we ask ourselves—Do I like it? Does it work?—are typically straightforward. Even these questions start to sound complicated if we look at them very closely. Why do we buy the things we buy? How do we choose between this one and that one? When we choose, what happens to the companies and manufacturers and suppliers and retailers who furnished those goods to us? And what happens to our stuff when we're done with it, when it doesn't work any more or when we no longer need it?

Design is not only about the objects we purchase for our homes that display personal taste and identity. Design fundamentally affects the ways we work, compute, communicate, and commute every single day. And, far beyond our homes and neighborhoods, California designers have profoundly shaped the way people around the world live and work. This special issue of *Boom: A Journal of California* explores the centrality of design to California politics and culture by showcasing iconic figures such as Jobs, Walt Disney, Stewart Brand, Ray and Charles Eames, as well as Kelly Goto, one of the most renowned practitioners of what is known as “user-experience design.” We also focus on those behind the scenes who have shaped design of water systems, transportation policies, and accessibility, who negotiate the needs of different interest groups vital to our state's social inclusiveness, environmental well-being, and economy. While some of the articles look back at the history of California architecture and design in the twentieth century, others look forward to the future to imagine and create the new habits and modes of thought that will shape our lives.

# Design fundamentally affects the ways we work, compute, communicate, and commute every single day.

The designed world is our world and there are some pretty serious problems with it. We may not know exactly when we first started questioning where it was taking us, but we know why we keep asking questions, particularly these days, as issues of financial instability, environmental degradation, and sustainability present themselves with increasing frequency and insistence. The first step in fixing those problems might be a question of design.

*Stuart Kendall*

*Christina Cogdell*

Guest Editors