



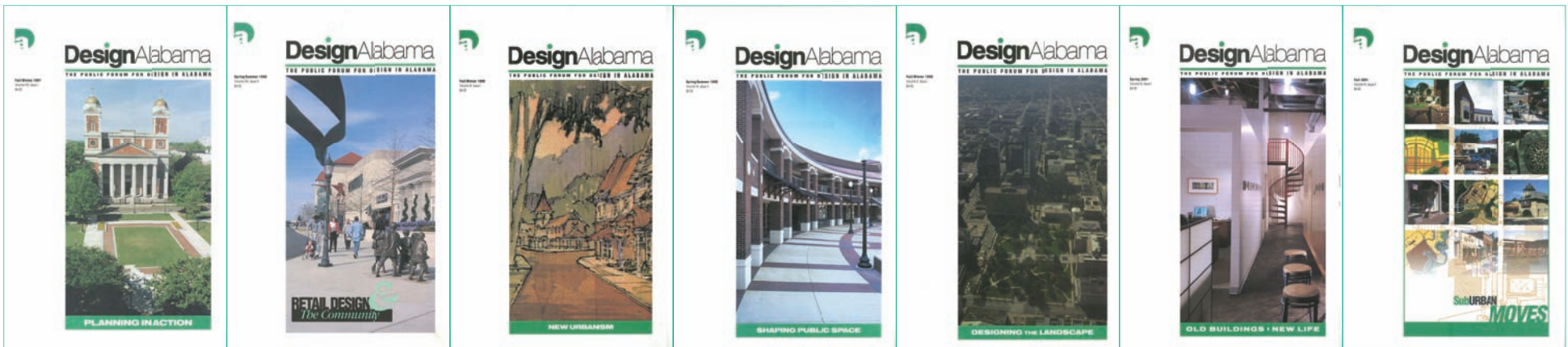
# DesignAlabama

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*Design creates culture. Culture shapes values. Values determine the future. Robert L. Peters ■ It's really hard to design ... by focus groups. A lot of times, people don't know*



*old Toynbee ■ In a quality city, a person should be able to live [an] entire life without a car and not feel deprived. Paul Bedre running out of urban places. Andres Duany ■ Only when the design fails does it draw attention to itself; when it succeeds,*



*ign – yes, no, and WOW! Wow is the one to aim for. Milton Glaser ■ People seldom improve when they have no other model  
ving the lives of others and for leaving your community and the world better than you found it. Marian Wright Edelman*



XXV  
DA Makes a Difference:  
**A RETROSPECTIVE**



# Nancy Mims Hartsfield: *DesignAlabama's First Lady*

by Samantha Lawrie

In 1987 DesignAlabama was incorporated as a statewide organization dedicated to educating the public about the importance of good design. Soon after, Becky Mullen, DesignAlabama's first executive director, Philip Morris, then executive editor of *Southern Living*, and Nancy Hartsfield, professor of graphic design at Auburn University, were charged with the creation of the journal.



As Mullen writes in the premier issue, "One of the first projects DesignAlabama engaged in was the planning and production of this journal, and it will be our most important tool for communication and the exchange of ideas." While Morris and Mullen generated the content, Hartsfield's design brought their collective vision to life and made the journal a tangible reality.

Hartsfield developed the structure and overall look of the journal while on sabbatical from Auburn University. The generous tabloid format allowed for both in-depth articles and the large images needed to showcase the work of Alabama designers. Hartsfield's careful selection of typefaces and crafting of style guidelines for the journal established a polished, contemporary yet approachable aesthetic perfectly suited for the journal's general audience. Even so, the journal was "cutting-edge." From the start Hartsfield designed and produced the journal using the most advanced technology of the time – the Apple computer. The new technology revolutionized the fields of publication and graphic design and gave Hartsfield complete control of typography, design and page-layout eliminating the need for professional type-setting and mechanical paste-ups. Hartsfield's early embrace of the computer-as-design-tool with its formidable learning curve marks her as a consummate design professional – as do the late nights over a Christmas holiday spent preparing the journal for a January press date. "The design of the journal was a labor of love," says Hartsfield, who often refers to the journal as her child.

While she produced the first volume (spring and fall issues) of the journal herself, by Volume II Hartsfield adopted a team approach to the journal's design. Colleagues and young graphic designers were invited to share the fun. For each issue articles were assigned and style guidelines were reviewed. As work progressed Hartsfield met regularly with the group to critique spreads and massage individual efforts into a unified expression of DesignAlabama. "Nancy creates a family atmosphere of support when working with those around her, serene yet determined to inspire our best efforts," says Tomie Dugas,

managing editor of the journal. A designer meeting was always a merry reunion where gentle guidance – "Don't you think that type looks a bit horsey?" says Hartsfield in her lilting Southern accent – was shared over lunch. Hartsfield has served as art director for the journal for all 25 volumes and has mentored myriad young designers in the process.

Beyond her achievement with the journal, the mentoring of artists and graphic designers may be Hartsfield's most significant contribution to the discipline. Hartsfield taught fundamental classes and graphic design at Auburn University for 35 years, serving her last four years as interim head of the art department. With colleague John Morgan, Hartsfield secured the first Apple computer lab at Auburn University, ensuring that Auburn graduates would be fluent in the latest technologies. "I was among the first students to benefit from her successful effort to create the very first Apple computer lab for Auburn University's graphic design department. I remember it being very exciting, and she was there day in and day out – hands on – patiently teaching us how to use new technology to support conceptual design," remembers Angela Stiff, principal and creative director of communications firm Copperwing ([www.copperwing.com](http://www.copperwing.com)). Hartsfield was affectionately known as the "Velvet Hammer" by students and colleagues, and the nickname aptly describes her productive pairing of patient support with high expectations. That numerous students have maintained relationships with Hartsfield well into their professional lives is telling of her devotion and impact. "I have loved every minute of my teaching career," says Hartsfield. "It has been a major part of my life."

Though retired from teaching and finished with this last issue of DesignAlabama Journal, Hartsfield is as busy as ever. As a founding member of the DesignAlabama Board of Directors, Hartsfield will continue serving on the board as co-vice-chair of communications, being joined this year by Angela Stiff. Instrumental in establishing the Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art in Auburn as co-chair of its building committee, Hartsfield now serves on the JCSM Advisory Board



The design team from left to right: Gina Glaze Clifford, Samantha Lawrie, Robert Finkel, Wei Wang, Nancy Mims Hartsfield, Bruce Dupree, Courtney Windham and Tomie Dugas.





**Bark in the Park Day at Riverfront Stadium, acrylic painting by Nancy Mims Hartsfield.** “Last spring the *Montgomery Advertiser* ran an editorial titled “Celebrating the Rebirth of Downtown”, which spoke to me. After several revealing excursions around the downtown district, I was immensely impressed with how beautiful and viable it had become, an extraordinary mix of historic old with tasteful modern – all-in-all, most attractive!” says Hartsfield. You can view Hartsfield’s artwork at [nancymimshartsfield.com](http://nancymimshartsfield.com).



The designerly elegance Hartsfield brings to the journal also can be found in the logo she designed for the Alabama State Council on the Arts.

Executive Committee. And in addition to these responsibilities, Hartsfield has embarked on an active and successful painting career. She has exhibited every year since retirement from Auburn University and continues to explore new media and subject matter. Her work is represented in public, corporate and private collections throughout the region. Recently Hartsfield was selected by the Montgomery Area Business Council on the Arts to create several works celebrating the city of Montgomery. Hartsfield’s paintings – described as fresh views of familiar local downtown spots – were then awarded to the recipients of the 2014 Business in the Arts Awards at an annual event recognizing River Region businesses that provide exceptional support to the arts. “I’ve spent my whole life trying to tell people how important art is to economic development,” Hartsfield told the *Montgomery Advertiser*. As a graphic designer and an artist, Hartsfield believes a community’s business and design arts worlds serve one another – this includes the visual and cultural arts as well. “Working together, business, design and the arts can shape a community, which attracts good business and good people,” explains Hartsfield.

**G**raphic designer, teacher, painter, mentor, board member, arts advocate, friend – Nancy Hartsfield is above all a woman who cares deeply for people. “Throughout her career Nancy has worked to provide new opportunities for others,” says Stiff. The *DesignAlabama* Journal is an artifact not only of Hartsfield’s commitment to good design but also of her care for the good people of Alabama. 📝

*Samantha Lawrie is an associate professor of graphic design at Auburn University. She was a 2015 recipient of an Alabama State Council on the Arts design fellowship, and her work is currently on display at The Georgine Clarke Alabama Artists Gallery in Montgomery.*

“My fondest memories are of all the people I have worked with over the years: **Philip Morris**, of course, members of the **DesignAlabama** board, professional people associated with the design industry, the people at the **Alabama State Council on the Arts** and my colleagues in graphic design.

Producing the journal has been a joy because of the wonderful people who worked with me along the way. Professor **Ross Heck** joined me on the third journal in 1989 as associate art director and worked by my side until 2009. Professor **Wei Wang** joined the design team in 1999 and became the associate art director in 2009. Wang also designed the website for **DesignAlabama** and the template for the digital newsletter. Professors **John Morgan** and **Ray Dugas** contributed digital illustrations in the early days of the journal, which were cutting-edge for the time.

**Tomie Dugas** came on board in 1994 and became managing editor in 1995. With degrees in both graphic design and journalism, she has done a tremendous job in planning, researching, writing, designing, editing and organizing the material. We couldn’t have done it without her.

Both students and graduate students have contributed along the way. Professor **Samantha Lawrie** has both written and designed articles since 1998. Other colleagues who have contributed their design skills are Professor **Kelly Bryant**, Professor **Dana Gay**, **June Corley** and **Bruce Dupree**. In fact, Dupree not only has designed articles but also has shot digital photographs when needed. Newcomers Professor **Courtney Windbam** and Professor **Robert Finkel** joined the team for the last three journals and have held to the standards.

Many thanks to all of these talented and professional people. It has been a fun ride! ”

— **Nancy Mims Hartsfield**



Art director Nancy Hartsfield with past associate art director Ross Heck (right) and current associate art director Wei Wang (center).