

## THE EDITORIAL PREFACE: CONTEMPORARY HISTORIES OF DESIGN AND TRANSIENCE

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This special issue is a compilation of papers presented at the 2022 Design History Society Annual Conference themed *Design and Transience*, held at İzmir Institute of Technology, 8-10 September 2022. In view of the current global condition characterized by indeterminacy and volatility caused by the global-scale humanitarian, ecologic and economic crises, the conference urged scholars and professionals in the field to reflect on the ways design and design history would deal with the issue of transience. The Covid-19 pandemic further led to a painstaking realisation of our own ephemerality as well as of everything we took for granted. In this context, the debate mainly focused on the ways designers and design historians, through their disciplinary practices, would cope with the consequences of natural disasters, wars, migration, displacement, and political tensions. The preoccupation with the issue of transience was further reinforced by the fact that information and knowledge have increasingly been subject to digital retrieval and manipulation, which constantly brings about new challenges and opportunities to compile, document, and preserve data. The instances whereby the condition of transience both informs and transforms user experiences, design disciplines, and design discourses were also of particular concern. The call for papers of the conference invited authors to address the multifaceted relationship between design and transience by resituating transience as a historiographic, cultural and design challenge. The essays included in this special issue all responded to this call in creative ways, and they loosely fall under such thematic categorisations as digital history, museums and preservation; politics, identity, and memory; postcolonial criticism and curatorial

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practices; and the history of design practices and institutions that deal with transience.

Kimmie Parker and Laure Holden offer a refreshing perspective regarding the role of online archives in decolonizing design history and undermining the hierarchies inherent in the processes of data collection and preservation. On a much more recent postcolonial condition and centralising the imminent question of design's and design historians' capacity to deal with the challenges posed by destruction, absence and impermanence, Jennifer McHugh focuses on the case of Ukraine. The author skillfully explores the potentials and extent of digital preservation of heritage, particularly when the pertinent cultural heritage is at risk at times of turmoil and conflict. And finally, Magali An Berthon traces the lost pieces of the textile collection of the National Museum of Cambodia from paper records and catalogues. By trying to disclose what is lost rather than focusing on what already exists, the author aims to bring into attention the rich diversity of the textile heritage dissolved by the authoritarian regime.

Dwelling on the interrelated issues of memory, preservation, and identity, Pedro Constantino Alvarez Caselli illustrates the heritage of editorial products via a case study focusing on a Chilean state publishing project titled *Empresa Editora Nacional Quimantú* between 1971 and 1973. Caselli presents a close examination of the publication revealing its ideological orientation and the role of its design corresponding to the new social dynamics in the country. The following studies successfully tackle similar issues while swaying between the past, present and possible futures. Maria do Carmo Paulino dos Santos Madu and Ana Claudia Castilho Barone dwell on how clothing was instrumentalised by a black woman, Dona Folô, in the freedom struggle to assert and affirm black subjectivity in Imperial Brazil. Finally, while Daniele Savasta, Elif Kocabıyık and Emre Gönlügür explore the efficacy of a computational interface in collectively constructing the visual history of İzmir International Fair by collecting and connecting ephemera, memories and information, Meriç Erdoğan narrates the multilayered history of the now abandoned North Brother Island in New York City. The latter searches for the island's possible future inhabitations by more-than-human communities, embracing all forms of natural life.

The final group of essays in the special collection addresses both personal and institutional memory in relation to design and design history. Instrumentalising Deleuze's philosophy of difference as a tool for analysis, Saadet Kök and İpek Akpınar study the conceptual framework of the congresses the International Association for Aesthetic (IAA) and the Society for Aesthetic and Visual Culture (SANART). Covering a time period from 1991 to 2019, the authors identify certain (dis)continuities in the congress themes and the call texts. In their critical review of the history of interiors and interior design in Turkey, Deniz Hasırcı, Zeynep Tuna Ultav and Umut Şumnu provide a much-needed perspective on the country's design histories, yet to be written as a cultural product and in relation to the issues of preservation and ephemerality. Elena Formia, Valentina Gianfrate and Elena Vai examine the role of design and design-centred approaches in urban transformation

by specifically focusing on the decades of the 1960s and 70s in Italy. Questioning the key concepts in European programmes and development policies, the authors conceive design as an embodiment of the concept of transience. Cansu Değirmencioglu and Deniz Avcı Hosanlı, expanding our imagination through autobiographical recounts as well as observations and recollections of patients and visitors, bring Turkish sanatoria into the discussion in the context of design and transience by juxtaposing the physical transience of the body and the interior design of a medical space creating a sense of spiritual longevity. Finally, Sisse Tanderup discusses the commodification of death through a focus on two brands Coeio, selling burial suits and LifeGem creating diamonds from human ashes. The author frames the practices of two brands within the conception of death in Western societies and explores how contemporary death practices relate to design and transience.

Encompassing a variety of aspects regarding the inherent connection between design and transience, this compilation is far from being exhaustive. For instance, the rise of artificial intelligence and the concomitant AI-generated artwork and design inevitably raise issues about the threatened or even diminishing agency of artists and designers as well as their ethical implications, and aesthetic representation. Directing our attention to such emergent topics that grow in importance could yield even more interesting results paving the way for further scholarly discussion in terms of the conceptualisation of transience vis-a-vis design.