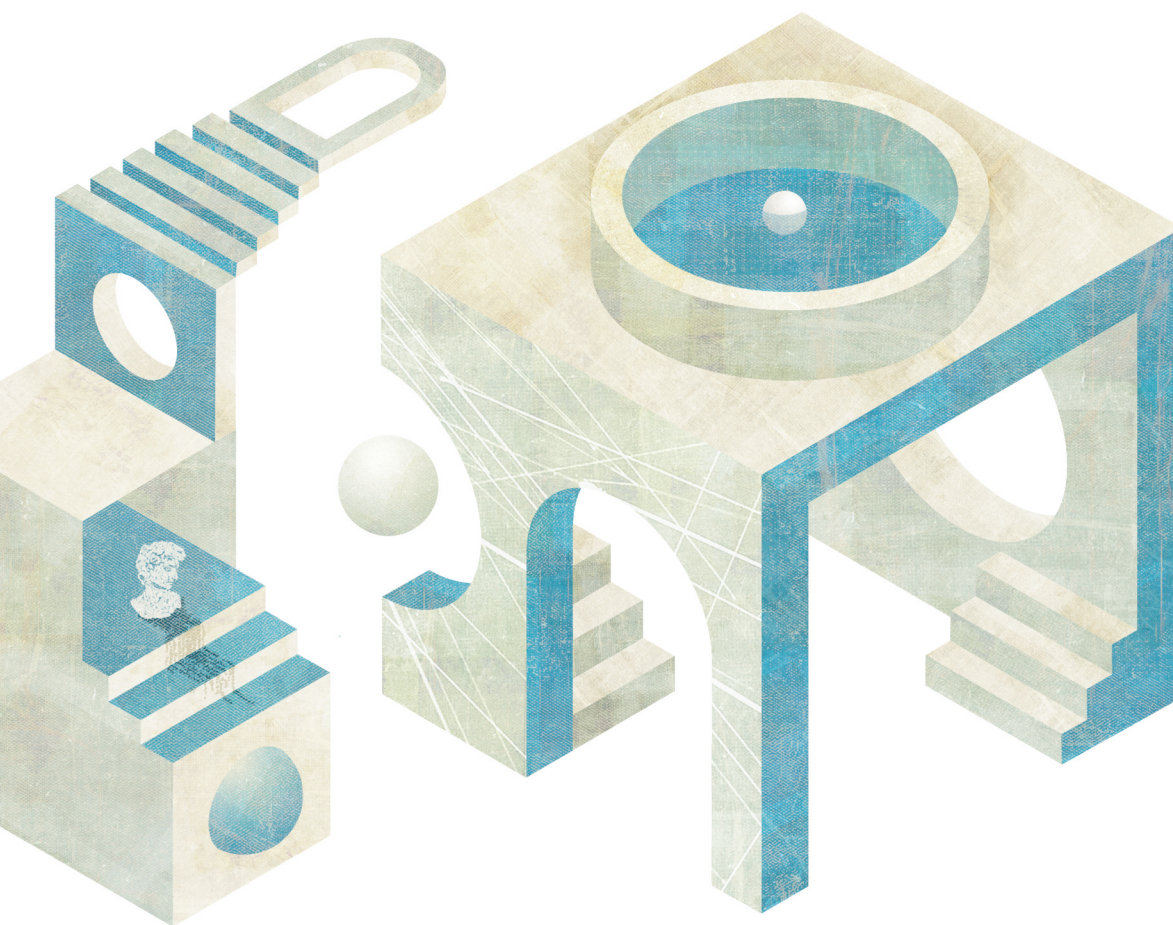


DESIGN CULTURE MATTERS

Embracing cultures and cross-cultures
through design perspective and matters



edited by Giampiero Bosoni, Marta Elisa Cecchi



D.I. FrancoAngeli
DESIGN INTERNATIONAL

Direction: Silvia Piardi

Scientific Board:

**Alessandro Biamonti, Alba Cappellieri, Mauro Ceconello,
Claudio Germak, Ezio Manzini, Carlo Martino, Francesca Tosi,
Mario Piazza, Promil Pande, Angelica Ponzio, Zang Yingchun**

The Design International series is born in 2017 as a cultural place for the sharing of ideas and experiences coming from the different fields of design research, becoming a place in which to discovering the wealth and variety of design, where different hypotheses and different answers have been presented, drawing up a fresh map of research in international design, with a specific focus on Italian design.

Different areas have been investigated through the books edited in these years, and other will be explored in the new proposals.

The Scientific Board, composed by experts in fashion, interior, graphic, communication, product and industrial, service and social innovation design, interaction and emotional design, guarantee the high level of the accepted books. After the first selection by the Scientific Board, the proposals are submitted to a double review by other international experts.

LEM - Landscape, Environment and Mobility

Editorial Board:

**Anna Barbara, Giampiero Bosoni, Barbara Camocini,
Annalisa Dominoni, Maurizio Rossi, Francesco Scullica**



Il presente volume è pubblicato in open access, ossia il file dell'intero lavoro è liberamente scaricabile dalla piattaforma **FrancoAngeli Open Access** (<http://bit.ly/francoangeli-oa>).

FrancoAngeli Open Access è la piattaforma per pubblicare articoli e monografie, rispettando gli standard etici e qualitativi e la messa a disposizione dei contenuti ad accesso aperto. Oltre a garantire il deposito nei maggiori archivi e repository internazionali OA, la sua integrazione con tutto il ricco catalogo di riviste e collane FrancoAngeli massimizza la visibilità, favorisce facilità di ricerca per l'utente e possibilità di impatto per l'autore.

Per saperne di più: [Pubblica con noi](#)

I lettori che desiderano informarsi sui libri e le riviste da noi pubblicati possono consultare il nostro sito Internet: www.francoangeli.it e iscriversi nella home page al servizio "[Informatemi](#)" per ricevere via e-mail le segnalazioni delle novità.

DESIGN CULTURE MATTERS

Embracing cultures and cross-cultures
through design perspective and matters



edited by Giampiero Bosoni, Marta Elisa Cecchi

D.I. **FrancoAngeli**
DESIGN INTERNATIONAL

Cover image by Sara Sciannamè

ISBN e-book Open Access: 9788835154853

Date of first publication: September 2023

Copyright © 2023 by FrancoAngeli s.r.l., Milano, Italy.

This work, and each part thereof, is protected by copyright law and is published in this digital version under the license *Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International* (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

By downloading this work, the User accepts all the conditions of the license agreement for the work as stated and set out on the website

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0>

Contents

General introduction

by Giampiero Bosoni, Marta Elisa Cecchi pag. 9

1. The atmospheric culture and matter of Interiors

by Giampiero Bosoni, Marta Elisa Cecchi » 13
Matter as “Invironment Atmosphere” » 13
The relevance of atmospheric issues in the design culture » 20
References » 24

2. Envisioning museums on-chain: a designerly inquiry on blockchain-based digital transformation

by Federica Rubino, Davide Spallazzo, Mauro Attilio Ceconello » 25
Abstract » 25
Introduction » 26
Fostering a designerly discussion on blockchain
in the cultural heritage field » 28
Further Methodological considerations » 32
 Scenario 1: Shared Ownership » 33
 Scenario 2: Collective Intelligence » 35
Concluding remarks » 36
References » 37

3. Materials and Society: Advancing the Material Culture of Design

by Marinella Ferrara, Beatrice Bianco » 41
Abstract » 41

Introduction	pag.	42
The contemporary relevance of the relation between society and materials. The cultural study paths	»	44
Towards a new material design culture	»	46
Implications on History of Design research	»	48
Concluding remarks	»	51
References	»	52
4. The Material: An Active and Dynamic Medium in Design Education		
<i>by Ziyu Zhou, Valentina Rognoli, Owain Pedgley</i>	»	55
Abstract	»	55
Introduction	»	56
Today's material and design field	»	59
Circularity of materials	»	59
The special place of materials in design	»	60
The democratization of materials, technologies, and 'tinkering' spaces	»	61
Shifting to a meaning-driven approach for materials and design education	»	63
Cultivating material designers	»	64
Concluding remarks	»	65
References	»	65
5. How to Discover a Design Culture?		
<i>by James Christopher Postell</i>	»	69
Abstract	»	69
Introduction	»	70
What Constitutes a Design Culture?	»	70
How might the processes and operations of <i>making</i> shape a design culture?	»	73
How can a Design Culture be <i>discovered</i> and what role does discovery have in the learning process?	»	74
Phase 1: Preparation and Study	»	76
Phase 2: Research Guided by Individual Inquiry	»	77
Phase 3 & 4: Group Synthesis and Teamwork	»	81
Concluding remarks	»	83
References	»	84

6. MUSE – Mobile Urban Studio Experience: in the city, of the city, for the city	
<i>by Peter A. Di Sabatino</i>	pag. 86
Abstract	» 86
Introduction	» 88
Confluence/convergence_foundations_principles_ links	» 89
A couple of additional notes on MUSE	» 96
Concluding remarks	» 100
References	» 102
Authors	» 104

6. MUSE – Mobile Urban Studio Experience: in the city, of the city, for the city

Peter A. Di Sabatino, Department of Design, Politecnico di Milano

Abstract

The **Mobile Urban Studio Experience (MUSE)** is a provocation and proposal in, and beyond, education. It contributes to current discussions and processes on physical and digital space, education, and university life before, during, and post pandemic, and for a re-examination of the relationships between the academy and the city/community, between the academy and the professional communities, and between the academy and the broader world. Hopefully MUSE might contribute to more nimble, responsive, resilient, and facile relationships amongst the creative professions and local and global communities in an ongoing manner of varying durations and in moments of peace, prosperity, crisis, or war.

MUSE can be an active contributor in the matter, and matters, of design culture. MUSE could create new cultures in design as well as affect issues, processes, and production of design and design culture. Further, MUSE underlines that design culture matters. And that the issues surrounding and forming design culture can be as important as the products, processes, people, and materials of design.

At this moment, MUSE, especially in its fullest and most complex triad modality, is still an embryonic creative tool, method, and system... a sort of creative Swiss-army-knife for education, professional practice, and social/humanitarian efforts and actions.

After four decades of writing fiction... my method has entailed, more often than not, the subtraction of weight. I have tried to remove weight from human figures, from celestial bodies, from cities. Above all I have tried to remove weight from the structure of the story and from language.

*When I began my career, the duty of every young writer, the categorical imperative, was to represent our times. Full of good intentions, I tried to become one with the ruthless energy that, collectively and individually, was driving the events of our century. I tried to find some harmony between the bustling spectacle of the world, by turns dramatic and grotesque, and the picaresque, adventurous inner rhythm that spurred me to write. **I soon realized that the gap between the realities of life that were supposed to be my raw materials and the sharp, darting nimbleness that I wanted to animate my writing was becoming harder and harder for me to bridge. Perhaps I was only then becoming aware of the heaviness, the inertia, the opacity of the world – qualities that quickly adhere to writing if one doesn't find a way to give them the slip.***

Six Memos for the Next Millennium, Italo Calvino, 2016 (edits by author)

+

***No school is a school without an idea.** Every school embodies an inheritance at least and at most is an invention rising out of its inheritance. By inheritance and invention, I mean the transmission and transformation of a creed, of a technique that animates the hand, of a thought about the consecration of knowledge as it individuates the self and enhances a community, a network, many communities and many networks. An ethics of knowledge is the foundation of any school in its essential definition as a gathering place, but the complexity of what that knowledge should be, how its production is configured and unfolds, who translates it across the bridges of generations and time, whether its structure is rigid or limpid in its willingness to change, whether it is resistant to external mandates or longs for the imprimatur of an outside authority, and what status and success signify for its teachers and graduates – all of these define the place of gathering, its ethical complexion, its reasons for being, and what learning means there.*

Art School: Propositions for the 21st Century, Steven Madoff, 2009

Introduction

In its simplest sense, and previously realized by the author in summer study abroad programs in Paris and beyond in the 1990s, MUSE is a design studio/lecture course typology, process, and experience. It is hoped that for other academics, it could continue to be an educational experiment if there is enough interest to warrant its undertaking and development. And in its most complex, fullest configuration in the future, MUSE could be a scalable, transversal (transdisciplinary), and transferable product_system_service design that could be embedded in an (educational) institution or an independent, entrepreneurial offering with, and for, various constituencies. This chapter will explore the origins and foundations of MUSE, and only briefly touch on various configurations that can manifest independently, or in an inter-related manner. These and other aspects will be developed in future publications and ventures.

The proposals stem from the author's direct experience in executing diverse design studios, and other design initiatives, in various physical and conceptual ways over time, place and culture. Specifically, these include places such as Paris, Barcelona, Berlin, Ahmedabad, Los Angeles, and Milan; in other words, these modalities have been tested and developed over time and place.

MUSE also has tangential references to things like the successful "Albergo Diffuso" model in Italy, the new "Uffizi Diffusi" project, Baudelaire and Benjamin's writings on the "flâneur", the search for 'lightness' and 'quickness' in Calvino's Six Memos for the Next Millennium. Other Italian and international trends and movements will be touched upon in this foundational introduction.

We know well that things change over time, that things will continue to change, and hence there are always new possibilities. Hopefully, as Le Corbusier prompts, we have eyes that see. A current confluence engulfs us, as with the early modernist. Our circumstances and the early modernist, and other time periods, contain both similarities and differences. Many will choose to engage, if not the embrace emergent opportunities and possibilities.

EYES WHICH DO NOT SEE

A great epoch has begun.

There exists a new spirit...

Architecture is stifled by custom...

Our own epic is determining, day by day, its own style.

Our modern life, when we are active and about has created its own objects: its costume, its fountain pen, its eversharp pencil, its typewriter, its telephone, its admirable office furniture, its plate-glass and its “Innovation” trunks, the safety razor and the briar pipe, the bowler hat and the limousine, the steamship and the airplane.

The history of architecture unfolds itself slowly across the centuries as a modification of structure and ornament, but in the last 50 years steel and concrete have brought new conquests... If we challenge the past, we shall learn that the “styles” no longer exists for us, that a style belonging to our own period has come about; and there has been a revolution.

Our minds have consciously or unconsciously apprehended these events and new needs have arisen, consciously or unconsciously.

Towards A New Architecture, Le Corbusier, 1982 (edits by author)

Confluence/convergence_foundations_principles_links

The following list attempts to articulate some of the facets of the convergence affecting us now and, in the future, and that allow for modalities like MUSE to become much more possible and relevant. The list is preliminary and is therefore not intended to be definitive or exhaustive... rather it intends to promote more thought, conversation, and refinement, as well as development in future publications.

- **Technology**
- **Economy / Economies**
- **Work and workplace issues and attitudes +**
- **Mobility / Transportation**
- **Globalization / Internationalization**
- **Population + societal / cultural trends (i.e., climate change)**
- **Covid pandemic +**

The most important principle of MUSE is direct, sustained immersion. ‘In situ’ engagement, over time, is critically important to achieve

a primary, embedded experience that will lead to a fuller and deeper understanding of place, people, and things. Being actively attentive and engaged in the context and content over time is crucial for a robust and conscientious analysis and synthesis. There must be intense interest and curiosity. Intimacy and sensitivity need time to ferment, to develop. A place, society, and culture need time and sustained immersion to be understood. And from this, our ability to design emerges, as well as our ability to do relevant research. Focused design and research merge, and become complimentary, responsible actions.

Beyond immersion and direct experience, the foundational points include:

- **Intimate:** First-hand, primary experience in research and design. This includes direct processes that engage all aspects of the context and content directly and fully, ideally in a diffused and diverse manner that is driven by passion and *curiosity*.
- **Untethered** engagements merge with unbiased and unfiltered actions, movements, investigations, and explorations. Being open, flexible, and free leads one to discovery, revelation, and knowledge.
- **Nimble:** being nimble is another facet of being mobile, responsive, relevant, and resilient. It involves being light, and having a looseness of actions, freedom and quickness in movements, thinking and working. *Serendipity* may enter, inviting the unexpected, unplanned, and unknown.
- **Openness** is the base prerequisite. Open minds and bodies, open eyes, and the ability to see – really see – are required. All senses must be open. There can be no prejudices, preconceptions, or pre-determined outcomes... Openness includes *suspension*... including the deferral of beliefs and of self. By losing oneself it is possible to become open to others and other things, become in tune, receptive, and perceptive. Through the loss of self, other things can find you... even your muse.
- **Simultaneity and multiplicity** of inputs, influences, and actions are needed. Full engagement is needed in finding the place and its being (the *genius loci*) and developing a layered understanding. Time is incorporated. One finds the past, present, and future senses and

sensibilities, the opportunities and needs of a place and a situation, and of a people and a culture... and of oneself.

- **Connections:** Connect things: Observe... sketch, diagram, photo, record, analyze, synthesize... draw... and make things. Think... but not too much, nor too early! Be confident, receptive, and connected. *Work.*

These foundational principles are linked with various external influences and references, some are more obvious and more broadly known, and some engage a particular Italian context. Living and working in Italy, and specifically at Politecnico di Milano, it seems appropriate, responsible, and important to mention some of the current issues and initiatives in Italy, and engage Calvino and others, in specific relation to ideas in this chapter, but also in a broader Italian and European cultural context, and the context of this publication.

For example, the ideas and programs of the ‘Albergo Diffuso’, ‘Università Diffusa’, and ‘Uffizi Diffusi’ share the desire to diffuse and decentralize components that previously were concentrated in a singular location. The liberation of elements formerly centralized may spring from different motivations and circumstance, but they all share the sense and ideology of openness and expansiveness, and direct connections and contact. The ‘Albergo Diffuso’ originated in the context of the decline of smaller villages and locals in Italy, as both a business opportunity and a way towards economic recovery. The ‘Uffizi Diffusi’ project was unveiled during the pandemic and intends to distribute the museum’s collection from Florence to many locations in Tuscany and beyond. A CNN article from 2021 quotes Director Eike Schmidt about his intentions to “deliver an all-enveloping experience of the art”. Schmidt continues: “You don’t look at a work of art in isolation... The bodily context and landscape context matters a lot, and this will give the opportunity to perceive these artworks in a very different manner”. But it is not only about the experience of the art, and its ‘in situ’ nature, he is proposing a more comprehensive and interconnected vision. Like MUSE, he is seeking to embed art more directly into the context in a decentralized, diffused manner. MUSE also shares Schmidt’s intentions towards sustainability, and also more localized economic enhancements by spinning off previously centralized services and systems. Schmidt continues: “At the moment of reopening the city and country, we have

to give a signal for a new kind of tourism... we need to transform tourism into something more ecologically and socially sustainable. And that means the decongestion of hotspots such as Florence, by spreading the visitors around... In essence, everybody wins. Tourists and residents will get the opportunity to see remarkable art away from the crowds, businesses throughout the region will see revenues grow, and residents of Florence may get a little respite” (Buckley, 2021).

The ‘Università Diffusa’ at PoliMi is particularly manifested through Polisocial, the social responsibility organ of the university, and its emerging ‘Off Campus’ hubs dispersed in various parts of Milan. (link: www.polisocial.polimi.it/en/off-campus-3/) It is a decentralization of the academy into the very fabric, activities, and lives of the city, and will result in innumerable advantages for everyone. Universities can retain their centralized campus, but also realize dispersed and diverse locations, often in unused spaces, under-utilized places, and lesser served communities, in the city and beyond. This presents enormous opportunities for students, faculty, staff, and the communities. These embedded urban locations will provide important and comprehensive sustainable influences – including economic, ecological, social, and cultural aspects.

However, the **Mobile Urban Studio Experience (MUSE)** is perhaps more ‘progressive,’ and is much lighter, than the ‘Università Diffusa’ concept outlined above. Rather than having permanent diffused and diverse physical locations in and around the city, MUSE has no singular or permanent physical location, as we will see in the Paris background story below. Like the ‘flâneur’, it is both in and of the city, but not tied or limited to any specific location in the city. It is, at least initially, untethered. It is freer, lighter, and more open to the various forces and factors of the city... and ultimately finds its area of specific focus through an analytical, investigative, iterative, and immersive process.

Baudelaire alludes to the flâneur as a sort of objective observer and recorder of the city and its life, he continues: “His passion and his profession is to merge with the crowd... for the passionate observer, it becomes an immense source of enjoyment to establish his dwelling in the throng, in the ebb and flow, the bustle, the fleeting and the infinite. To be away from home and yet to feel at home anywhere; to see the world, to be at the very centre of the world, and yet to be unseen of

the world, such are some of the minor pleasures of those independent, intense, and impartial spirits...” (Baudelaire, 2010, p. 15; text edited by author).

In Product_System_Service Design (PSSD) and current design parlance (with a specific nod to IDEO’s *Method Cards*), we can see the above as very similar to tools and processes labeled as “Fly on the Wall, Shadowing, Cross Cultural Comparisons, Cognitive Maps, User Interviews, etc.” (IDEO, 2003). Another intention is for MUSE to activate numerous tools, processes, and design proposals in a direct and primary manner. Occasionally ‘going to the site’ is vastly different from being immersed and embedded in the site, and its context and content. Sustained, first-hand interviewing, observing, analysis, case studies, diagramming, and mapping in situ add additional dimension and depth.

Returning to foundational principles, links, and references through Calvino’s work and a broader Italian cultural context merged with a sense of Italian literary history, assists us with the broader context of this book on design culture matters. Calvino’s iconic contributions to Italian and international creative culture is profound, and hence provides a direct link to this book’s title and intention to explore design culture matters. Calvino simultaneously understands the pulse of Italian creativity, especially in literature, and is a fundamental aspect of that pulse. It is a time well spent.

Calvino’s opening quote in this chapter establishes a critical tone and vital characteristics that underline some of the conceptual and operative foundations of MUSE. Calvino’s memos shed light on issues surrounding design and education. A restatement of the last two sentences therefore seems to be an appropriate reminder to underline their importance. Calvino’s growing awareness of the “heaviness, the inertia, the opacity of the world” reinforced his increasing desire to pursue “the sharp, darting nimbleness that I wanted to animate my writing” (Calvino, 2016, p. 4). MUSE shares these sentiments, perspectives, and intentions, it offers a possible lightness to education and practice.

Calvino does not simply recognize the duality between lightness and heaviness, between nimbleness and inertia, but also the transitional nature of these domains when he writes that “I sometimes felt that the whole world was turning to stone: a slow petrification, more advanced in some people and places than in others, but from which no aspect

of life was spared. It was if no one could escape Medusa's inexorable gaze" (Calvino, 2016, p. 4).

While my mind jumped to Ionesco while first reading the memo, Calvino never mentions *Rhinoceros*, perhaps as it does not share the actual literary qualities (nor the Italian lineage) of lightness that he is trying to reveal, instead his first example is Perseus as presented in mythology and through the writings of Ovid. He writes that "When the human realm seems doomed to heaviness, I feel the need to fly like Perseus into some other space. I am not talking about escaping into dreams or into the irrational. I mean that I feel the need to change my approach, to look at the world from a different angle, with different logic, different methods of knowing and proving" (Calvino, 2016, p. 8).

This leap is also at the foundation of MUSE. It presents options in education, learning, teaching, practice, and interaction with the world. If needed, it may bring an antidote to a possible lingering 'heaviness' or inertia of the academy, the professional community, and global institutions and instruments. MUSE is fully committed to fairness, equality, and equity, but not necessarily through the means of 'sameness' and meaningless restrictions. It is, in a simple way, a change of approach, a different modality that employs "different methods of knowing and proving".

Observing, recording, and adjusting student learning, processes, and production in stationary, traditional studio environments over many years, and also in lighter and more flexible models, has led me to understand that the educational value in each modality is valid, as is the productivity of the students and faculty. The type of learning and productivity may vary, but frankly not too significantly, and the added diversity is extremely important. With tethered, rooted, and traditionally based education, there is clearly room, if not need, for diversity. I am certain of the value and impact of lighter models, such as MUSE, and feel strongly that more experimentation and research into these modalities would be of great benefit.

Lucretius's *De rerum natura* is the first great poetic work in which knowledge of the world leads to a dissolution of the world's solidity and to a perception of that which is infinitely small and nimble and light. Lucretius wants to write the poem of matter, but he warns us from the start that the reality of matter is that it's made of invisible particles. He is the poet of physical concreteness, seen in its permanent, unchanging substance, but he begins

by telling us that empty space is just as concrete as solid bodies. His greatest concern seems to be preventing the weight of matter from crushing us. As soon as he lays out the rigorous mechanical laws that govern every event, he feels the need to allow atoms to deviate unpredictably from the straight line, thereby ensuring the freedom both of matter and of human beings. The poetry of the invisible, the poetry of infinite unpredictable potentialities, even the poetry of nothingness, originate in this poet who has no doubts about the physical reality of the world. (Calvino, 2016, p. 10)

Calvino immediately follows this succinct exposé on Lucretius that stresses the importance of not allowing the ‘heaviness’ of things to suppress or stop us, by turning to other critical touchpoints concerning ‘lightness’ through the work of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, written 50 years later. Calvino writes that “For Ovid too everything can be transformed into new forms; for Ovid too knowledge of the world entails dissolving the solidity of the world; for Ovid too, there is among everything that exists an essential equality that runs counter to all hierarchies of power and value”. And that in Ovid’s lexicon, everything, and everyone “can change itself into radically different forms” (Calvino, 2016, pp. 10-11). And so, surely, design studios, lecture courses, professional practices, and how we interact and engage with the world can transform as well... especially if we do not permit precedent, inertia, prejudice, and bureaucracies from crushing us.

Before we break the spell, and move onto some other facets of MUSE, we should at least touch on the second memo by Calvino entitled ‘Quickness’. Calvino begins by discussing and sharing some legends, fables, and folktales, and points out that the sense of time is much more abstract, open, and not very ‘heavy’ or constraining... and hence the significance and frequency of devices like ‘once upon a time’ for example. There is a quickness, a sort of magic, that transfers, and transforms, us to another world. And this world has other rules, and other qualities. “The chief characteristic of the folktale is economy of expression; the most extraordinary adventures are recounted in terms of their bare essentials” (Calvino, 2016, p. 43).

MUSE too is about confronting, and working with, bare essentials in an unfiltered and untethered way. It is not about a beleaguered, cerebral process that overpowers the place, people, and things that we, in fact, came to, and should, work with...! Calvino continues that “Quickness of style and thoughts means above all nimbleness, mobility,

and ease – all qualities that go with writing that is prone to digression, to leaping from one topic to another, to losing the thread a hundred times and finding it again after a hundred twists and turns” (Calvino, 2016, p. 55).

Lastly for now in this ‘foundational’ section... I have had the most success in the execution of the immersive, untethered, in situ nature of MUSE through dedicated, intensive workshops and fully integrated and independent study abroad programs. These are not the mainstream typologies for lecture courses or design studios in traditional, university-based, semester formats... but they certainly do exist. Perhaps I have been attracted to workshops and more atypical programs due to their incredible effectiveness and impact. Their focus and intensity, often arising from their brevity, and perhaps their inherent alternative and experimental nature have been important to me and have proven to be an excellent educational experience for students. Maybe Calvino is also drawn to these modalities and typologies when he writes that “The demands of the publishing marketplace are a fetish that should not prevent experimentation with new forms. I hope here to wave a flag for the richness of short forms, with all they presuppose in terms of style and density of content” (Calvino, 2016, p. 60).

A couple of additional notes on MUSE

This chapter serves as a basic introduction of MUSE and its underpinnings, and specifically brings some focus on its educational modality. It will be developed more fully in subsequent publications. So, while it is inappropriate and impossible to dive into details of the educational modality of MUSE in this chapter, and few notes on time-frame, duration, and scope may be useful. The following points include different scenarios, benefits, and complications. They also reveal that the first two, shorter and independent modalities, are ‘easiest’ to plan, execute, and sustain, and that they are perhaps ideal for initial instigation of, and experimentation with, MUSE:

Modality ≈ Duration ➤ Comments/Characteristics

- Workshop ≈ 1 week +/- ➤ concentrated, focused, and intense; best if independent of other courses and commitments.

- Summer sessions ≈ 8-10 weeks ► typically ‘off-track’ and independent of other courses and commitments, or with all units (beyond the studio) in the MUSE program.
 - Semester ≈ 14 weeks ► typically ‘on-track’ with all units in the MUSE program or other units at the university, ‘online,’ or blended.
 - Annual ≈ 8-9 months ► stand alone and ‘off-track’, and independent like a study abroad program, Erasmus, etc. or integrated/blended with the university.
- + possible ‘professional’ participation (maybe also internship) and government/institution/NGO participation and partnerships...

And one backstory may be relevant: In Los Angeles in the early 1990’s, I initiated Woodbury University’s Paris program, the first educational offering beyond its campus. In Paris, the upper-level architecture design studio initially had a fully dedicated, 24/7 accessible studio for all the students in the program. It was equivalent to the studio space offerings in Los Angeles due requirements to meet accreditation standards set by the degree accrediting agency (NAAB). However, this created a ‘detachment’ and removal from the city since the location of the studio was in the periphery of Paris, and because students spent so much of their time there. It was in contradiction to the main idea of ‘full and direct immersion’ of the program. However, the lecture class on urbanism and urban theory that was offered simultaneously with the studio in Paris, and also lead by me, never had a formal classroom... the city, streets, parks, and plazas were the classroom.

The rationale for the fully dedicated studio space in Paris was in a sort of blind reflex to basic ‘conventions’ and NAAB requirements. These were bureaucratic and preconceived weights to the initial realization of the full idea of the program... constraints of convention, norms, and bureaucracy. NAAB had articulated the amount of space and furnishings needed for each student in a design studio, reinforced by precise analytical breakdowns required for accreditation. And, even though it was said that schools ‘should be themselves’ and that ‘standards should not be equated with standardization’, the reality and pressure felt very different.

We were a new architecture degree program in Los Angeles, and I was a young faculty member. Accreditation was extremely important to everyone, and critical to the school’s future. But, eventually, after

losing spaces yearly, including a diminishing reality of them being real ‘studio’ spaces, I simply stopped getting any formal space for the studio... and nothing changed. The work was always very strong, and it remained strong, and became even more focused and nuanced... and the students did not complain... nor did anyone else. So, the studio simply faded away, and we achieved the fullness of the idea of direct immersion with, and within, the city. It, ultimately, was that easy... a simple decision based on clear intentions with proven results over time.

While there is a ‘lightness’ and freedom of movement associated to MUSE, ultimately, after initial investigations and analysis, each student, or each group of students, will become embedded in a selected community, institution, or urban typology to bring focus and design specificity to their work. Various “toe-holds” and a sense of grounding in the communities deepen the immersive experience and work of the studio. The studio can be hosted by a variety of institutions and locations, and there could be a small ‘basecamp studio’ in the Bovisa campus for at least logistical links to production labs and other university centralized facilities, and possible links with Polisocial’s Off Campus outposts.

The main idea is simply not to stay in a remote and abstract studio space, but rather to engage the city and *to have the city become the studio...* to be *of* the city, community, institution, and/or typology... a sort of local ‘Erasmus’ program. This extends finding and understanding the sense of ‘place’ and ‘history’ directly to *society, culture, and community* over time. It includes tangible and intangible aspects. The direct relation to the community and culture is critical, as is sustained participation. MUSE engages, informs, educates, and empowers the community. This is achieved through direct collaboration employing co-work and co-design methodologies.

Lastly, and very briefly for now, beyond this educational module, MUSE can also be a model for professional ‘untethered’ work that may leverage the ‘digital nomad’ and distributed companies of recent times. Additionally, it may also serve as a model for emergency and disaster relief activities, including war, that need agility and nimbleness for rapid response and mobility to assist communities.

MUSE merges the Academy with the professions and with the local or global community. It is a system and a network. MUSE engages,

evolves, and extends design culture and design culture matters. It articulates our time and fuses design domains, contingencies, locations, disciplines, professions, communities, cultures, and circumstances. It unites and connects.

MUSE is an independent or embedded entity and can exist in a singular or in a triad form. It is a linked, transversal, interconnected, distributed network of various scales and typologies.

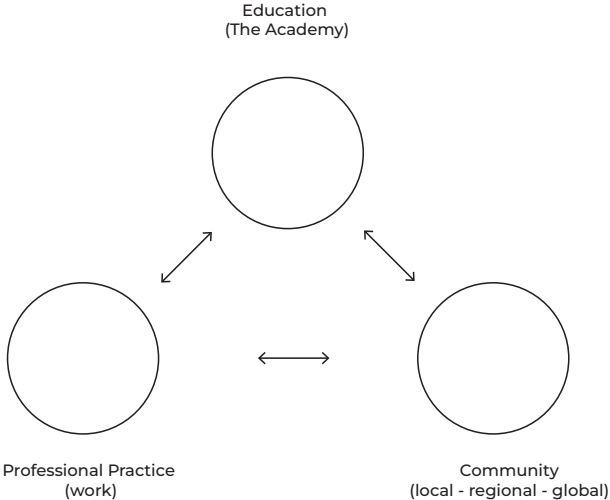


Fig. 1 – Primary branches and domains of MUSE, designed by author and produced by Claudia Mastrantoni, 2023

In the fullest state, MUSE links nomadic, untethered, diffused, and distributed people, students, professors, and retirees to universities, professional practice, institutions, corporations, governments, NGOs, and communities. This ultimately transcends a simple notion of MUSE as only an educational offering or platform, and even the relationship with it to the academic institution. MUSE may live beyond the Academy due to clear relationships with professions and professional practice as well due to relationships and partnerships, including funding opportunities, in emergency and disaster relief situations and warfare.

MUSE is an independent or embedded entity and can exist in a singular or in a triad form. It is a linked, transversal, interconnected, distributed network of various scales and typologies.

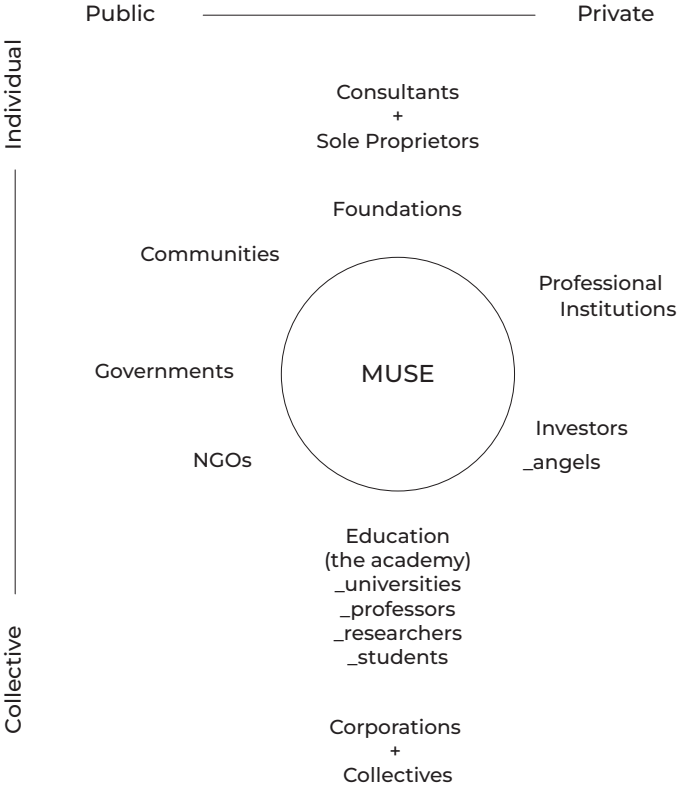


Fig. 2 – Primary constituencies of MUSE, designed by author and produced by Claudia Mastrantoni, 2023

Concluding remarks

MUSE is really about preparation and exposure, and ultimately choice, to new ways of studying, working, and living... and being an active and contributing participant in the world. It synthesizes the current confluences in life and work of our times. It leverages and artic-

ulates our times, our context, our content. It balances or compensates for the ‘separateness’ and perhaps ‘aloofness’ of the academy, professions, and governments – in their worst-case scenarios, or remnants from their past that may simply be unconsciously continued into the present. It is about choice and opportunities, about being in the world and of the world. It merges the academy with the professions and with the local or global community. It is an educational program, and more... it is a system, a network.

MUSE is a network_ service_ system navigating various realms:

Local _ National _ International	(scope)
Small _ Medium _ Large	(scale)
Singular _ Multi(ple) _ Trans(versal)	(disciplinary)
Academic _ Professional _ Community	(based)

Design culture matters very much... and hence creating, nurturing, and developing a design culture and ‘variances’ of the design culture is critical. Especially for the designer, how one does things matters... let alone ‘what, when, why and where’ one does things... and hence structural inclusion of not-so-normal offerings like MUSE matters. If possible ‘undercurrents’ that may promote or affect mainstream design culture are present, or if we allow new variants to emerge and exist that add a palpable sense of diversity, experimentation, and ‘lightness’ that is sanctioned and supported by the university, then a strong and broad message is delivered to all members of the institution and the community. It is important that pathways to diverse and alternative things are present and available, and that diversity and inclusion becomes part of the culture. MUSE fundamentally, directly, and intimately merges design and culture in ways that matter; it calls for innovative and inventive institutions to become lighter, and more open and unconventional. MUSE counters heaviness and inertia.

I hope that this essay will promote at least some reflection on the relevance and opportunities of the normative, concentrated – and often isolated – campus. It would be beneficial if its concentrated, collective aspects were leveraged further... including significant multi- and trans- disciplinary educational experiences, and increased openness and diffusion of labs, shops, gyms, etc. And hence achieving an even broader sense of community, contribution

and collaboration, and robust integration of economies and fuller economies of scales.

The final distillation of all of this is effective, impactful, and inspiring education, learning, practice, and contributions. It is the role of the professor, and practitioner, to inspire and challenge the students and community, to impart and extend knowledge and learning as best as possible. This includes utilizing a variety of formats, vehicles, and processes. MUSE is dedicated to this search, this intention... and to the 'extraordinary' via provoking, stretching, and empowering all.

MUSE is not radical, nor even new... it may in fact return us to a form of direct education found in earlier common experiences like 'Le Voyage d'Orient' (or the grand tour) by Le Corbusier and others... or like meeting Plato under the olive tree, or better yet, in the agora.

***Extraordinary class projects are worth their weight in gold.** Those projects that, for years after they are done, students discussed, and teachers imitate are essential to successful design education.*

First, challenge the student: a project must offer sufficient variables and serendipity that students can test their skills and talents and, in the final analysis, surprise both the teacher and themselves.

Second, inform the student; A project must also provide enough unanswered questions that students are learning something new by doing something new.

Third, elevate the student: A project can propel students into opposing directions-either through success or failure.

Challenge, inform, and elevate are the building blocks of a solid education, and to achieve this mix requires a selfless devotion on the part of the teacher and an intense willingness to learn on the part of the student. A good, or great, class project can make the education experience real.

A good class project is combustible, it is the fuel that powers the creative engine; or put less metaphorically, it is the beginning, not the end, of an experience.

Design School Confidential, S. Heller and L. Talarico, 2009 (edits by author)

References

- Baudelaire, C. (2010), *The Painter of Modern Life*, Penguin Books, London.
- Benjamin, W. (1999), *The Arcades Project*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Berger, J. (1973), *Ways of Seeing*, British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books, London.

- Buckley, J.C. (2021), *Italy moves to halt overtourism before travel Restarts*, CNN. Available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/italy-uffizi-diffusilaunch-venues-tuscany-cdm/index.html> [Accessed 23 July 2021].
- Calvino, I. (2016), *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*, Penguin Books, London.
- Heller, S., and Talarico, L., eds (2009), *Design School Confidential: Extraordinary Class Projects from International Design Schools*, Rockport Publishers Inc, Beverly, Massachusetts.
- IDEO (2003), *IDEO Method Cards*, William Stout Architectural Books, San Francisco, CA.
- Madoff, S.H., edited by (2009), *Art School: Propositions for the 21st Century*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Le Corbusier (1982), *Towards a New Architecture*, Praeger Publishers, New York.
- Le Corbusier (1987), *Journey to the East (Le Voyage d'Orient)*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Lynch, K. (1960), *The Image of the City*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Norberg-Schulz, C. (1980), *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*, Rizzoli, Milan.
- Polisocial (2022), *OFF CAMPUS*, available at: www.polisocial.polimi.it/en/off-campus-3/ [Accessed 22 december 2021].
- Povoledo, E. (2021), *Out of Storage and Onto Walls, the Uffizi Spreads Its Brand*, The New York Times. Available at: www.nytimes.com/2021/08/19/arts/design/uffizi-diffusi.html [Accessed 19 august 2021].
- Rasmussen, S.E. (1964), *Experiencing Architecture*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Shedroff, N. (2001), *Experience Design 1*, New Riders Pub., Indianapolis.

We live in an uncertain, changing, hard-to-focus era in which traditional design approaches and methods can no longer respond to today's challenges that surface in varying degrees and intensity. Moreover, we are developing a different perception of 'materiality' and the mediums employed. Hence in this 'liquid' and blurry landscape, the question emerges: What is the importance of understanding the value of design culture, more precisely, the "matters" through which this culture is manifested and expressed today? Moreover, how design culture aligns with the changed reality by responding "creatively" to today's emergencies?

The volume investigates a wide sphere of issues referring to an extended concept of "matter" – the word matter intended not only as materials as such but also of content and relationships – through design actions, approaches, processes, tools and methodologies employed in different areas and with different objectives, yet united by the desire to intercept the current shift, sometimes reinventing and sometimes evolving programmatically over time to embrace the changed framework.

The matter is thus interpreted in its range of potential declinations, bouncing from concept to object, material to immaterial, process to solution, and traditionally defined medium to a dynamic virtual tool.

This collection of essays is dedicated to all those who wish to explore the value and "matter" of design culture between past inheritance, present time and foreseeable future mutations through the deepening and inspiration of new and alternative tools, approaches and design methods.