



Research Alert
on Mediterranean
Urban Spaces
and Cultural Heritage



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PAD

via Festa del Perdono 1 – 20122 Milano – Italy
via Roma 171 – 90133 Palermo – Italy
info@padjournal.net – editors@padjournal.net

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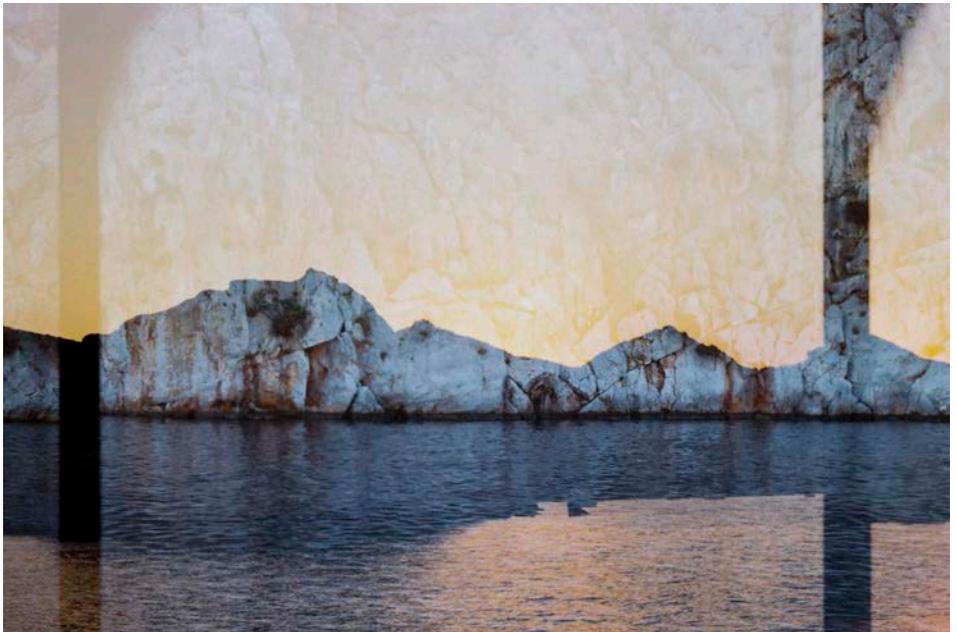
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Research Alert on Mediterranean Urban Spaces and Cultural Heritage

Marinella Ferrara & Chiara Lecce, Design Department, Politecnico di Milano,
Italy



005

Pages on Arts & Design Journal keeps on its intention to stimulate, through its call, original research topics developing around the countries of the Mediterranean area.

While the articles of the previous issue #14 examine prior topics such as Design and Circular Economy Model, Design for the Valorisation of the Mediterranean UNESCO Sites and Mediterranean Design History episodes, the present issue #15 comes back to mayor problems and potentiality of Mediterranean countries. It pays attention to sustainable development of the Mediterranean Urban Space and Cultural Heritage, giving voice to several authors from the Egyptian Academy, but not only.

Therefore, these two last issues configure together a set of design discourses and practices that describe a direction towards what we now call “Social Design”. By this expression, we mean a reflective, and creative practice able to face the situations of uncertainty, the challenges of social innovation, the awareness, and their sustainable and durable development. The papers presented address the daily vulnerability of citizens and environments, challenging problems concerning welfare, and public services with a social impact, with the aim of re-configuring social and environmental politics.

The first section of #15 proposes a deeper insight into the mechanisms of complex urban realities. It opens with the article “Design intervention: Understanding Cairo Informal Areas” by Jomana Attia and Alaa El Anssary. The essay addresses the problems of the unemployment of inhabitants of

Cairo's informal areas. Authors' aim is to help the numerous NGOs active in Cairo to understand better this reality and establish more sustainable projects, serving informal area inhabitants through design interventions.

“Industrial waste management in Egypt: a sustainable design system” by Nariman Lotfi concerns the whole Egyptian industrial waste cycle. The study hypothesizes that by applying design-thinking strategies, designers can establish a link between large industrial companies in Egypt and small workshops, thereby creating a sustainable waste management cycle. The essay reports information from all those involved in the production process (from engineers to craftsmen, company managers, and final users) adding the practical example of the glass production chain which findings showed the importance of the designer's role in addressing design and product quality to a sustainable production process.

The third contribution of this section, “Kaleidoscopic presence: a study of presence, listening, and movement in Lisbon” by Camila Soares de Barros is about the relationship of the need of body expression and a particular context.

The essay, in line with a perspective of pragmatic aesthetics, reports the birth of a creative practice: a site-specific dance performance, called BICHO, created “*in, about, and with*” the Lisbon neighbourhood of *Beco do Jasmim*. The article illustrates the creative and investigative process of this dance, which strictly links the human body (and all its senses) to a specific space and its residents, defined by the author as a “kaleidoscopic presence”.

The second section of this number collects three articles gathering each other around cultural heritage topics, even if with distant perspective.

The first article brings us back to Egypt. “From Moving Image to Still Image: Feature Films as Reference for Preserving Architectural Heritage” is an original paper proposed by Ahmed Wahby and Nora Kahil, that investigates Egypt’s Belle Époque (the 1930s and 1960s), and the vision that Khedive Isma’il Pasha (19th and 20th century) had for developing Egypt. The thesis supported by the authors is based on their conviction that visual media can effectively aid in both documenting and referencing cultural heritage. In particular, cinema movie’s scenes could contain layers of visual information, enhancing the knowledge of the past and present, and ultimately, the future. Therefore, this study aspires to promote the extraction of historical material, principally with the intent to revisit and contemplate the vanishing Belle Époque historical architectures in the cities of Cairo and Alexandria in Egypt.

“Augmented Reality and Mixed Reality for cultural heritage. New tools for the enhancement of Mediterranean sites and stories through empathic and emotional experiences” is the paper presented by Carla Langella, which explores the research project titled “CHEESE” (Cultural Heritage Emotional Experience See-through Eyewear). The research, attended by an interdisciplinary team, intends to investigate challenges and opportunities of new technologies like Augmented Reality and Mixed Reality transferred to the field of Mediterranean cultural heritage. The role of design is at the centre of the

essay, thanks to its capacity to investigate users needs, attitudes, and expressive languages in a hunter-gatherer perspective. Just as, concerning museography, the design is central to control both material and immaterial factors of innovation, in order to define dense and rich exhibition experiences.

The last paper undertakes the critical subject regarding people limited knowledge of the Islamic art, which creates – according to the authors – a superficial and limited understanding of the “Islamic” specification in an object or design. “Critical Design Approach to Understand the Current Public’s Perception of Islamic Art and Design” by Andreas Sicklinger, Alaa Baligh and Sherin Helmy reports a one-year research project investigating the public’s perception of Islamic Art, applying Critical Design strategies for the analysis framework.

PAD #15 ends with the images of “Post Disaster Rooftops Ep01 - Taranto 20149. Is this fading-city-on-the-Ionian-Sea cooler than Blade Runner?”, a curatorial exercise that uses the architecture of Taranto as a platform to investigate the marginal condition of the Mediterranean urban scenario. Post Disaster Rooftops is a collective performance that occupies unconventional urban spaces like roofs, used as a device to have a recognition of the collapsed buildings of the old city and its disturbing skyline of industrial plants.

We believe this issue – like the previous one and the following upcoming next year –, has the discrete merit to collect unedited and performing arts and design studies able to issue the Mediterranean heterogeneous habitat.

These stories represent just a few extracts of the enormous potential that Mediterranean areas can generate – avoiding commonplaces and undercutting attitudes – solving contingent problems with a look towards the future.

BIOGRAPHIES

Jomana G. Attia

Awarded a M.Sc. degree in Design from the German University of Cairo-Egypt. Attia has experience in Marketing, Marketing Consulting and Market research. She has worked with several NGOs and SMEs in the areas of participatory design, branding and communication. She is currently teaching in the Design Theory department at the GUC, while working on her Ph.D.

jomana.gamaleldin@guc.edu.eg

Alaa El Anssary

Awarded a PhD degree in Design from the university of Duisburg-Essen, Art and Design faculty - Folkwang Hochschule der Künste – Germany. El Anssary has been teaching at the department of Product Design since 2007 at the German University in Cairo GUC. With extensive professional and research experience in the field of product design he focuses on the process of designing as an interdisciplinary research including culture, human behavior and technology. Alaa El Anssary is the author of many papers, articles and he has published a book on the design process and innovation.

alaa.elanssary@guc.edu.eg

Sherin Helmy

Holder of a bachelor degree in Product Design from the Faculty of Applied Sciences and Arts, German University in Cairo. As well as currently working as a teaching assistant in the Design Theory department in the same Faculty. Interested in all fields of design and always trying to learn and evolve.

sherin.ali@guc.edu.eg

Peppe Frisino

MA Design for Visual Arts, Design and Arts Faculty (IUAV University, Venice) with a broad interest in artistic practices and do it yourself cultures with a glimpse to social design. His research focus on collaborative practices applied to crafts and social innovation, as well as creating spaces for collective experiences and art residencies.

gfrisino@gmail.com

Alaa Baligh

Holder of a bachelor degree in Product Design from the Faculty of Applied Sciences and Arts, German University in Cairo. As well as currently working as a teaching assistant in the Product design department in the same Faculty.

alaa.gamaleldin@guc.edu.eg

Nora Kahil

Was born and raised in Downtown Cairo, Egypt. She has a Masters degree in the field of Media Design and currently instructs Applied Arts and Sciences students at the German University in Cairo. Her passion for conserving her cultural heritage and her hometown, as well as her specialized field of work, continuously highlights the importance of preservation. Nora's Levantine origins appear to support her desire to revive the grandeur of the past. This topic finds precedence in her publications and the projects she undertakes. Nora is a passionate photographer who, more recently also took the stage as a TEDx speaker.

nora.jean@guc.edu.eg

Carla Langella

Architect, PhD, Assistant Professor of Industrial Design at Università degli Studi of Campania "Luigi Vanvitelli", Department of Architecture and Industrial Design (DADI), where she lectures "Product Design", "Bio-Innovation Design" and "Design for visualization of the Science". Since 2006 she has founded and coordinates the Hybrid Design Lab (www.hybriddesignlab.unicampania.it), a design laboratory dedicated to the mutual collaboration between design and science with particular attention to the human centred innovation. Her publications and research projects are related to the themes of biomimetic design, design of new materials and application of digital technologies in cultural heritage.

carla.langella@unicampania.it

Nariman Lotfi

Lotfi is an instructor at the German University in Cairo where she was awarded a Master's degree in Product Design in 2014 focusing on Design and Bionics. She has focused on research in the fields of Product design, Biomimicry, and Sustainability which she presented in workshops and talks including a TEDx talk at Zewail City University in 2017. She was awarded the Grand Prize by the Biomimicry Institute for an irrigation solution for Fayoum's agriculture in 2013. She is currently working on her PhD degree focused on 4D printing and the future of the industrial design scene in Egypt.

nariman.gamal@guc.edu.eg

Gabriella Mastrangelo

MA in Interior Design (Politecnico di Milano), she studied illustration at Central Saint Martins and worked at Cinimod Studio (interior and interaction design) in London. Her work is focused on creating spaces for relations, experiences and participation through urban installations and hands-on workshops. In 2011 she started "Make People Do Lab" a research project on crafts and participatory design practices, based in the Apulian region. In 2014 she joined Entropika, a multidisciplinary design lab based in Athens, operating at the intersection of art, architecture and technology. In 2016 she co-founded Bordo, an interior and visual design practice based in Taranto. Since January 2018 she is part of the Open Design School in Matera, Italy, designing urban infrastructures for public spaces for Matera European Capital of Culture 2019.

mastrangelogabriella@gmail.com

Plasticity Studio

Art and research project established in 2017 by Grazia Mappa e Gabriele Leo in an attempt to investigate the natural and political implications of western design culture. Our multimedia work finds itself at the intersection of contemporary art, and design sociological investigation.

Currently we live and work between Taranto and Milan.

plasticity-studio.tumblr.com

Andreas Sicklinger

Professor at the Faculty of Applied Sciences and Arts, German University in Cairo, Egypt.

andreas.sicklinger@guc.edu.eg

Camila Soares de Barros

Dance and movement artist and researcher interested in biopolitics, education, creative processes, and in art as power of life. Brazilian, Bachelor of Dance (UNICAMP- Brazil), Specialist in Técnica Klauss Vianna (PUC-SP, Brazil) and Master in Education (UNIFESP- Brazil). In 2017-2018 she integrated the international collective of artists "O Risco da Dança" at c.e.m - centro em movimento and presented her latest dance work BICHO in Festival Pedras'18, in Lisbon-PT. Back to Brazil since August 2018, she keeps investigating BICHO and its developments and potencies in different territories.

camilasoaresdebarros@gmail.com

Ahmed Wahby

Graduated in 1992 with a degree in Architecture from Ain Shams University, Cairo Egypt. In 2000 he obtained an MA degree in Islamic Art and Architecture from the American University in Cairo, AUC where he had worked as a research assistant for almost 4 years. In 2008 he was awarded his Ph. D degree in Islamic Art, Architecture and Archaeology from the Oriental Department of the Otto-Friedrich University, School of Human Sciences, Art and Culture, in Bamberg, Germany. Dr. Wahby has been teaching since 2008 at the German University in Cairo GUC, the Faculty of Applied Sciences and Arts in the Design Theory Department. He has also served as the Faculty's Vice Dean for 8 years. He has numerous publications in local and international journals.

ahmed.wahby@guc.edu.eg



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