



ULUSLARARASI SANAT – TASARIM KONFERANSI, PERFORMANS VE SERGİSİ

14 Nisan 2021

INTERNATIONAL ART- DESIGN CONFERENCE, PERFORMANCES & EXHIBITION

April 14, 2021



*Sanatın İyileştirici Gücü*  
**ULUSLARARASI SANAT - TASARIM  
KONFERANSI,  
PERFORMANS &  
SERGİSİ**  
**14 NİSAN 2021**

*The Healing Power of Art*  
**INTERNATIONAL  
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CONFERENCE,  
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**14 APRIL 2021  
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**PROCEEDING BOOK**

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“Sanatın İyileştirici Gücü” Teması Üzerine...

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*About the Theme “The Healing Power of Art”*

April 14, 2021

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# **DOKUZ EYLÜL UNIVERSITY BUCA FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

*INTERNATIONAL ART- DESIGN CONFERENCE, PERFORMANCES & EXHIBITION*

*About the Theme “The Healing Power of Art”*

April 14, 2021

## **PROCEEDING BOOK**

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## PRESENTATION

### About the Theme “The Healing Power of Art”

Since the cave paintings around 30,000 years old, man always used art to create magic and illusions. Those paintings of wild animals presumed as the rituals before hunting, which helps to stay alive and get nourished. During antiquity Greeks used every kind of artistic activity as catharsis meaning purification and clarification. In ancient Egypt public drama theatres and music performed to heal and comfort the public. Music, dance, special costumes, and body paintings like tattoos had been used for recovery and wellness by Shamans, and other believers in different tribes from all over the world like America, Africa, and Australia. Six thousand years of history about using art in recovery had begun from middle Asian Turkic tribes, transported to Middle East and Muslim world over Asia Minor to the Balkans. The hospitals of Seljuk and Ottoman Dynasties from middle ages with special sections for using the power of art in healing can be seen along the geography.

Human thinking and perception skills have brought many advantages and disadvantages. People collectively (ritual, dance, sound, image production, sense of belonging) and / or individually (psychological relaxation, getting away from the negative thoughts and feelings, concentrating on what they can achieve on their own) have found different ways to heal these difficulties by their personal efforts. In addition to individuals who are interested in art as a profession, who work and specialize in art, there are also people from different fields who prefer to relax by mixing and arranging colors, forms, brush strokes, gestures, movements, music notes, instruments, sounds, and letters. Different disciplines of art play an active role on a global and / or local scale as a recovering and reforming method to enable the society to move away from the dilemmas that the individual has fallen into, to breathe by giving a pause, to encourage the individual for transferring the negative to positive.

The one-day International Art, Design Conference and Exhibition explores the many ways creative mind deals with social, physical, and environmental recovery by using the visual language and materials of art and design.

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## **Mnemosphere Project. Power of Images**

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### **Abstract**

We are immersed in a society built on images, through which we try to communicate and leave our trace. Memory and remembrance seem to be recurrent thoughts of our time, able to penetrate our deepest and most ancient instincts and feelings. Visual culture is part of many different disciplines and fields with a creative and artistic approach to investigating. In this sense, Design contributes to enhancing this visual language and could help expand memory studies in seeking a relationship between imaginative horizons and the emotions they trigger.

Mnemosphere, through an interdisciplinary approach, investigates how the memory of places is designed and communicated through experiential spaces capable of stimulating emotions. The research proposes a dialogue between communication design and exhibit design in the atmospheric dimension; it approaches with a particular focus on emotions, chromatic perception, and the design of temporary spaces and services.

The research first considers the articulation of a common lexicon regarding the memory of places, atmospheres of spaces, and atlas of emotions, among others. Then, the project intends to investigate the themes that emerged by analysing their specific communicative and visual components by collecting data to analyse parameters and red threads to design spaces linked to memory and emotions. The result is a collective and participated visual archive, the Mnemosphere Atlas, in which emerges the power through which images can narrate personal and collective memories in the present moment. This is being done through an open call for images, spread online through the project's platforms.

The shared archive and the results will be available online to contribute to a different perspective on visual culture in the creative and design fields of knowledge.

<https://www.mnemosphere.polimi.it/>

**Keywords:** *visual culture; atlas; memory of places; emotions; exhibition; atmosphere.*

### **Premises**

Mnemosphere is a research project, still in progress, which started in the context of the second edition of the MiniFARB call for proposals for the funding of interdisciplinary research projects, promoted by the Department of Design, Politecnico di Milano, and involving PhD students and research fellows. Through this call, activities linked to the research strands defined by the Dipartimento di Eccellenza are promoted, encouraging intersection and synergy among the new actors of the Department. Furthermore, this activity aims to foster collaboration and the growth and recognition of researchers at the national and international level.

### **Introduction**

Considering "the memory of places" as an active and dynamic concept, not only rooted in the past, it is possible to expand its horizon until it enters into a design perspective that includes different disciplinary fields. Territory's heritage can thus dialogue with the tools of the present, being translated into new communicative and spatial solutions. From this perspective, exhibition displays have the inherent ability to bring back interests and issues that cut across historical and geographical contexts, questioning traditional frameworks and pointing to new ways of presenting them.

Given the intrinsic complexity of the memory/emotions/space dimension, Mnemosphere project is based on an analysis of "mnestic" activation systems and devices from a multidisciplinary viewpoint. The final scope is to

establish parameters and guidelines capable of responding to the need, embedded in the very nature of the memory of places, to reactivate itself in the contemporary world.

The research project comprises a multidisciplinary research team with different backgrounds, driven by a common goal of achieving multiple interpretations of the theme. Mnemosphere, therefore, bases its research approach on a synergistic collaboration between different disciplines. The driving force behind the research is the dialogue between communication design for the territory and exhibition design in the atmospheric dimension, with particular emphasis on the translation of content into a system for the design and understanding of the constructed mnestic space.

The transversal nature of the research is enriched with references to the study and analysis of emotions, chromatic perception, and the design of temporary spaces and services.

According to Walter Benjamin, memory is not a tool for exploring the past but rather a setting for it (2003, p.265). So the memory of places is the context in which the interdisciplinary actors of the research move, allowing for deepening the themes according to different perspectives and points of view. (Fig.1).

Colour is one of the fundamental elements in the design of the experience of space and memory. The chromatic aspect that characterises an environment can stimulate perceptual and emotional responses in individuals, affecting their behaviour (Kotler, 1973 in Yildirim, Akalinbaskaya and Hidayetoglu, 2007, p. 3233) and therefore their personal narrative. According to Birren (2006), colours have different emotional impacts and affect how people relate to space and memory, evoking individual and collective emotions. The research project proposes an original approach to studying colour and its relationship with memory and emotion in spatial contexts: environments where complex patterns interact with perceptions and behaviour (Tofle, Schwarz, Voon and Max Royae, 2004).

The study of colours allows the physical nature of memory to emerge, which is first and foremost the result of the senses and perception and is therefore emotionally charged. Emotions involve complex physiological processes “memory affects physical organs and engages our somatic being [...]. The objects that are architectonically set in place and revisited in the architectural mnemonic include ideas and feelings, which are thus understood as fundamentals of collective decor” (Bruno, 2009, p.22).

In this context, we add the spatial experience that finds its exploratory focus in the discipline of design of spaces and services whose transformation and manipulation depend not only on perception but also on the system of actions-interactions that occur in them. As a result, spatial design frequently encounters a redefinition of the parameters that allow for a better relationship and interaction between people, even improving the sense of the shared heritage of a place, meeting the relational nature of services. (Fassi, Galluzzo, Marlow, 2018).

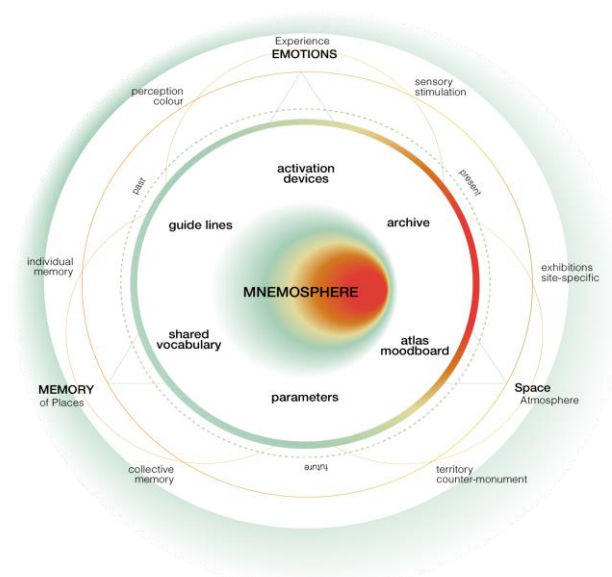


Figure 1: Mnemosphere theoretical framework, 2020.

### **Objectives and related activities**

As part of the interdisciplinary dialogue within Design, the Mnemosphere research investigates how the memory of places can be “awakened” through the atmospheric design of spaces.

The investigation has been divided into two intermediate objectives, which in a different and combined way, intend to investigate the research theme from both a theoretical and practical point of view, namely:

- To establish how the different disciplines involved in the research contribute in a specific and transversal way to the themes of the setting up of the memory of places, starting from the existing literature, together with moments of comparison with the scientific community of reference;
- Investigating the research theme through field activities, aimed at collecting data and elements useful for defining parameters; analysing, synthesising and critically interpreting the data and conducted experiences, thus defining guidelines to contribute to the knowledge of design in the axis of memory/emotions/spaces.

The Mnemosphere project is structured in three main phases of action and related specific activities of analysis and data collection:

- The first phase, defined as "Exploration", addresses the analysis of the specific state of the art for each disciplinary field, intending to reach a shared and unitary theoretical framework;
- The second phase, "Meta-Analysis", aims at collecting different kinds of data through field activities;
- The third phase, "Synthesis", aimed to determine a system of parameters, guidelines, and specific tools, with a subsequent synthesis and critical review of the results obtained.

At present, the project is still in the progress phase, specifically in the intermediate stage defined as "Meta-analysis", and has not yet reached the expected objectives and results.

Therefore, we will describe the preliminary steps that have allowed the progressive evolution of the project and the presentation of the research at its current state.

#### **Phase 1 - Exploration**

The intuitive understanding of a composite word, a *portmanteau*, seems to fade as soon as one tries to give it an exact and precise definition. Such a phenomenon occurs when we try to define the atmosphere of a space or the memory of places, which establish an emotional connection with the perceiver.

Therefore, the research seeks not to give a single definition to the concept "mnemosphere" but to draw on the intrinsic intangibility of its substance and the plurality of voices it contains. The initial step was to identify a semantic perimeter for the term and the constellation of concepts that the research encompasses. This preliminary consideration led to the need to place a theoretical framework that could structure the conceptual orientation of the study, together with a shared value system.

The research's first output and navigation tool was decided to adopt a vocabulary containing an articulated lexicon of reference. To do this, a questionnaire was set up within the research team, which could bring out the sensitivity and specificity of each individual member and act as a tool and means of "harmonising" personal views and perspectives.

The lexicon was drafted starting from the synthesis and shared interpretation of the answers collected and the extrapolation of the key concepts identified by each member. This restoring method was designed to take account of the semantic nuances that each term takes on various disciplinary fields.

The Mnemosphere dictionary has a specific value in the individual disciplinary fields and a choral value in the research context. It is used as a hermeneutic and navigational tool in the sphere of memory/emotions/spaces.

#### **Phase 2 - Meta-Analysis**

While the semantic value of terms defines the limits of language by analysing linguistic "symbols", syntax deals with the relationship between the individual compositional elements and their functions. The current phase of "Meta-analysis", after the first part of framing and defining intentions, focuses precisely on this aspect,

analysing the relationships and reactions between the individual components. This phase then focuses on the evaluation and implementation of the theoretical assumptions.

The importance of content visualisation is a fundamental aspect in defining guidelines and parameters for designing spaces that communicate and enhance the memory of places. The atmosphere of a space or an environment can visually evoke something already experienced in the peripheral of one's own experience, bringing the memory to the surface without being made explicit verbally.

The evocative power of images, defined as atmospheric, is essential because they can recreate the sense of context and place and the historical and cultural horizon that characterises them. Therefore, the definition of a graphic identity was necessary to support the subsequent development of the research.

### Visual Identity

The designed visual system aims to integrate the different thematic areas of research corresponding to the approaches of the group's members, focusing above all on their points of contact.

The system consists of coordinated and shared formal and chromatic elements. The formal aspect of the system was developed from circularity as an element with dynamic potential for representing abstract concepts such as memory and emotions and reference to the unifying element of the sphere, which alludes to the three-dimensionality of space.

The chromatic aspect of the system evolved from the differentiation of the five themes of research development, namely memory, emotion, colour, atmosphere, and space. A colour code and a specific shade were assigned to each of them: memory - beige; emotion - orange; colour - red; atmosphere - green; space - blue. The five primary shades have different brightness levels (high, medium and low) and saturation (medium and low), underlining the differences and complexity of the concepts represented.

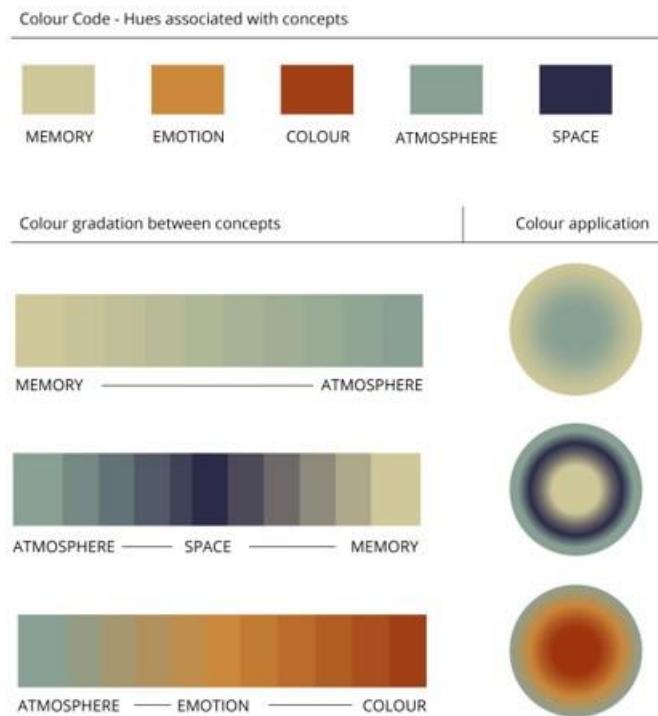


Fig.2: Mnemosphere Graphic Identity, 2020. Chromatic code and colours mixture.

The graphic identity manages to overcome conceptual singularities by visually identifying specific palettes for each interdisciplinary dialogue. The central axis memory/emotions/spaces is represented through the manifestation of the logo and the secondary connections through the mixtures of chromatic codes. (Fig.2). These colour codes will then be applied to stratify the concepts in the photographic images that will compose the moodboard of the research project.

### Moodboard as a design tool

The moodboard tool is an aggregate of evocative, visually stimulating images representing spatial aspects, qualities of movement, material properties, and aesthetic perspectives. This tool inspires creative thinking and guides discussions and reflections on abstract and concrete concepts, facilitating the transition and intimate relationship between the conceptual qualities and technical details of a project. The idea of mood is by definition, linked to the atmosphere of a space. It represents the mood of an environment, capable of involving and stimulating the person passing through it at that precise moment. Designing the mood of space also means stimulating the emotions, memories and recollections linked to places.

Given these premises, it seemed essential to start an activity of visual translation of the contents through this system to use the moodboard tool as an actual evocative device and design tool.

It was then decided to hybridise it with a social form of communication, opting for Instagram, considering the visual and connective vocation of the platform. By setting up this type of interface, the tones and moods that want to be spread and communicated to users are made more explicit, inspiring collective participation. The aesthetics of the contents (Baule, 2014) is understood as the collection of evocative elements of various natures aimed at the creation of an "emotional landscape", a virtual atlas composed of images, concepts and colours, aiming at a more "intimate" approach, intended to involve different users in research increasingly.

This type of digital communication is also an essential ongoing tool for collecting data and sharing the results obtained. It is precisely through these devices that research was able to launch open calls for images of the project, proposing the gathering of images and terms to enrich the mnemospheric vocabulary. The analysis of the images and vocabulary received, through a process of progressive symbolic abstraction, will make it possible to convert the data collected into parameters and valuable guidelines for communicating the specific values of the research.

### **Open Call for Images**

In line with all the above considerations, the aim was to organise a data collection activity that would compensate for the impossibility of organising presence workshops, but that could involve a broad international audience from different backgrounds. Moreover, the challenge was to use a tool, the open call, usually connected to the art world, and apply it to a design study to approach this issue with a different sensitivity. The decision to use the open call format came about precisely because, from the very start, the research enabled exploration of the topic through extensive textual input, such as the glossary, references, and open-ended responses. However, this mode of communication primarily was missing visual and imaginative supports.

The call remained open for three months, and here is the structure in detail.

#### **1. The questionnaire**

The first part consisted of general questions about the participant's identity, such as name, age, nationality, contacts and the acceptance of the privacy policy of the Politecnico di Milano. Then, the self-assessment questionnaire was structured according to a list of questions aimed at analysing the mnemosphere structure. The questions opened up the possibility of introducing other key concepts, describing various characteristics and indicating possible synonyms of the term. An exciting chance was to define the concept of mnemosphere through the use of contrary terms, which negated such an intangible and elusive topic. (Fig.3)

Other questions were structured through multiple choices, allowing selecting several items simultaneously within the same question. For example, participants were asked to define the mnemosphere in terms of size and movement, imagining what characteristics it might have, according to a personal perspective, (Fig.4) or indicating through multiple choice questions which types of artefacts best reflected their own mnemosphere. It was then possible to extract from the results that the mnemosphere can have different spatial dimensions and does not belong to a single spatial conformation. And then, closed-ended questions seek clear and precise answers on specific aspects of the research to investigate. (Fig.5).



- b. What words would you use to describe what a mnemosphere is NOT?

Type your answer here...

Shift + Enter to make a line break

Fig. 3: Inside the questionnaire. Describing mnemosphere through the use of contrary terms.

- d. How do you visualise it in terms of **movement**? \*

A active / participatory

B passive / contemplative

C hybrid

D Other

Fig. 4: Inside the questionnaire. Looking for mnemospheric features

- h. Do you think the mnemosphere is linked to a specific place?

Y Yes

N No

Fig. 5: Inside the questionnaire. Closed-ended questions.

## 2. Uploading images

The second part of the call was entirely dedicated to images.

The call asked participants to upload a maximum of 3 files, but there were no limits on format, style, or communicative language. Images could be photographs, illustrations, paintings, collages, and so on. This kind of expressions variety will be a significant added value for the research.

We also asked to insert a title to each image, a set of keywords, year/place of shooting, percentages of colours and senses involved, and an optional brief description to expand even more the mnemospheric horizon.

The call ended in March 2021, with over 200 participants worldwide. More than 400 images uploaded showed how the power of images is fundamental in conveying thoughts, experiences, emotions, personal and collective memories, and how they can revive different imaginaries emotional landscapes. (Fig.6).

To collect the results, it was decided to also develop a website (<https://www.mnemosphere.polimi.it/>) to set up an online exhibition of all the images. In this way, people can see all the other images, can be involved in the project and be inspired. Furthermore, the careful analysis of the submitted contributions will lead to the definition of the mnemospheric guidelines.



Fig. 6: Mnemosphere Open Call results, 2021.

### Mnemosphere Atlas

The examination will start by detecting some mnemospheric red threads running through the collected images: shared colours, recurring themes as nature, remembrance, architecture, blurred atmospheres or abstract approaches (Fig. 7). A preliminary subdivision of the images is illustrated below, denoting the different spatial and atmospheric conformations of the subjects and environments depicted. Finally, further readings and subcategories can be identified.

All these actions aim to create a collective definition of Mnemosphere and a participatory Mnemospheric Atlas. This type of visual configuration echoes the *Mnemosyne Bilderatlas*, i.e. Mnemosyne figurative atlas, conceived by Aby Warburg in the late 1920s, and consisting of a series of tables made up of photographic montages that are assembled according to different criteria.

In the Mnemosyne Atlas, as in the Mnemosphere project, the arrangement of images placed side by side in such a way as to weave several thematic threads around specific themes creates "fields of tension and provokes the viewer into an open interpretation process: the word to the image" (zum Bild das Wort)" (Iuav, 2012). The research will look for those founding *topoi*<sup>22</sup> of Mnemosphere to open up to new experimentations in the variety of the received images and their designed juxtaposition.

### Expected Results

"In atmosphere, personal memory and subjective experience come together with designed and regulated environments through sensory perception. The visual is thus one gateway into thinking about atmosphere, but it always solicits more-than-visual sensations as well as the affective and emotional charge that lingers within a scene" (Edensor, Sumartojo, 2015, p. 261)

A mnemospheric system of parameters, guidelines, and tools is the main expected outcome of the research, expressed in the Atlas mentioned above. It will allow future actions to give continuity to the study and its inclusion in the national and international panorama. In particular, it is expected that this system will be used in the design and academic contexts, linked to all the disciplines involved, but also in real contexts, connected to the enhancement of the memory of places and the setting up of exhibition spaces, such as creative cultural industries, foundations, museums and archives in the territory.

It is also planned the realization of an exhibition of the Mnemosphere atlas to show the results of the research and make them interact with the people and public space. The ultimate aim is to trigger around the

<sup>22</sup> The term *topos* derives from the Greek τόπος, topos, 'place' (plural τόποι, τόποι) and means common place. It can therefore be understood as a narrative scheme that can be indefinitely reused, to which a particular narrative motif is often linked.



interdisciplinary value of the theme, the involvement of experts and academics, to present this research as a further point of view on the culture of the project.



Fig. 7: Mnemosphere, preliminary subdivision of the images in atmospheric categories, 2021.

This preliminary phase will lead to the creation of an “ID card” (Fig. 8) for each image to show their relationship with the parameters set up at the beginning of the research: atmosphere, memory, space, emotion and colour.

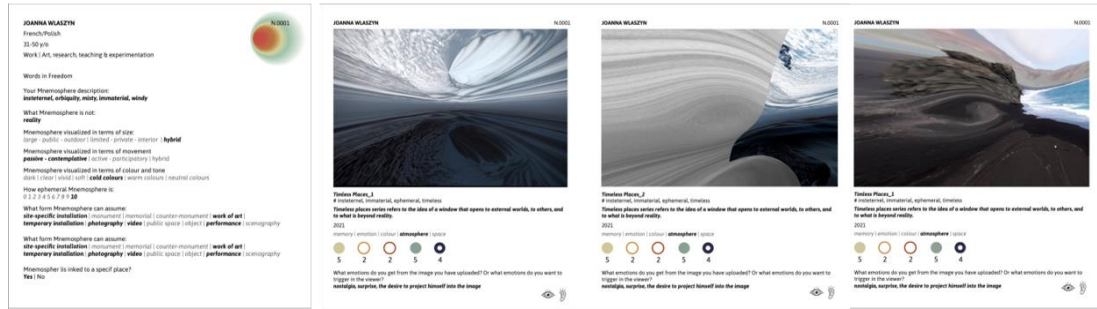


Fig. 8: Mnemosphere ID Cards, 2021.

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