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COMMUNICATION DESIGN APART



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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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aiap@aiap.it

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EDITORIAL

#19

Communication Design Apart

Marinella Ferrara & Francesco E. Guida

Politecnico di Milano



006

PAD dedicated the year 2020 entirely to women, their creativity and design action. The focus of issue 18, entitled “The Women’s Making”, was on the maker culture and its meanings. In this issue 19, the attention shifts to the field of Communication Design.

The intention is to continue investigating the design contributions and views, expressions and cultural and political positions of women. We believe that the present issue can contribute to the international debate and widen its boundaries.

The title of this second consecutive issue dedicated to women’s design intentionally quotes the text edited by M. Antonietta Trasforini, *Arte a parte* (2000). A collection of contributions that in its title wanted to highlight the marginality and omissions made against women artists in art history. This metaphor of the marginal place (“apart”) emphasises the “centre” partiality, that is to say of those who wrote history until now. This centrality of historical studies and its importance emerges in this issue of PAD, in which half of the essays have a historical approach.

“Historical Perspective and Women (Under) Representation” is the title of the first section. Starting from different perspectives, in terms of space and time, the four contributions investigate the theme of women’s presence in the histories of Communication Design.

The essays by Francesco E. Guida (“Beyond Professional Stereotypes. Women Pioneers in the Golden Age of Italian Graphic Design”) and M. Àngel Fortea (“From a Female De-

signer's Perspective. The First Female Professional Group of Graphic Designers in Catalonia") propose two readings on a local scale, the one of Italy and the one of Catalonia, each with specific connotations related to the contexts and in two different historical periods. Beyond the designers mentioned and described, the authors suggest research methods and criteria for rereading and rewriting the histories of design. In both cases, the aim is to recognise the work of generations of female graphic designers of the past, never or less mentioned in the previously written histories.

Letizia Bollini, in her essay entitled "Missing in Action. Women of Digital Design", underlines how problematic is the mapping of the presence of women in the field of digital technologies and design according to a historical perspective. The author analyses the research context and the lack of documentation and sources that often highlight not the absence of female protagonists, but rather the lack of their narrative. In particular, she intends to suggest a revision focused on the (under)representation of women as a symptom and need for a change of perspective in the writing of histories of such a recent area of design.

Finally, "I am Cobalt" is the title of the passionate portrait of Thérèse Moll by Cinzia Ferrara. She was a Swiss-born little known but by no means secondary figure in graphic design history, active for a short period post-WWII years. Despite her short life, which continues to create a halo of mystery, the impact of her work for MIT's Office of publications is notable propagating the style of Swiss graphic design.

The second section, entitled “Women in Action”, hosts four contributions that extend the discussion’s boundaries, from different perspectives but all linked to practice, research, and various kinds of activism.

In her humorous memoir-style case study (“My Adventures with *Adventures in Menstruating: A Case Study of Feminist Zinemaking and Period Positivity*”), Chella Quint introduces us to the rationale behind the *Adventures in Menstruating* zine project and its evolution over time. An excellent example of art activism expanded from a pure DIY level into a mainstream one.

Elisa Bertolotti with her contribution “Playing with Time and Limits. Experiencing Ursula Ferrara’s Animation Process” introduces us to one of the most excellent living female animators and her independent practice, built on the use of alternative and less-inhibited techniques.

In “The Role of Women in Technologies According to the Media. How Communication Design Can React”, the authors Valeria Bucchetti and Francesca Casnati contribute to the responses that Communication Design can give to fight gender inequalities. They present the work of the research group DCxCG (Communication Design for Gender Cultures) at the Politecnico di Milano in research and teaching. The aim is to discuss the relevant issue of the stereotyped and limiting representation of women in technologies to strengthen the young designers’ critical instrumentation and support reflections around new communication models.

To close the section, Anna Barbara presents “HERstory. A Women Design Project in UAE”, a design-driven experience, organised at the Dubai Women Museum, to promote the dialogue between different generations of women and female leaders in UAE. The research-action project aimed to encourage a different approach, considering female thinking and practice as an inclusive model.

The third and last section of this issue, named “Projects & Documents” gives space to two initiatives promoted by our publisher, Aiap, the Italian Association of Visual Communication Design. Two initiatives that have a common goal to achieve through different activities (an award and an exhibition): that is, through cultural actions, to feed the discussion and to inform the debate on communication design, on the role and the contribution of women, in the present and the past.

The first of those initiatives is AWDA, Aiap Women in Design Award, which Aiap has been promoting since 2012. A unique international award to investigate the languages, poetics and different approaches to communication design and explore the conditions in which women designers work. Exactly one year ago (November 2019) in Florence was celebrated the fourth edition with the Award Ceremony, and in the coming months, the organisers should launch the next edition. The award concept originated from a series of research initiatives promoted by Aiap and aimed to acknowledge and share the contributions of numerous women designers in the field of visual communication design who have contributed to, and continue to enhance, the discipline.

The second project presented in this final section (“PINK. Representations of Women and Women Graphic Designers”) also fits into the same route. It is an exhibition project carried out throughout 2020, in uncertain and changing conditions (due to the pandemic), with two objectives. On the one hand, to show women’s representations curated by graphic designers (both male and female) from the golden age of Italian design. On the other hand, to reflect on the women designers’ contribution in a certain period subject to significant changes. The project intended to question and argue on the role of history, sources and gender studies, on the presence of women designers in the profession in the post-WWII period and their absences in the great histories of design.

With this testimony, the closing and opening parts of issue 19 correctly connect each other. Historical research proposes itself as a versatile tool to interpret the past but above all as a basis for building the future and to better understand how and how much our society has changed. And how much still has to change, thanks and through the specific point of view of design and communication design.

There are still spaces for work, investigation, research, reflection, debate. The discussion is still necessary and indispensable. In particular on topics such as those proposed through this collection of contributions and project cases. A debate whose goal is to inform or, better, to feed knowledge.

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BIOGRAPHIES

Anna Barbara

Architect and Associate Professor in Interior and Spatial Design at Politecnico di Milano. She has been visiting professor at Tsinghua University, School of Art and Design, Beijing (China); Kookmin University, Seoul (South Korea); Hosei University, Tokyo (Japan) and many other international universities. She was Canon Foundation Fellow 2000 in Japan. Awarded by Premio Borromini, selected by Archmarathon and ADI-Index 2019. Sense/time_based design is her main topic developed in education, conferences, publications, curatorship and professional works.

Author of *Storie di Architettura attraverso i sensi* (Bruno Mondadori, 2000), *Invisible Architectures. Experiencing places through the senses of smell* (Skira, 2006) and *Sensi, tempo e architettura* (Postmedia Books, 2012), *Sensefulness, new paradigms for Spatial Design* (Postmedia Books, 2019) and many other publications.

In 2021 she will launch with POLIdesign the first international course in Olfactive Spatial Design.

anna.barbara@polimi.it

Elisa Bertolotti

Elisa Bertolotti works with storytelling, moving image and communication design. With a Ph.D and postdoc from Politecnico di Milano, Elisa is currently teaching design at the University of Madeira, Portugal.

She is also co-curator of the Atlantic Wonder research program, focusing on alternative methods for learning outdoors and developing new ways to foster innovation between design and the natural sciences.

elisa.bertolotti@staff.uma.pt

Letizia Bollini

PhD in Industrial Design and Multimedia Communication (Politecnico di Milano). Associate professor of Communication/Interaction/Transmedia Design at the Faculty of Design and Art, Free University of Bozen-Bolzano.

Research and design topics since 1995: interaction, experience, multimodal interface design, visual, social and spatial representation, with a strong focus on tech evolution, and accessibility in the field of Cultural and Intangible Heritage and Archives. Previously researcher at the Department of Psychology of the University of Milano-Bicocca (Theory and Technology of Communication; Psychosocial Science of Communication), professor at the Politecnico di Milano and faculty member of the HEC in User Experience Design, the University of Bologna (Internet Science) and the Milan State University (Digital Communication).

Coordinator of the Commission "Theoretical, historical and critical research and editorial projects" of the ADI Design Index, preselection of the Compasso d'Oro Award.

letizia.bollini@unibz.it

Valeria Bucchetti

She is Full Professor at the Design Department of Politecnico di Milano where she teaches "Visual Communication" in the Communication Design Degree and "Communication Design and Gender Culture" in the Design Master Degree (School of Design); she is Chair BSc + MSc Communication Design.

Her interest involves visual and gender identities in communication design field. She studies theoretical aspects of identity systems and their communication components and developed projects of basic and applied research. She is a member of the Ph.D Design board and of "Centro di Ricerca interuniversitario Culture di genere".

She won the "Compasso d'Oro" Design Award as co-author of the project for the multimedia catalogue of the Poldi Pezzoli Museum (Milan, 1995) and received Honourable Mention, Compasso d'Oro ADI (XXV), for the project "WeMi. La città per il welfare". She is author of several books: *La messa in scena del prodotto* (1999), *Packaging design* (2005), *Altre figure. Intorno alle figure di argomentazione* (2011), *Anticorpi comunicativi* (2012), *Un'interfaccia per il welfare* (2017), *Progetto e culture visive* (2018).

valeria.bucchetti@polimi.it

Francesca Casnati

PhD Candidate at the Design Department of Politecnico di Milano, she works in the research area involving communication design and stereotypes concerning social discriminations, specifically gender discriminations.

After the master degree in Communication Design, with a thesis about gender stereotypes in the communication field, she joined the research group DCxCG (Communication Design for Gender Cultures) contributing to projects on gender issues

and supporting the teaching activity on some courses at the School of Design – Politecnico di Milano – including the Communication Design and Gender Cultures course of the master degree.

francesca.casnati@polimi.it

Paola Ciandrini

Archivist and record manager by training and profession, member of the DAP Digital Archives Perspectives group of the Università di Macerata, curator of the Ibridamente.it project. Contract professor in Università di Macerata for Master FGCAD, contract professor in APD School of the Archivio di Stato of Milan. Research lines: records management system design, historical archives valorisation.

p.ciandrini@unimc.it

Cinzia Ferrara

Architect and Visual Designer, Cinzia Ferrara holds a PhD in Industrial Design: she is Assistant Professor in the Department of Architecture at the University of Palermo, where she performs a series of duties such as conducting research on Visual Communication Design and holding courses for both the BA in Industrial Design and the MA in Design & Culture of the Territory. She's also the course leader for a series of masters and workshops, and an organiser of cultural events, conferences and exhibitions. From 2015 to 2018, she has been National President of Aiap (the Italian Association for Visual Communication Design) after serving as Vice President from 2009 to 2015. In 2017, she was one of 100 designers selected to be World Design Ambassadors for the Italian Design Day.

She's author of books and essays published on national and international journals: she's also part of editorial committees, observatories and European projects. She lives and works in Sicily, which is a continent, rather than just an island.

cinzia.ferrara@unipa.it

Marinella Ferrara

PhD, associate professor of product design in the School of Design of the Politecnico di Milano. Since 2014 she has been the head of MADEC, the Research Centre of Material Design Culture in the Department of Design. Her researches are mainly focused on design-driven innovation, design for materials (advanced and smart materials), news technologies integration in product and interior design, Future Design Scenarios. With her research, she has made a significant contribution to methodologies of Design for Materials and historiographical work. Moreover, she deals other research topic like the design in Mediterranean countries, gender issues in design and Design History.

Co-founder of *PAD. Pages on Arts & Design* journal, since 2011 she has been the PAD editor in chief. Since 2015 to 2017 she has been a member of ADI's executive board, and currently coordinates the technical-scientific committee for long-life professional training of design professionals.

Since 2019 she has been a member of the executive committee of *AIS/Design. Storia e Ricerche* scientific journal.

Authors of more than 140 scientific publications, she is a member of scientific committees in international conferences, reviewer for international scientific journals, and research evaluator for academic research application in NL and PT.

marinella.ferrara@polimi.it

Maria Àngels Fortea

PhD in Design at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the Barcelona University (UB) and Degree on Advertising and Public Relations in the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB). She is titular professor of the Design Degree and Coordinator of the Master's Degree in Research and Design Experimentation of Design College of Barcelona.

In the research field, she is member of GREDITS (Design and Social Transformation Research Group). She has specialized on Historical and Historiographical Research of Design. Her research work is focused on Pop Art Design, and specifically on the development of graphical Pop Art in Catalonia and Spain as a result of her PhD thesis.

She is currently interested on research projects that seed to make visible the contribution of female graphic designers.

mangels.fortea@bau.cat

Francesco E. Guida

Assistant professor at Politecnico di Milano (Department of Design, School of Design, Bachelor in Communication Design), he is secretary of the BSc + MSc Communication Design Courses. PhD in Design and Technology for the Enhancement of Cultural Heritage, he has more than 25 years of experience as a graphic design consultant.

Board member of Aiap (the Italian Association for Visual Communication Design), actually he is coordinator of activities and researches for the Graphic Design Documentation Centre (Aiap CDPG). Since 2013 he is a member of the editorial committee of *AIS/Design. Storia e Ricerche* journal and since 2014 of *PAD. Pages on Arts & Design* journal.

Starting from 1997 his contributions on graphic design and visual communication are published in journals, books and conference proceedings.

His main research activities are in the fields of visual identities, speculative and experience design, and graphic design micro-histories.

francesco.guida@polimi.it

Chella Quint

She is a Brooklyn, US-born, Sheffield, UK-based designer, writer, performer, researcher and founder of the Period Positive movement. In between performing feminist sketch comedy and studying for an MA in Education, she coined the term 'period positive' to describe the zeitgeist of her zines, art and craftivism, and developed the concept into a well-known desing initiative and campaign to find long-term solutions to menstrual illiteracy. She launched the first annual Period Positive Week in May 2019.

She has recently joined Lab4Living's 100 Year Life and Future Home project at Sheffield Hallam University. Her doctoral research explores ways to navigate aging and lifecycle changes where embodied shame can be a barrier to agency in co-design. She co-hosts the annual Sheffield Zine Fest and her zines are held in a number of international zine libraries and collections. She performs and exhibits regularly at science, literary and comedy festivals.

chellaquint@gmail.com

TI SENTI POCO BENE? AIAP HA TUTTE LE SOLUZIONI PER TE. SCOPRILE.



Aiap CDPG, the *Graphic Design Documentation Centre*. Working to collect, catalogue, archive, enhance and promote any documents related to graphic design and visual communication. These documents (originals as well layouts of projects, books, posters, prints, catalogues, correspondence, photographs) help reconstruct the history of graphic design in Italy and support research and educational activities, as it is the CDGP's intention to make these documents widely available.



Aiap
via A. Ponchielli, 3, Milano
aiap.it
[@Aiap_ita](https://twitter.com/Aiap_ita)



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aiap.it
[@Aiap_ita](https://www.instagram.com/Aiap_ita)



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