A Companion to Contemporary Design since 1945
Edited by Anne Massey
A Companion to
Contemporary Design since 1945
WILEY BLACKWELL COMPANIONS TO ART HISTORY

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Edited by

Anne Massey
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Anne Massey is a Visiting Professor at Richmond, the American International University in London and specializes in design research, particularly the design of the interior. She worked in her father’s architectural practice, Harry Massey Associates, during the 1970s and 1980s and subsequently worked at a range of universities as Professor of Design and Culture, including the University of the Arts London. She studied for a BA (Hons) History of Modern Art and Design at Newcastle Polytechnic (now the University of Northumbria) and then a PhD on “The Independent Group: Towards a Definition.” She was the founding editor of the academic journal Interiors: Design/Architecture/Culture, now published by Taylor and Francis. Her books include Designing Liners: Interior Design Afloat (Routledge 2006); Interior Design Since 1900 (Thames and Hudson 2008), and Chair (Reaktion 2011). She co-edited Hotel Lobbies and Lounges (Routledge 2013); Biography, Identity and the Modern Interior (Ashgate 2013); Pop Art and Design (Bloomsbury 2017); and Design, History and Time (Bloomsbury 2019). Massey has also contributed to a range of academic journals, most recently the journal Architecture and Culture. The Independent Group and the history of the Institute of Contemporary Arts remains a major research interest and she regularly broadcasts, curates, and publishes on the subject. This includes The Independent Group: Modernism and Mass Culture in Britain, 1945–1959 (Manchester University Press 1996) and Out of the Ivory Tower: The Independent Group and Popular Culture (Manchester University Press 2013). She is currently writing the biography of Dorothy Morland, the first and only female Director of the ICA from 1952 to 1968 for Liverpool University Press.
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**Graeme Evans** is Professor of Culture and Creative Economy at the University of the Arts London and has held professorships in Design Cultures at Middlesex and Brunel Universities and the Chair in Culture & Urban Development at Maastricht University. He convenes the Regional Studies Association Mega Events Research Network (https://megaevents.org) and his forthcoming book *Mega Events: Placemaking, Regeneration and City-Region Development* will be published by Routledge in 2019. He has published widely on the design, planning, and impacts from Olympics, EXPOs, and cultural festivals, and advises cities and governments on event and culture-led regeneration.

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**Grace Lees-Maffei** is Professor of Design History in the School of Creative Arts at the University of Hertfordshire, where she leads the TVAD Research Group in its work on relationships between text, narrative, and image and directs the Professional Doctorate in Heritage. Grace’s publications include *Reading Graphic Design in Cultural Context* (Bloomsbury Academic 2018), *Designing Worlds: National Design Histories in an Age of Globalization* (Berghahn Books 2016), *Design at Home: Domestic Advice Books in Britain and the USA since 1945* (Routledge 2013), *Iconic Designs: 50 Stories about 50 Things* (Bloomsbury Academic 2013), *Made in Italy: Rethinking a Century of Italian Design* (Bloomsbury Academic 2013), *Writing Design: Words and Objects* (Berg 2012), and *The Design History Reader* (Berg 2010).
Gregory Marinic, PhD, is an architectural theorist, scholar, educator, and practitioner whose research and practice are focused on the intersection of architecture, interiority, obsolescence, adaptive reuse, and geography. His New York-based multidisciplinary design practice, Arquipelago, has received awards from the Seoul Metropolitan Government, American Institute of Architects, and the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture; Arquipelago has also exhibited in the AIA Center for Architecture in New York, the Estonian Architecture Museum in Tallinn, the Seoul Dongdaemun Design Plaza, the TSMD Architecture Center in Ankara, and the National Building Museum in Washington, DC. His critical essays have been published in AD Journal, the Journal of Architectural Education, Design Issues, the Journal of Interior Design, AIA Forward Journal, the International Journal of Architectural Research, and the Int|AR Journal of Interventions and Adaptive Reuse. Dr. Marinic is an Associate Professor at the University of Kentucky College of Design and Director of Graduate Studies in the School of Interiors. He previously served as founding director of the Interior Architecture program at the University of Houston College of Architecture and Design.

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John Potvin is Professor of Art History at Concordia University, Montreal. He is the author of Material and Visual Cultures Beyond Male Bonding (2008), Giorgio Armani: Empire of the Senses (2013), and, more recently, Bachelors of a Different Sort: Queer Aesthetics, Material Culture and the Modern Interior in Britain (2014), winner of the Historians of British Art Book Prize. In spring 2016 he was awarded a four-year Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada grant to explore “Sexuality, Masculinity and Shame in Interior Design: From Professionalization to Queer Theory, 1869–2015.”

Malcolm Quinn is Professor of Cultural and Political History, UAL, and Honorary Senior Research Associate, UCL Faculty of Laws, Bentham Project. Since the publication of The Swastika, Constructing the Symbol (Routledge 1994) his research has engaged with questions of design, aesthetics, and state power. He has written about public taste and state-funded art and design education for the journals History of European Ideas, International Journal of Art and Design Education, Journal of Visual Arts Practice, and Revue d'études Benthamiennes. He is the General Editor of The Persistence of Taste: Art, Museums and Everyday Life After Bourdieu (Routledge 2018).

Damon Taylor is a design theorist and practitioner who writes on the relationship between the made environment and the politics of action. He is currently Senior Lecturer in Design at the University of Brighton, where he teaches product design, design and craft history and theory, (un)sustainable design, socially useful design, and design systemics.

Mark Taylor is Professor of Architecture at Swinburne University, Australia. His primary research focus is the history and theory of the modern architectural interior with an emphasis on cultural and social issues. Mark has authored and edited several books including *Interior Design and Architecture: Critical and Primary Sources* (Bloomsbury 2013) and co-edited *Designs on Home: The Modern French Interior and Mass Media* (Bloomsbury 2015) and *Flow: Interiors, Landscapes and Architecture in the Era of Liquid Modernity* (Bloomsbury 2018).

Sarah Teasley is Reader in Design History and Theory and Head of Programme for History of Design at the Royal College of Art. She specializes in the history of design, technology, and society in modern and contemporary Japan, with particular expertise in furniture and industrial design, design education, manufacturing communities, industrial policy, and knowledge networks. An attention to materials and artifacts and human interactions with them underlies her research, as does a commitment to interdisciplinary work between history, STS, and design research. Publications include *Global Design History* (Routledge, 2011) and “Design and society in modern Japan,” a special issue of the *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* (2017).

Lois Weinthal is Chair of the School of Interior Design at Ryerson University, Toronto. Her research and practice investigates the relationships among architecture, interiors, clothing, and objects, resulting in works that take on an experimental nature. She is the editor of *Toward a New Interior: An Anthology of Interior Design Theory* (2011) and co-editor of *After Taste: Expanded Practice in Interior Design* (2012), with Kent Kleinman and Joanna Merwood-Salisbury, both published by Princeton Architectural Press. She is a recipient of grants from the Graham Foundation, Fulbright, and DAAD. She studied architecture at Cranbrook Academy of Art and Rhode Island School of Design.
Thanks to Jayne Fargnoli, the commissioning editor at Wiley, who worked closely with me on the original proposal for this edited collection. Gratitude also to Dana Arnold, the series editor, for all her help and support throughout the process. Clare Barry was the editorial assistant in the early stages of the book, and my thanks to her for detailed and accurate work. Special thanks are due to the contributing authors, who produced innovative and inciteful essays to bring the field of contemporary design history to life. This has been a major undertaking, spanning more than three years. I trust it will give a flavor of the excitement and variance that characterizes thinking and writing about design.

Anne Massey
London, July 2018
Series Editor’s Preface

Wiley Blackwell Companions to Art History is a series of edited collections designed to cover the discipline of art history in all its complexities. Each volume is edited by specialists who lead a team of essayists, representing the best of leading scholarship, in mapping the state of research within the subfield under review, as well as pointing toward future trends in research.

This Companion to Contemporary Design since 1945 aims to consider the history and theory of design in relation to contemporary practice. In this way we comprehend design as both something a professional designer produces and how it is recognized by its users and consumers. The essays present a challenging account of the boundaries that have come into being between design history and its cognate disciplines, especially art history.

Each of the five sections of the volume provides a multilayered, interdisciplinary re-evaluation of design. The opening three sections address the concepts of “Time,” “Place,” and “Space,” while the final two on “Object” and “Audiences” offer a more nuanced examination of the various ways that we encounter design in terms of the objects themselves and as viewers, users, and consumers.

Together, these essays combine to provide a new and thought-provoking revision of our conception and understanding of contemporary design that will be essential reading for students, researchers, and teachers working in design history, theory, and practice, and in related fields.

A Companion to Contemporary Design since 1945 signals an important rapprochement between art history and design history and is a very welcome addition to the series.

Dana Arnold,
2018
Introduction
Anne Massey

As you read this text, either in book form or by means of a computer screen or hand-held device, you are interacting with design. The font and layout of these words is designed; the physicality of the book or the screen has been designed for ease of interaction; the chair you sit on or the bed you lie on or the means of transport you are sitting on have all been designed by someone for someone – in this case, for you. Design is a big subject and comprises spaces, objects, and technologies from a recent urban development to the microchip, with interiors, fashion, craft, graphics, and the digital lying in between.

The purpose of this volume is to provide a critical overview of a broad range of design disciplines, to stimulate interdisciplinary debate and consider undiscovered convergences and synergies. A Companion to Contemporary Design since 1945 is part of the Wiley Blackwell Companions to Art History series, and was initially inspired by Amelia Jones’s edited collection A Companion to Contemporary Art since 1945 (Jones 2006) and mirrors its approach. Like Jones, I studied the history of modern art and design within an art school context at Newcastle Polytechnic (now the University of Northumbria) and we even participated in practice as part of the degree course, one of the first in the world to have “design history” in its title. I then went on to study for a PhD on the Independent Group at the same place, and this breadth of approach, which covers architecture, art, design, film, and popular culture in tandem with contemporary practice, has stayed with me over the past 30 plus years (Massey 2013). As Jones explains: “This book accepts the challenge of exploring the
complexities both of contemporary art as a now ‘historical’ phenomenon (as the years between ‘now’ and 1945 expand in number) and of contemporary art as potentially the cutting edge of what people calling themselves artists (or understood by others as such) are making and doing in this increasingly complex and globalized economy of cultural practices” (Jones 2006, p. 3). This collection aims to consider the history of design since 1945 in relation to the design of now across and between design’s disciplinary boundaries. The added dimension for this book is the multifarious nature of design, which can be defined as something a professional designer produces but, in addition, what society at large may understand to be design, that is, an amateur practice or a co-design for example. The punk rocker garb discussed and illustrated in Chapter 14 is an example of street style, of design by and for the wearer.

Critical thinking about the complex area of design has emerged since 1945 under a series of banners, most predominantly design history, design methods, design studies, and, more recently, design thinking. These latter approaches try to pin down and logically explain this complex subject, even producing hermetically sealed models for the professional practice of the design process. This particular tendency of design theory emerged under the grouping of design methods. As Penny Sparke explained: “One of the earliest manifestations of design scholarship – which was loosely described as ‘design methods’ – emerged in the 1960s as part of a general desire to systematize hitherto un-systematized processes. Growing out of the anthropomorphic and ergonomic work of the wartime and immediate post-war years, and linked to the growing interest in cybernetics, attempts were made to minimize both the artistic and commercial definitions of design that had hitherto been emphasized by many design professionals, influenced by earlier developments in the USA, and to see it, rather, as a discipline rooted in a rigorous and rational ‘scientific’ process” (Sparke and Fisher 2016, p. 3). As an Independent Group stalwart, Reyner Banham argued at the time, when discussing the development of software and invisible technology and the redundancy of scientific approaches to design, that “The significant and memorable products of the present time nearly all contain elements of surprise, of variability, of exploitable imperfection” (Banham 1969, p. 11). And it is these surprises, variabilities, and imperfections which the book focuses on rather than assuming a more didactic and absolutist approach. Banham and his Independent Group colleagues understood the importance of ephemerality in the design process and for design criticism. He described the role of the design critic as:

He [sic] must project the future dreams and desires of people as one who speaks from within their ranks. It is only thus that he can participate in the extraordinary adventure of mass-production, which counters the old aristocratic defeatist 19th-century slogan, “Few but roses,” and its implied corollary, “Multitude are weeds,” with a new slogan that cuts across all academic categories: “Many, because orchids.” (Banham 1981, p. 93)
Although we now would seriously question ephemerality from the point of view of sustainability, one of contemporary design’s biggest challenges, the need to understand design beyond didactic theory, is vital.

An important crucible for understanding design in the 1980s was the journal BLOCK. Writing in the Introduction to the “Design History” section of The Block Reader in Visual Culture the editors echoed Banham’s horticultural analogy when discussing the early days of this significant cultural journal: “There was a thrill in refocusing the ‘art historical’ eye to take in that undergrowth of visual culture. Design history was an opportunity to explore the productive frisson of botanising the apparently mundane object – to investigate the minutiae which, from the lofty vantages of art history, appeared as an unauthored blur” (Bird et al. 1996, p. 132). This approach has reverberated through a critical understanding of design right into the twenty-first century. The frisson of studying popular taste in an academic environment pervades, with researchers unproblematically exploring “kitsch” and denigrating and disrespecting mass taste (Massey 2000, pp. 1–19). The chapters in this volume take a generous and empathetic view of design and of popular taste, offering a thoughtful and sensitive approach to the panoply of design.

Design theory has been enriched over recent years by new work in the fields of fashion, graphics, and interiors. While Penny Sparke has provided an excellent overview of general design journals (Sparke and Fisher 2016, pp. 3–4), it is also important to take new journals in the subdisciplines of design into account, notably Fashion Theory: the Journal of Dress, Body & Culture launched in 1997; Communication Design: Interdisciplinary and Graphic Design Research in 2009; and Interiors: Design/Architecture/Culture in 2010. This development has enhanced the richness of reflecting and writing about design. An amalgamation of these different approaches, which gives an overview of the excitement and energy surrounding the discussion of writing and thinking about design at present, constitutes this volume. Grouped around five key themes, the collection brings together leading authors in the field, and provides an overview of current, critical writing on the subject. The five themes are “Time”; “Place”; “Space”; “Object”; and “Audiences.” The book therefore progresses from the general to the particular, charting the different dimensions within which contemporary design can be understood.

The first theme of “Time” is crucial to any understanding of design now. In the digital age our perceptions of time have transcended the rigid formulations of analog time, and entered an era when time is layered, the past extends into the present, and the future into the past. The section begins by thinking about how we historicize the present, with the chapter by Sarah Teasley which details the contribution that contemporary design history can make. She takes as a case study her own experience of working in the field of graphic design in Japan in the 1990s. This is followed by a chapter by Elizabeth Guffey, which examines current views of the past in terms of “nostalgia.” This chapter examines the concept of “new nostalgia” in the contemporary world, and explores the
relationship between contemporary design history and the past. We then turn our attention to thinking about the future, a key area of work for contemporary designers and theorists. Can we predict the future? In a subtle and complex chapter, Damon Taylor maps out the different approaches to future gazing and establishes the seeming impossibility of such a task.

The next section, “Place,” pinpoints an important navigational point for design, that is, where it is produced and consumed in the postcolonial present. Yuko Kikuchi argues for the importance of East Asian design history in her chapter “Transnationalism for Design History: Knowledge Production and Decolonization through East Asian Design History.” She argues for a de-centering of design history and the production of knowledge. Victoria Rovine then examines the contemporary significance and meaning of African fashion design for African fashion designers, and explores the ways in which they work with traditional emblems and traditions. The section finishes with Gregory Marinic’s consideration of “Urban Sights: From Outdoor Streets to Interior Spaces,” which takes us from the USA to Dubai and considers the shopping mall in relation to Fredric Jameson’s notion of interior hyperspaces.

The following section, “Space,” considers design within the context of spatial cultures. The section begins with Rina Arya’s investigation of “Virtual Space,” which considers the ubiquity of digital culture and contemporary perceptions of space and place. The perceived dichotomy between the real and the virtual is problematized. The focus then shifts to “Interior Atmosphere” in the chapter by Lois Weinthal, who explores the poetic dimensions of the ephemeral and transitory in the design process. Ben Highmore turns our attention to the creation of the postwar domestic interior, using the twin forces of modernity and tradition. He focuses on technology in the home and how this can be marshaled to link back to the past and forward to the future. The section concludes with Graeme Evans’s consideration of the design of contemporary mega-events. Looking at the design and planning of the huge sites for hosting international events, particularly the Olympic games, he considers the local and the global in the creation of these branded spaces.

The next section moves to a more finely grained examination of the “Object” of contemporary design in their various formats. Alexa Winton provides a useful overview of the field of object-oriented ontology using key examples and invites us to reconsider the significance of stuff in the study of contemporary design. Jonathan Bean explores the Consumed Object from the perspective of Consumer Culture Theory (CCT). He argues that there is scope for collaboration between the fields of CCT and design history to further develop our understanding of the consumption of design. A different facet of the consumer and contemporary design is explored by Kjetil Fallan. He sees contemporary design history as an important discipline for the education of designers but reaching out further in terms of society and culture in general. Fashion is often overlooked in the theorization of design practice and its history, often operating within its own realm. Christopher Breward takes “The Fashionable Object” as his subject and examines shifting meanings of fashion in relation to style and
taste. Grace Lees-Maffei then investigates “The Written Object: Design Journalism, Consumption, and Literature since 1945.” Although design is conventionally thought of as a visual or haptic activity, the written word has always been, and continues to be, important throughout the design process. Lees-Maffei argues that words are present from the client brief through to the design blog. The section concludes with a chapter that examines the neglected area of design and sexuality. John Potvin argues that the area of sexuality offers new and exciting avenues of enquiry, and turns our attention to the politics of gender neutrality in contemporary design.

The last section, “Audiences for Design,” takes us from objects to people. Jonathan Faiers takes “Luxury and Design: Another Time, Another Place” as his subject, detailing how luxury is consumed as an ahistorical entity through the device of film and television. Paul Atkinson turns his attention to the world of amateur design and the ways in which non-professional design interacts with design production in the digital age. This challenges the prevailing norm, where contemporary design history is regarded as the province of the professional designer only. Still on the subject of professional design, Mark Taylor and Natalie Haskell trace the trajectory of the history of the interior design profession in relation to the development of interior design education and research. This is followed by Vicky Gunn’s chapter on “Design Education in Higher Education,” which situates the training of designers within the art and design context, highlighting the dominance of an unsuitable fine art model. Paul Micklethwaite then takes the radical stance of considering “Design Against Consumerism” and the ways in which the contemporary practice of design can mitigate against the destruction of the planet. Arguing against a consumer-led model of design, he questions the viability of a sustainable consumption approach. The final chapter provides a rare overview of design in relation to social class. Malcolm Quinn argues that bourgeois discernment and taste created a cultural idealism that reinforced a liberal democracy, an idealism that can unravel when this shared taste is challenged.

References

Part I

Time