

making and unmaking the environment

University of Oslo
Oslo, Norway

Call for papers

Design and designers hold an ambiguous place in environmental discourse. They are alternatively being blamed for causing environmental problems, and hailed as possessing some of the competences that could help solving those problems. Despite this long-standing centrality of design to environmental discourse, and vice versa, these interrelations remain underexplored in design historical scholarship.

Confirmed keynote speakers:

Simon Sadler – University of California, Davis
Jennifer Gabrys – Goldsmiths, University of London
Peder Anker – New York University & University of Oslo

Half a century ago, Leo Marx coined the phrase 'the machine in the garden' to describe a trope he identified as a prominent feature of 19th and early 20th century American literature, in which the pastoral ideal is seen as disturbed by the invasion of modern technology. Marx subsequently shifted perspective from this fascination with 'the technological sublime' to a deep concern for the environmental ramifications of technological progress. The question of how we as society deal with the allegorical machine in the proverbial garden is more relevant than ever.

Design is both making and unmaking the environment. Conversely, it might be argued that the environment is both making and unmaking design. This conference seeks to explore how these processes unfold, across timescapes and landscapes, thus opening a new agenda for the field of design history. Design thinkers from John Ruskin and William Morris to Richard Buckminster Fuller and Victor Papanek and beyond have grappled with the intricate and paradoxical relations between the natural environment and the designed environment. From Ghandi's India to Castro's Cuba, design policy has been enmeshed in concerns for its environmental ramifications. From prehistoric stone implements to contemporary nanotechnology, design has been key to shaping our environment.

In the anthropocene, we can no longer talk about design (and) culture without also talking about design (and) nature. The conference theme is intended to stimulate new directions in design historical discourses that take seriously design's complex interrelations with nature and the environment. Not only does design feature prominently in the making and unmaking of the environment; studying the history of these processes will also help reveal how the idea of the environment itself has been articulated over time. Engaging with issues of environmental controversies and sustainable development can move design history beyond its conventional societal significance, and may thus enable more resilient futures.

Relevant topics include, but are not limited to:

- Design and consumption
- Repairing, fixing, mending
- Design in nature
- Design of nature
- Histories of sustainable design
- Histories of unsustainable design
- Environmentalist movements and design
- Design movements and the environment
- Durability and ephemerality
- Impacts of materials and manufacturing
- Imaging nature(s)
- Greenwashing & greenwashing
- Designs on the Anthropocene
- Politics and policies of sustainable design
- Design and alternative energy
- Designing doom and gloom
- Designing technofixes
- Appropriate technology
- Eco-modernism vs. green conservatism
- Eco-fiction/Eco-topias
- Deep ecology as design philosophy
- Traditional design for resilient futures
- Visual culture of the environmental crisis
- Waste and afterlives
- Silent springs and atomic winters
- Social sustainability
- Ecology and systems design
- Navigating spaceship earth
- Earthships and biodomes
- Biomimicry and generative design

Special anniversary strand: Making and Unmaking Design History

2017 marks the 40th anniversary of the first Design History Society Annual Conference, held in Brighton in 1977, as well as the 30th anniversary of the Journal of Design History. In celebration of this landmark, we invite proposals for papers addressing the historiography of design and the history of the discipline, with the aim to curate a special anniversary strand on the making and unmaking of design history.

We are inviting proposals for individual papers of 20 minutes, or proposals for thematically coherent panels of three papers. Panel proposals must include abstracts for all three papers in addition to a short description of the panel theme.

Deadline for submission of abstracts: 20 January 2017

Please submit your proposals in the form of anonymous MS Word documents to: dhs-2017@ifikk.uio.no

Convenor: Kjetil Fallan

Co-convenors: Ingrid Halland, Ida Kamilla Lie, Gabriele Oropallo, and Denise Hagströmer

7-9 September
2017

DESIGN
HISTORY
SOCIETY

UiO : Department of Philosophy, Classics, History of Art and Ideas
University of Oslo

Design History Society Annual Conference 2017