

Design for All



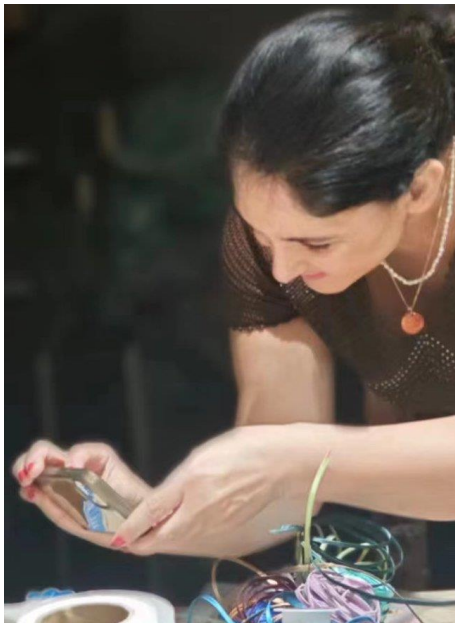
20:20 Celebrating Women Designing Design
Part IV: Limitless

Guest Editors: Dr Dolly Daou
Eija Salmi FRSA

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GUEST EDITOR(S) :



Dr Dolly Daou

Chair of the Academic Advisory Board, Cindrebay University, Dubai. Co-founder and Co-Chair of Food Think Tank, Cumulus Association. Co-convenor of Food Design Research Studio, Design Research Society

Dr Dolly Daou's academic and industry experience spans over 25 years, during which she has established higher education programs and led non-for-profit organisations in Australia, Asia, Europe and in the Middle East. Dr Daou is currently Chair of academic advisory board at Cindrebay University, Dubai, and, since 2018, has served as co-founder and co-chair of the Food Think Tank at Cumulus Association.

In recognition for her career trajectory, Dr Daou achieved the Kingston Community Award of Citizen of the Year (2024) And was the finalist for Kingston Community Award, Women of Year (2024). Dr Daou was also awarded Al-Safeer Congress Ambassador Award from the Ministry of Economy and Tourism in Dubai.

Combining her Doctorate in interior architecture and urbanism with expertise in food design and ecological management of resources, Dr Daou has become one of the global food design experts with distinctive trans-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary skills and knowledge. Dr Daou is author to many publications including: Unbounded on the Interior and Interiority (Cambridge scholars) and co-editor of The Transformative Nature of Food (Routledge, January 2026).

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5113-818X>

Google Scholar: Dr Dolly Daou.

Website: <https://dollydaou.org/>



Eija Salmi FRSA

Secretary General at Cumulus Association

A global citizen and advocate since 1990 for international education and research in art, design and media. Responsible to empower the next generation of youth by encouraging their alma maters to collaborate and play an impactful role to place the needs of the earth first and to create the right balance between people, planet and any profit.

Background in finance , art history and languages, jumped from finance to university internationalization. Happy to join as speaker, provocateur, participant to inspire and support . Eija has been leading the Secretariat General of Cumulus since 1990, and playing a key role in connecting design education and innovation. Cumulus secretariat is a hub, a centre of the network suggesting connections with satellite activity. Ready to navigate and carry responsibilities to process things in uncontrolled and unlimited situations and environments. To create credibility with thought leadership, able to

align and leverage as keys. Optimism and tomorrow are burned in her DNA.

Cumulus is a non-for-profit association, endorsed by UNESCO and the only leading global association of art and design education and research. Cumulus represents a dynamic ecosystem for internationalisation and global mobility, knowledge exchange, and collaboration since 1990 established by Aalto University in Helsinki with Royal College of Art in London. Today 395 members from 71 countries, reaching with partners over 2500,000 students, academics and staff, which demonstrates the importance of collaboration in a 21st century higher education landscape that is increasingly complex and global.

Bring the planet forward. Cumulus is the entry code.

Editors Note :

20:20 Celebrating Women Designing Design Part III & IV: Continuity and Limitless

Dr Dolly Daou

Eija Salmi FRSA

Continuity is a privilege. When we share and celebrate meaningful stories, we continue to grow. We learn from the diversity of perspectives that shape our vision and inspire limitless ventures.

It is a privilege to be invited for the fourth time as a Guest Editor at Design For All and to collaborate with Eija Salmi, Secretary General of Cumulus Association as co-editor. This connection began when Christian Guellerin introduced me to Design For All through his association with Eija Salmi. Now, this collaboration returns to its original point of contact to continue a meaningful collaboration.

As with every issue we thank Dr Sunil Bhatia for inviting us to be guest editors in celebration of significant milestones in Design For All's history: its 20th year anniversary and the publication of its 250th issue. To honour its 20th anniversary Design For All is dedicating 2025 to celebrate women designers. For 20 years, has demonstrated its continuity, global and diverse expression, receptivity, and limitless achievement by inviting guest editors for its monthly publications.

Continuing on from the success of the previous two issues, 20:20 Celebrating Women Designing Design Part I & II Receptivity and Expressions, we celebrate and share the special issues: 20:20 Celebrating Women Designing Design Part III & IV: Continuity & Limitless. One more time, through these issues we share the voices and achievements of 20 inspirational women. We thank each one for accepting our invitation to contribute and trusting us with their stories.

As with Part I & II, 20 women designers from diverse disciplines and cultural backgrounds were invited to write 1,000 words on a topic of their choice. Each issue features 10 authors, invited from a global network with a proven track record of impact on design. We look forward to recognising more designers, as we are sure there are many others across all genders, who also deserve recognition.

The authors were invited to choose their writing style and format. Both special issues contain a variety of academic articles, essays, reflective pieces, and interviews, all shaped by the authors' professional experiences and personal preferences. The issues offer an open platform for authors to share their perspectives, knowing that their voices will be respected, heard, and celebrated. Throughout the editing process, we made sure the authors' original voices were preserved in their cultural, and linguistic context.

The combined October and November issues feature articles by twenty authors from eighteen different countries across five continents, covering a wide range of design and architectural disciplines. This global representation demonstrates the diversity of perspective in design.

The journal issues are designed sequentially to celebrate different areas of design and demonstrates the diversity of stories from multi-cultural and multi-disciplinary backgrounds. The October issue Part III Continuity, celebrates women's achievements by sustaining their vision, overcoming challenges in leadership, pioneering new disciplines, exploring new cultures, and launching innovative ideas, products, services, methodologies, and business ventures. The November Issue, Part IV, Limitless examines the limitless creative power of women and their ability to envision and create a new world amid current challenges. These issues reflect the resilience and creative force of women worldwide. Both issues are connected across the globe and by the limitless power of design and the diversity of stories of humanity that led each woman to pave a creative path through persistence and dedication to purpose.

We invite you to read, understand and appreciate the voices of these twenty influential authors, who continue to inspire, motivate, and contribute to designing design, across disciplines and continents. The cover image selected symbolises the traces of each story told in these special issues, which similar to sand print, the stories shift and transform over time, leading to limitless and endless possibilities of new stories to emerge.

Thank you Design For All, for inviting us in celebrating your 20th anniversary and your 250th issue by honouring the achievements of twenty more women designing design. We also celebrate the achievements of every individual who is designing their own life trajectory, creating positive stories for humanity.

These special issues are already evolving into impactful projects to continue to narrate the limitless stories of humanity, with all genders involved.



Andrea Siodmok

Dean of the School of Design, RMIT

Andrea Siodmok is Dean of the School of Design, visiting Professor at Northumbria University and Governor for Glasgow School of Art. Chief Design Officer at the Design Council, she was part of a small team of design strategists that developed the ‘Double Diamond’ design methodology. An industrial designer by training, her regenerative practice spans technology, policy, economics, and futures.

Women Designing Design: Reflections on Practice, Methods, and Public Purpose

Andrea Siodmok

Abstract

From my early twenties design has been the lens through which I have explored complexity and human agency. This has led me to a career-long inquiry into how design can be applied in new contexts to cultivate an ethically grounded, systems-aware, inclusive design practice. This essay reflects on my design philosophy, career trajectory, key projects, advocacy, and leadership approach to designing the design discipline itself.

Over three decades, my practice has been defined by two simultaneous tracks, on the one hand a desire to demystify design and on the other, to expand its boundaries. Through this I have come to see design as a tool for understanding dynamic systems, improving human experience, and turning ideas into a practical reality – put simply, I define design as an act of ‘purposeful creativity’. Ultimately, for me, design is not just a process or output—it is a practice for imagining and enabling more equitable, evidence-informed, and resilient futures.

Keywords: *Design Futures, Policy Design, Strategic Design, Design Methods.*

Reflections on three decades of design

Reflecting on my work at the intersection of design and public-sector innovation, I am increasingly aware of how the discipline has been broadened by generations of practitioners—many of them unseen women—who have challenged conventional boundaries and introduced new ways of knowing. I have specifically mentioned some here, but many more have worked adjacently to my practice and have informed it greatly.

Fundamentally, my work has been guided by a design philosophy that integrates human experience into systemic change. This aligns closely with human-centred and participatory design approaches (Sanders & Stappers, 2014), as well as the broader emphasis in design studies on reflective practice (Schön, 1983) and action research (Lewin, 1944).

Early experiences, from my PhD training in industrial design and Masters in Public Policy to my leadership roles at the UK Design Council and Government, have instilled a rigorous understanding of research methods and processes. In parallel, as a design practitioner, I have sought to act as a field-builder, applying a designerly approach in new contexts from public services to government policy. These have been complementary epistemologies, applying rigorous research to ground practice-based reflection through over 200 projects across the private, public, and social sectors. As a result, I have developed a clear belief that design can bring clarity, creativity, and evidence to the systems of governance that shape our everyday lives.

Designing conscientiously

From my early training and teaching in industrial design, I advocated in *The Next Bauhaus: Redesigning Design Education* (Young, Blair and Cooper, 2001), that design must extend beyond objects and outputs to consider the systems, values, and societal impacts we shape. I argued for design to expand its focus from the 'design of details' to influence its wider context – to be more consequential in affecting both wider systems and in shaping the context itself (such as policy). In education and practice, I argued this meant cultivating designers who were more conscientious; who are materially adept, ethically grounded, systems-aware, and accountable for the consequences of their work. Over the next few decades, I was able to apply this theory across a range of projects that sought to design the systems and shape the context of design itself.

Defining Designing – forming 'best practice'

At the UK Design Council, as their first Chief Design Officer, I focused on promoting design to different audiences. The Design Council's design knowledge team, who I led, created a network of over 35 experts to build a 'living repository' of design knowledge. The knowledge strategy suggested a tripartite approach of theory (definitions), practice (examples) and process (tools and methods) to de-mystify design and share best practice. This work was underpinned by a taxonomy of design to ontologically situate tacit design knowledge into a set of frameworks and classes.

The *Double Diamond* design process further articulated the need to determine the 'context' of designing (Discover) before proceeding to

define the 'solution' (Deliver) as a divergent and convergent process. Women in these teams included Anna Humpherson, Richelle Harun, Sonja Dahl, Anna Richelle, Jennie Winhall, Ellie Runcie and Gill Wildman. Whilst the *Double Diamond* has become widely applied in design practice and education it was never designed for designers. It was intended to demystify design for non-designers. By removing some of the 'black box' mystery of design practice, in turn we were better able to advocate for the value of design with politicians, scientists, public servants and business.

Challenging Design - through Design Challenges

Working alongside Hilary Cottam, Jennie Winhall and Chris Vanstone in the RED unit at the Design Council in the mid 2000s provided a formative grounding in design for social innovation. Here I witnessed how design could act as a lever for systemic change. Women in these roles often navigate disciplinary intersections, bringing social insight, strategic thinking, and creativity to complex societal problems (Bason, 2014). My career has unfolded within this wider movement, which sees design as a mechanism for evidence-informed, participatory, and adaptive policy.

I continued this practice-based reflective approach, inspired by the work of Cottam et al, in other Design Council projects when I created the 'Design Challenges' team. I had long-viewed design as a means of interrogating complex, real-world conditions and revealing aspects of systems that traditional policy analysis can overlook. Understanding how people navigate public services, regulatory structures, and institutional constraints became essential to uncovering what truly functions—and what requires change. A key

insight from these projects was the notable lack of sophistication in design professionals to meet the standards of evidence necessary for government and the constant need to collapse design problems into neatly defined solutions. It was increasingly clear to me that designers and design practice would also need to change if collaboration on major policy issues was to be possible.

Grounding design - Bottom-up co-design practices in the field

From the Design Council I was appointed to lead a regional partnership called 'Designs of the Time' (Dott) a biennial civic program of design entrepreneurship, that had previously delivered ten social change projects under John Thackara's leadership in the North East of England. At the Design Council I commissioned a PhD by Lauren Tan to review the emerging methods of service design practitioners including the work of Deborah Szebeko at Think Public and others at Livework and Engine.

Inspired by the potential impact of this work when Dott concluded I become the first Chief Designer for service design and innovation in a local authority in the UK, to embed the legacy of the program within organisational design. Reflections on this informed *Design Transitions* (Jefferies, Yee & Tan, 2013), including my interest in shaping policy by the people affected by it. This was the time I first met Christian Bason, leader of MindLab in Denmark, during our appointment for the European Commission on their Design Leadership Board where we co-wrote the public sector recommendations in *Design For Growth and Prosperity* following which he invited me to contribute to *Design for Policy* (2014).

Redefining design – developing ‘next practice’ by expanding design into policy and public innovation.

These formative experiences helped prepare me to establish the UK Policy Lab, where I collaborated closely with colleagues such as Beatrice Andrews, Cat Drew, Lucy Kimbell and Camilla Buchanan. Together, we worked to introduce human-centred design, futures methods, data visualisation, and speculative design into policymaking.

At the core of this work was acknowledging and shaping power and influence. The idea of ‘situated knowledges’ (Haraway, 1988) has been especially influential. It reminds us that evidence is always contextual and that lived experience often reveals systemic insights that quantitative modelling alone cannot produce. This conviction underpins why ethnographic and qualitative methods remain central to my work. It also connects my practice to a wider history in which women designers have advanced relational, empathetic, and inclusive methodologies (Tonkinwise & Latimer, 2020).

In parallel, futures and strategic foresight have been important in expanding my understanding of design’s potential. Futures methods help organisations think beyond linear planning and attend to alternative trajectories (Mulgan, 2019). In the public sector—where uncertainty is inherent—considering multiple futures is not speculative indulgence, but a necessity.

Underpinning this, the Policy Lab research fellow, Lucy Kimbell introduced Dewey (1938) as a pragmatic approach to utilising abductive reasoning to generate design hypotheses in government policymaking (Kimbell, 2015). She also co-wrote the *Open-Policy-Making Toolkit* online, a compendium of methods for innovation in policy. These tools were captured in powerpoints and shared through workshops receiving over 100,000 views.

The Policy Lab delivered policy projects, but it also sought to democratise design and embed it as an organisational capability rather than a specialised function. I created numerous models and frameworks during my time as a Civil Servant. The most influential was probably *Government as a System which* describes the different powers of government, sometimes called levers, as a form of co-creative system stewardship.

Designing design - for human and planetary flourishing

My journey in policy, education, and leadership reflects a broader movement to ensure design contributes meaningfully to public and societal flourishing, grounded in empathy, ethics, and human connection.

My personal trajectory has consistently explored the intersection of innovation, technology and society. Whether examining public services, policy systems, or societal challenges, I have focused on understanding how people navigate systems and how lived experience can illuminate unseen power dynamics. This is a form of creative leadership that continues today, where I see design

leadership as a process of shaping the authorising environment to enable creativity, experimentation, and collaboration to flourish.

Underlying all of my work is a commitment to making design more inclusive, participatory, evidence-informed and future-focused. This is achieved by broadening what counts as evidence, embedding futures thinking, and integrating lived experience into decision-making, through which design can become a catalyst for democratic and adaptive governance (Cottam, 2018; Mulgan, 2019). Women designers have often led these efforts, reframing design as a tool for equity, resilience, and societal well-being. Reflecting on my career and the broader field, I see design as a discipline continuously redefined by women who have expanded its methods, epistemologies, and responsibilities. Whether through human-connected inquiry, systemic thinking, speculative design, or organisational leadership, my work demonstrates that design can shape not only outputs, but the very systems, institutions, and futures in which we live (Siodmok, 2020; Cooper, 2001).

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Ingrid van der Wacht

Factor-I. Founder, concepthor , communicathor, and connecthor

Since 2002, I have been immersed in the wondrous world of design, leaving behind a more commercial career to explore the immense potential of design for Good. I work as a freelance concepthor, communicathor, and connecthor within Eindhoven's vibrant design ecosystem — from Design Connection Eindhoven and the Municipality of Eindhoven to the Dutch Design Foundation and Dutch Design Week.

The local and European projects I have led or contributed to have addressed diverse challenges towards a more flourishing world that works for all — from applying design innovation in business, NGOs, and government, to co-designing with communities around healthy food systems, circular and bio-based building, and social regeneration.

My hope is that designers continue to set an example for everyone — as thoughtful, generous, and empathetic creators who work in freedom and with fair remuneration for a better world.

Contact details

ingrid@factor-i.nl

M ++ 31(0) 6 411 80 526

Instagram: ingridwacht

LinkedIn: Ingridvanderwacht

Design Moves People Forward

Ingrid van der Wacht

Abstract

Of course, design must have a purpose. It is part of our primeval skillset — a knowledge base that evolved alongside our brains. Since the beginning of humanity, we have designed our way through life: crafting tools to hunt and cook, creating shelter and symbols, shaping stories and systems to help us survive and make meaning.

Over time, this ability to design became our greatest power — and our greatest temptation. We designed for desire and mass consumption. We have become masters of reshaping the planet, engineering comfort and control at enormous cost. Entire ecosystems have been transformed; countless species, including our own communities, were and are pushed to the edge. Design has moved us forward — but often without asking *toward what and why?*

Keywords: *Global connection, Love, Design for Good, Nature*

No Design, No Shame

The No Design Manifesto – *design beyond shame*, initiated by *Mieke Gerritzen* and others and launched during Dutch Design Week 2025, envisions a future where designers are free to imagine without restraint. As Peter Lunenfeld writes within it:

“The future only exists in our imaginations, so any design ethics must include taking on the future as a client. As designers are those rare humans who can make their dreams manifest as images,

objects and systems they must hallucinate a world they actually want to live in.”

This call to creative courage resonates deeply with many leaders in the design field today — especially women who design not from scarcity or guilt, but from care, abundance, and the conviction that imagination itself is a form of resistance. Resistance against a world ruled by money and metrics, by the relentless logic of profit that erodes what is most precious: our connection to each other and to a flourishing world. It is through this act of imagining otherwise that design becomes not just a profession, but a movement working on a quiet revolution of care.

A New Ethics of Making

A new generation of young designers is rethinking what design is for. They are guided not only by creativity, but by ethics, empathy, and imagination. They ask: *What should we design? What should we refuse to design?*

Like the design of weapons that in a clean way kill people and destroy environment. Despite the violence, weapons spread, the weapon industry does not stop developing and designing new and more efficient arms. Whereas imitation arms are still sold as toys for little kids. This paradox inspired designer Hannah van Luttervelt to create a striking graduation project: soft, life-sized replicas of weapons of mass destruction. Her series *Playing with Weapons* turns instruments of power into uncomfortable cuddly toys — including a 1:1 scale version of “Little Boy,” the bomb that destroyed Hiroshima. At Dutch Design Week, people were shocked to see this symbol of

devastation rendered tender. Her work invites reflection on the absurdity of how easily violence is normalised, and how urgently we need to redesign our values.

Designing for Connection and Care

Design of these days is increasingly about connection — with people, with communities, with nature. Many young designers no longer aspire to create “stuff” but to co-create systems and stories that heal. They work within communities to uncover real needs, rather than invented ones by people in control.

Others design *for* scientists and activists, helping to translate research into emotion and action. Within the *Collaborations for Future* program by *Foundation We Are*, designers and researchers teamed up to find new ways to move people — literally and emotionally — toward climate awareness. Designer Merel Witteman, working with climatologist Roderik van de Wal, developed *Sea-Level Ice Cream*: a playful but urgent campaign showing how rising seas will affect our daily lives. The melting ice becomes both metaphor and messenger.

Their collaboration is a reminder that data alone does not move people — but design can. Design touches the senses, and through that, the heart.

Designing Democracy

It is no coincidence that *Designing Democracy* became a new focal point for *Foundation We Are*. During Dutch Design Week 2025, this interactive exhibition drew thousands of visitors eager to engage in

open, co-created conversations about the future of governance. The enthusiasm reflects a broader cultural need: to reimagine democracy as a living design process — one built on participation, transparency, and trust.

For 25 years, Dutch Design Week has been a stage where designers, technologists, and thinkers showcase new directions for living together. The Dutch Design Foundation, its organiser, now collaborates with public partners on coalitions around urgent themes — from food and water to circular building. This intersection between design and policy shows how creative thinking can seed systemic change.

Design Is Love

Design is about movement — emotional, social, ecological. It asks us to look seven generations back and seven forward. To design is to care. To design is to love.

We cannot all be professional designers creating systems, artworks, or scalable solutions. But as human beings, we can all design the way we live — with more consciousness, connection, and compassion.

Let's move, as the No Design Manifesto urges, from surviving scarcity to thriving in abundance.

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Mireille Chakib Daou

Founder and Principal, MDgroup

Born and raised in Beirut, Lebanon, Mireille Chakib Daou, spent her early years studying at the French Lycée before moving to the United States during the Lebanese Civil War. She completed high school and later earned a Bachelor of Arts in Interior Design with a minor in Fine Arts from Marymount University in 1992. After gaining valuable professional experience in the U.S., she returned to Lebanon and founded MDgroup, a multidisciplinary design-build firm specialising in residential, commercial and hospitality projects. With over 30 years of experience, she has built a career that bridges creativity, technical precision, and cultural sensitivity. Her work reflects a synthesis of Western professionalism and Middle Eastern artistry, emphasising timeless design quality and execution. As a woman in the construction industry, she continues to advocate for inclusion and mentorship, inspiring young designers to pursue their ambitions with confidence and purpose.

Designing beyond boundaries: A Woman's journey in Interior Design and Construction

Mireille Chakib Daou

Abstract

When I graduated from Marymount University, Virginia USA, in 1992 with a BA in Interior Design and minor in Fine Arts, I carried with me a vision that design could be more than decoration; it could be a language that connects people, culture and emotion. More than three decades later, that belief continues to guide me as I lead MDgroup, a design-build firm based in Lebanon that has completed projects across residential, commercial and hospitality sectors.

Beginnings in the United States

My professional journey began in the United States, where I was fortunate to work alongside experienced designers and architects who emphasised process, precision, and collaboration. Those early years taught me that design excellence depends as much on communication and organisation as on creativity.

The U.S. design culture valued clear documentation, teamwork and client engagement. I learned how to translate ideas into executable plans, manage budgets, and respect deadlines. These lessons formed the foundation of my professional discipline. But beyond that, they nurtured my belief that good design must be both functional and human-centred as much as it is aesthetic. Every space should respond to how people live, work and feel.

Returning Home to Redefine my Path

After gaining valuable experience abroad, I made the life-changing decision to return to Lebanon, my home country. The nation was in a phase of reconstruction and reinvention, and I wanted to contribute to that renewal. I brought back not just technical expertise, but also the conviction that design could play a vital role in rebuilding identity and fostering resilience.

In Beirut, I founded MDgroup, a practice that began as a design studio and gradually evolved into a comprehensive design-build firm. I wanted to bridge the gap between design vision and execution, to ensure that what we conceptualise on paper materialised with integrity and precision on site. Over time, MDgroup grew into a multidisciplinary team handling every phase of turn-key projects, from concept development and technical detailing to construction and finishing.

Our projects spanned a wide range of scales and typologies: private residences, corporate offices, retail spaces, and hospitality projects, among others. Each project reflects our core philosophy, that good design harmonises aesthetics, functions and emotions. We approach every space as a narrative, blending contemporary design language with local craftsmanship and prime materials.

Navigating a Male-Dominated Industry

Becoming a contractor and leading a design-build firm as a woman in Lebanon was not an easy job. The construction field remains largely male-dominated, and when I first entered job sites, I often

encountered skepticism. Many assumed that a woman's role in design was limited to aesthetics and not technical execution.

To succeed, I had to prove my competence, not through words, but through knowledge and results. I immersed myself in every aspect of the work: materials, engineering coordination, site supervision, and budgeting. I learned to navigate the challenges of construction management and speak the language of craftsmen and suppliers. Over time, the results of our projects spoke louder than any ideas.

Leading MDgroup required not only technical skill but also emotional intelligence. I learned to balance assertiveness with empathy, to lead teams by example, foster trust, and encourage collaboration. I believe that strong leadership comes from mutual respect and shared purpose.

Operating in Beirut also meant dealing with unique challenges, from economic instability to material shortages and political uncertainty. Yet these difficulties shaped my resilience, they taught me how to design with flexibility, creativity, and optimism.

Design Philosophy: Where Culture Meets Function

My design philosophy has always centred on people and place. I believe that every space should reflect its users' lifestyle and cultural identity while maintaining a sense of universality and timelessness.

At MDgroup, we approach design as a holistic process that merges art and engineering. Every element, from light and proportion to texture and detail, is carefully considered to achieve harmony. I

draw inspiration from both modern simplicity and the richness of Lebanese craftsmanship. Collaborating with local artisans allows us to create spaces that feel authentic and rooted, using natural materials such as wood, glass, stone and metal in innovative ways.

Sustainability is also integral to our practice. In a region where resources are limited and the environment faces mounting challenges, responsible design is essential. We strive to incorporate energy efficient systems, eco-friendly materials and adaptive reuse strategies where possible. Our goal is to create spaces that not only enhance quality of life but also respect the planet.

Three Decades of Evolution and Empowerment

Over the past thirty years, my career has evolved alongside the field itself. Technology has transformed how we design and build, from digital modeling to advanced project management tools. Yet, the essence of design remains unchanged: it is still about empathy, creativity, and problem solving.

Through MDgroup, I have had the privilege to collaborate with talented professional, loyal clients, and dedicated craftsmen who share a common vision. Together, we have completed projects that stand as a testament to perseverance, quality and passion.

Being a woman entrepreneur in design and construction has also given me a platform to advocate for inclusion and mentorship. I am deeply committed to encouraging young designers, especially women, to pursue their ambitions confidently. The industry needs

diverse voices, and I believe that women bring unique perspectives that enrich design through intuition, detail and emotional depth.

Looking Forward

Today my mission is to continue expanding MDgroup while exploring new frontiers in design innovation. I see every project as an opportunity to push boundaries, to integrated technology, sustainability, and culture into a cohesive experience.

As I reflect on my journey, from the classrooms of Marymount University to the construction sites of Beirut, I see a story shaped by perseverance, adaptability and purpose. Every challenge has strengthened my resolve, and every success has deepened my appreciation for this profession.

Design, at its best, is not just about creating beautiful spaces; it is about improving the way people live, work and connect. It is about building environments that inspire, comfort, and empower. And as a woman who has built her career across continents and through shifting times, I stand by this conviction: good design has no gender, no boundary and no limit. It is and should always be, Design for All.



Sue Alouche

Professor, l'École de Design Nantes Atlantique

I am a design and branding strategist whose career began in 1980 in London, working with global brands on retail projects. At the same time, paradoxically, I had to face a life-changing accident which challenged my own resistance to the built environment.

In 1990, I co-founded my own ethical design agency and later became an independent consultant for NGOs and charities, echoing my own values of diversity and inclusivity.

In 2004, my professional experience in social and ethical branding came with me to France when I started teaching at l'École de Design Nantes Atlantique, hoping to inspire the next generation of socially-conscious designers.

From Disability to Design for All: A Journey of Resilience

Sue Alouche

Abstract

In 1980, I joined Terence Conran's celebrated retail design agency where I was Studio Manager to a team of 30 designers. Believing the world was my oyster, life took an unexpected turn in 1984 when a serious road accident left me unable to walk for two years.

The initial response from my employer was empathetic, but, I was eventually let go. My view of the world changed dramatically, being in a wheelchair for 2 years, you see things from a different perspective.

Fortunately, four former directors had set up The Design Solution and offered me a position. I joined them in 1986 without hesitation, but, with a major physical challenge: an office on 5 floors with no lift. Relying on walking sticks as my aids, it worked. I was eventually promoted to Associate Director.

Their empathy and trust in me was a powerful lesson. I gained first-hand experience of fighting against the built environment, cementing my resilience and informing my life-long advocacy for Design for All.

KEYWORDS: *Empathy and Kindness, Ethical and Sustainable Design, Diversity and Inclusivity, Inaccessibility, Built Environments, Design for All, Resilience, Socially-Conscious Design. Circular Design, Circular Economy.*

Back on my feet. Embracing Ethical and Sustainable Design

By 1990, I was able to walk again (not without disability) but was ready for a new challenge. I left The Design Solution to co-found my own agency, Eureka!, with a co-Associate Director. We were driven by a vision centred on sustainable and ethical design – a radical idea for 1990.

Our launch materials reflected this commitment: we used the grainiest ecological paper, vegetable inks, and embraced a "less-is-more" strategy and aesthetic. Our unique approach attracted pioneering clients of this epoch, such as The Body Shop and later, Lush cosmetics, as well as corporations such as the BBC. Following on from this, various arts and cultural organisations jumped on board.

Despite our innovative concept, the recession of the early 90s proved insurmountable, and in 1994, we parted ways. More resilience was needed.

Strategic Consulting for Social Impact

Following Eureka!, I established myself as an Independent Consultant focused on ethical and environmental issues, leveraging my strategic experience to support the charity and NGO sector. At this time, organisations, such as these, were just beginning to see

the value of viewing themselves as 'brands' and starting to employ emotional triggers and stories for their causes. This is where I could help. This strategic shift gave me a focus on social problems:

The World Development Movement (WDM): I worked on projects addressing displacement and poverty. Critically, the WDM was among the first to publicly call out global brands and manufacturers for unethical practices involving factory workers in China and India¹ (WDM, 1995).

Marie Stopes International: My work centred on communicating issues of women's rights, education and contraception, still considered a taboo, to a 'younger' public.

Centrepont: I developed strategies to promote the work of this homeless charity for young people, helping to raise awareness and gain vital funding from businesses.

In 1997, I returned to academia to deepen my theoretical understanding of social design issues and to pursue a Master in 'Design Studies' at Central St. Martins College of Art and Design. My thesis, (S.Woolway-Alouche), 1997) *Aroma, the vision of the future*²,

¹ *This critical piece of research which spanned 6 months inside factories, specifically targeted a brand producing Barbie, Sindy, and Action Man dolls. It was the first time this issue had gained interest in the UK parliament as an Early Day Motion in 1996 <https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/14030/barbie-sindy-and-action-man>*

² *The premise of my thesis research was that Aroma could offer a way (and was already naturally helping visually impaired people in the built environment to find their way around). But, I wanted to work particularly in retail design, in order to develop a sense of appetite, to render their shopping experience more experiential. I worked with 3 visually impaired people from the Royal National*

explored the retail experience for visually-impaired people and earned me a Distinction.

A New Design Language and a Move to France

The early 2000s saw a personal and professional transition. I was now working freelance for my husband's design agency, Made by Man (which later merged with Reich and Petch, Canada), specialising in the design of cultural and arts sectors.

In 2004, we made the personal decision to move to France with our 2 children. It was a total culture shock for us all, and I needed to learn a whole new 'design language.' I reached out to a design school I had noticed just before we left the UK and was soon given a part-time role as Professor Adjunct at l'École de Design Nantes Atlantique in 2005.

The world had become a harder place to live and work.

Speaking only a smattering of French, French lessons came first. In France the notion of Brand Strategy was under-developed which gave me other opportunities. But it was not easy to work as a freelancer in France, until 2009, when Nicholas Sarkozy, introduced the Auto Entrepreneur scheme - as I was one of the first 500 to join the scheme, I was invited to the Élysée Palace to meet him.

Institute for the Blind and who kindly took part in trials in Tesco supermarkets and eventually went on to become friends. My other professional partner on the project was BOC Sciences who was just starting to trial aroma experiences in cars and offices.

The results were interesting, as they worked well for the visually impaired, but not so well for members of staff who had to endure the odours over longer periods of time. This was something I had to address. My work was featured on Radio 3 and in Design Week.

My extensive professional background proved invaluable for the challenges of the time: an ageing population, refugee crises, climate change, racial issues, unethical practices and inclusivity. These issues created opportunities to infuse my teaching with my core values and experience.

Ageing, transgenerational Design, Diversity and Sustainability. A More Focused Approach.

Over the years, my work at the school evolved. I taught brand design to International Bachelor Retail and Product students and was also involved in the work of specialist Master Labs focusing on Sustainable Design, Food, Care and Media. My teaching was intensely focused on real-world social challenges:

Refugee Aid: During the Syria crisis, I led a week-long workshop with 2 colleagues focused on having empathy with and developing ideas to help the daily life of refugees³ (UNHRC, 1995). Privately, I organised collections for refugees at The Jungle in Calais through my social network, Knowing Nantes⁴.

³ *During the research phase of this workshop, we used roleplay tools developed recently by the UNHRC - Passages (An awareness game confronting the plight of refugees.) A lot of the exercises focused on the issues of empathy, acceptance and inclusion. The students found the roleplaying difficult – it made them realise the extreme difficulties they face particularly in their displacement from country to country.*

⁴ *Knowing Nantes is a social network formed in 2005 for Anglophones arriving in Nantes from all over the world, who were as lost as I was. It currently has 7,300 members on FB and also has a dedicated page for setting up in business in France.*



17th November 2015 Knowing Nantes' aid to the Refugees based at the Jungle, Calais.



Dialogues - a book of applied research. Led by Aalto University (Helsinki, Finland), L'École de design Nantes Atlantique (France) and the Politecnico di Milano (Italy).

Transgenerational Design and Empathy: I co-led workshops for TANGO an Applied Research Project⁵ (Aalto University, 2013) for Sustainable Design and Art Pedagogy. Entitled 'Understanding and Connecting With Me As I Get Young' and 'Design to Improve Life,' using extreme user role play.⁶



Design to Improve Life using extreme user roleplay. A workshop undertaken with Elyssa Sfar.

⁵ ***The Applied Research Project “For Sustainable Design and Art Pedagogy was a transgenerational design and research project and a series of workshops and exhibitions organised by TANGO <http://www.designtango.eu/courses-test> held in 3 countries culminating in conferences, guest lectures and the development of Dialogues - a book of applied research. Led by Aalto University (Helsinki, Finland), L'École de design Nantes Atlantique (France) and the Politecnico di Milano (Italy). I was one of two Lead-Professors in the Trans-generational Empathy workshop.***

⁶ ***A workshop focusing on Designing for the Ageing Population with 'Design for All' principles, using Methods from IDEO to enable students to feel like old people (by dressing up to restrict their senses and movement and role play). By asking them to adopt their grandparents for a month of intensive observations and discussions, to really learn about their needs and their daily lives, to improve them and fulfil their desires through design.***

From Empathy to Circularity.

Beyond l'École de Design, I developed and ran workshops for the University of Nîmes (Integrating Empathy into Service Design) and courses for Rennes Business School, (Sustainable Brand Design in the Luxury Industry and User Experience Management in the Cultural Arts Sector)⁷.



Students outside FRAC, Rennes, inside walkabout to study users, and finally, mapping the Customer Journeys.

My academic focus broadened in 2013 with the publication of my book on personal branding, *What's the Difference that Makes the Difference*⁸. (Fuchs, Alouche, 2013)

Following this, I was invited to write a doctorate proposal on the circular economy⁹. Although I was not selected for the doctorate

⁷ I developed this course to give the students hands-on experiences of users in cultural centres in Rennes, France. It was important for them to see the difficulties of different types of users first hand in the built environment, but also the exhibits themselves. The focus was on inclusivity, accessibility and design experience. Each year, I organised a partnership with a different cultural centre, partners included the FRAC and La Criée Centre for Contemporary Art.

⁸ *What's the Difference that Makes the Difference* is a personal branding workbook developed by Yvonne Fuchs and myself and has since been developed into workshops and seminars for students and freelance and start-up businesses alike.

position, the research revealed the immense potential of the circular economy in the built environment and other design disciplines. This led me to develop seminars and projects focused on circular design, such as *The Rag Pickers of Tomorrow*.



Parisien Rag Pickers 1899-1901. Taken from Tom Szaky's Book, The Future of Packaging.

Below: Rag Pickers in India at the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation - Ahmad Masood/Reuters.



⁹ A doctorate research proposal for the University of Brighton/Philips Lighting, Entitled 'Adding more meaning to Lighting Design in the Circular Economy.' Backed by the UK Arts & Humanities Research Council.

Full circle: Research, Writing, Retirement, and finally putting my feet up.

My career has come full circle. I have walked miles in my own shoes, as well as others'¹⁰, learning along the way the challenges facing the human race and how to design to the real needs of human beings. I also retain a keen interest in circular design and the social effects of contemporary geopolitics.

I will be retiring at the end of this year after a fulfilling career. My immediate focus will be to write a book on the history and cultural significance of the original Red, White, and Blue bag, now an iconic symbol associated with displaced refugees. I am passionate about communicating its rich cultural, social, and design history as well as telling refugee's back stories.

I plan to continue looking for research opportunities in these vital areas and to take up art classes to explore new ways of communicating these themes.

¹⁰ *One of the most famous expressions in Empathy training is "Before you judge a man, walk a mile in his shoes. The saying is often contributed to various indian tribes, but it also comes from a poem written by Mary T. Lathrap "Judge Softly" or "Walk a Mile in His Moccasins" in 1895. I am still looking for the perfect pair of comfortable shoes for my retirement.*

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Lolita Dutta

Design educator, spatial designer, design speaker, writer and consultant for design thinking and critical thinking

Lolita Dutta is an alumnus from the National Institute of Design, with over four decades of experience as a design practitioner and as a design educator. Her area of expertise lies in the domain of communication design, with a specialisation in exhibition spatial design.

She has worked extensively for the Government of India, the private and public sector, NGOs, and diplomatic missions. In her role as an educator she has held several leadership positions with premier design institutions. Her profile includes curriculum building, mentoring, and advocacy and policy. She has been active as a panellist, moderator, and speaker on various platforms. Other than being a designer and educator, Lolita enjoys writing, painting, reading , photography and cooking!

THE ATTITUDE OF DESIGN

Lolita Dutta

Abstract

In a world largely influenced by changing technology, AI and other such interventions, the humanisation of personal connections is at a minimum. Where as design requires an attitude. An attitude in demeanour, work ethics, and most of all an attitude in the way you are and how you see the world around you.

Keywords: *Attitude, Design, Adaptability, Learning, Change, self-reflective*

I was all of five when I realised I have an attitude. Left to my own devices on a hot summer afternoon in Delhi, I saw the pristine white wall of our balcony as an appropriate canvas. Armed with a new box of crayons, I unleashed all my creative energies onto the wall. Pink, and blue juxtaposed with purple and green, yellow mingled with orange and red. My parents were visibly distressed as we lived in a rented apartment. Two days down the line, the landlord happened to pay us a visit; aghast at first, he peered at the wall once again and then declared he did not mind the artwork! Emboldened by this, I went to the wall again, and that is when I realised I had an attitude. Towards my work , and towards being confident about using colour. Years later, while doing a colour exercise in design school, I was told I had an unusual approach towards how I saw, mixed and used colour. It's an attitude I thought, and this I imbibed into my practice.

Attitude is also about acceptance, I embraced the changes from analogues to digital, from how design perceptions became understood in different ways. As an exhibition/visual designer, my approach to work imbibed another kind of attitude, it made sure I aligned with the new age technology.

It has been well over four decades since I graduated from the National institute of Design, Ahmedabad India. In these intervening years, I also became a design educator. Almost 35 years into education has made me aware that attitudes have drastically changed. Not merely in terms of learning, but in terms of how students perceive design and all that goes with it. It is disconcerting, to say the least, how the learner of today does not have the attitude to either explore, be curious, or have a streak of madness. They are almost robotic in their approach to the classroom, bored; they do not stare out of the window, but into their phones. AI speaks to them, answers their questions, writes their papers, and decodes their assignments. Only a handful of learners are still enthusiastic, and proclaim an attitude.

Design to me, is an intrinsic part of our daily existence, a human centric problem solving tool. In recent times, we have given it new nomenclatures, but at the core of which still lies a process, driven by research and a deep understanding of the psyche. To embrace this we need the attitude towards evolving theories, ideologies, but most of all a self-reflective personality that speaks of individuality, embodies the spirit of the self, anticipate user interaction, all leading to cohesive design solutions.

To be able to do this effectively, the truly creative mind must not stop dreaming; there is the artist in all. Of course the right brain often overlaps with the left. A juxtaposition of logic and art. However, it is all about one's attitude regarding social relations; this has to be centre stage, but today one seldom sees that spark, rarely senses the attitude which can change the way we think.

The young learner of today is in search of instant gratification. Seldom stopping to pay attention to empathy or even delving into the soul of what lies beneath. My role as an educator often feels redundant in the classroom, where the only deliverable is either marks-driven, or what gives remuneration. However, I still try my best to motivate the student by narrating my experiences, escapades, and sharing that attitude I long proclaimed, of the times when I was five. I never stopped drawing, dabbling with colour and writing poetry. To me this is my personal style, an attitude which I feel connects me to the reality of the world around us. It is in the way I dress, think radically, and speak. Utopian in some ways, I imagine, but utopia can be inspirational and can change the way people, or the design student thinks.

I recently conducted some ideation exercises which were out of the box. At the end of the day (having taken away the phones and laptops of the students), I asked them what they thought? I was pleasantly surprised. "Liberating" they echoed with sentiment! A total change in attitude!

My own trajectory through these years of being a close observer in design methods, policies, critical analytics, and mainly education, is this: we may embrace all the AI we want, but with reasonable usage. I am not averse to it as long as the willingness and the attitude to learn through some lecture based or human-centric intervention still prevails.

Today we are on the threshold of opposing schools of thought. I am not one for any conflict. My indicator of learning is the welfare of the student; their attitude towards information has to be defined between the parameters of their own understanding. It can most certainly be achieved.

As for me, the white walls of my childhood still linger in my mind, echoes of the splashes of colour often assail my thoughts, the journey from the untrained artist to designer has been joyous, has made me who I am. A woman designer with a positive attitude.



Dr. Yuliia Korneiko

Assistant to the Rector for International Educational Projects, Kharkiv State Academy of Design and Arts, Ukraine

Yuliia Korneiko is the Assistant to the Rector for International Educational Projects at the Kharkiv State Academy of Design and Arts and an Associate Professor in the Department of Cross-cultural Communication in Creative Industries. She holds a PhD in Pedagogy and a Master's degree in Design with a focus on art-based therapeutic practices. Since joining KSADA in 2018, she has worked in international cooperation, design education, and art-recovery initiatives. Her research interests include cross-cultural communication, art therapy, healing environments, and trauma-informed design for vulnerable communities.

WOMEN DESIGNERS SHAPING HEALING ENVIRONMENTS: A PERSONAL REFLECTION FROM UKRAINE

YULIYA KORNEIKO

Abstract

This essay reflects on my professional journey as a Ukrainian educator working during a time of war, displacement, and transformation. As women designers become increasingly influential in the global discourse on inclusive and healing environments, the Ukrainian context adds a profound dimension to this work. Teaching at the Kharkiv State Academy of Design and Arts (KSADA) under daily air-raid alarms has reshaped my understanding of design as a tool of emotional resilience, care, and recovery. Through the development of the Master's program "Universal Design and Art Recovery Practices," I have worked with women students who create therapeutic books, sensory tools, and art-based interventions for displaced children and vulnerable communities. Their diploma projects—ranging from multisensory room design and innovative therapeutic toys to meme-based communication and art-therapeutic games—demonstrate how design becomes a form of healing. This essay shares my experiences, challenges, and the role of women designers in shaping restorative environments in Ukraine today.

Keywords: Art-Recovery Design, Multisensory, Healing design, Art-therapeutic games, Ukraine

My essay

I often think about how radically my understanding of design has changed over the past years. Before the war, design for me was a space of creativity, communication, and cultural dialogue. Today, living and teaching in Kharkiv, a city that experiences daily air-raid alarms, explosions, and displacement, design has become something much deeper: a tool of care, emotional grounding, and human resilience.

As a woman designer, educator, and coordinator of international educational projects, I have learned that design in crisis is no longer about aesthetics or trends. It becomes a form of protection, self-expression, and healing—especially for children and young people who carry invisible emotional wounds.

My Path Into Art-Recovery Design

Women's Projects That Heal: A New Wave of Ukrainian Design

Over the past years, I have supervised diploma projects that respond directly to the emotional and social needs of displaced children and teenagers. All of them were created by women designers, each demonstrating empathy, care, and a deep understanding of healing design.

1. Designing a Sensory Room through Multisensory Approaches

This project developed a multisensory room based on Snoezelen principles adapted to the realities of wartime Ukraine. The student designed lighting scenarios, tactile zones, sound textures, and flexible calming modules for shelters, IDP centres, and schools. It

showed how sensory environments support emotional regulation and reduce anxiety among children experiencing trauma.

2. Developing an Innovative Toy as a Tool for Children's Emotional Support

This work centred on creating a therapeutic toy providing grounding, comfort, and emotional security for children under stress. Soft textures, weighted elements, and symbolic features help children cope with fear and instability. Such toys are now widely used in temporary educational spaces.

3. Meme Design as a Tool for Teenagers' Visual Communication

This project investigated how visual humour, digital identity, and memes serve as tools for emotional expression and peer communication. During displacement, memes became a lightweight but powerful medium for sharing difficult emotions, offering support, and building community. The work revealed how visual communication strengthens psychological resilience.

4. Designing an Art-Therapeutic Ice-Breaker Game for Communicative Interaction

This diploma explored an art-therapeutic game aimed at helping children and teenagers rebuild trust and communication after relocation. Through drawing prompts, symbolic tasks, and playful interaction, the game encourages emotional sharing and strengthens social bonds.

Healing Environments as a Collective Practice

Through my work, I have come to understand that healing environments are not created by one person—they emerge from collective resilience.

As women educators, we create emotional safety through communication.

As women designers, we build tools, spaces, and symbols that support emotional survival.

As women students, our learners transform their pain into creative support for others.

This collective female perspective aligns with global theories of therapeutic design, which emphasise the role of comfort, sensory balance, and emotional clarity in recovery (Ulrich, 1991).

My Design Philosophy Today

After teaching through crisis, my design philosophy rests on three principles:

1. Design must care.

It should reduce harm, calm the nervous system, and offer emotional stability.

2. Design must listen.

Healing environments begin with empathy—listening to trauma, displacement, and lived experience.

3. Design must restore.

Through colour, texture, narrative, interaction, and communication, design can rebuild a sense of safety and belonging.

Nowadays in Ukraine, design is more than a creative practice—it is a lifeline for emotional survival.

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Assoc. Prof. Dr. Astrid Kusumowidagdo
School of Creative Industry, Universitas Ciputra.

Astrid Kusumowidagdo is an Associate Professor in Architecture at Universitas Ciputra, and a member of the Indonesian Interior Designers Association (HDII). She specialises in commercial space, sense of place activation, traditional and indigenous shopping environments, and creative industries. Currently, she leads the Sense of Place Prototype Development Project at Kampung Ulos, Lumban Suhi-Suhi, Lake Toba, Indonesia, focusing on interior furnishings and women's empowerment through Ulos and woven textiles. This collaborative project also involves a lecturer, Melania Rahadiyanti, who focuses on display design, and a fashion designer, Enrico, who contributes expertise in fashion product innovation.

Empowering Women Through Design: Revitalising Ulos Textiles for Interior Fabrics and Community Identity

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Astrid Kusumowidagdo

Abstract

This research explores women's empowerment through the revitalisation of Ulos weaving in Kampung Ulos, Lumban Suhi-Suhi, North Sumatra, Indonesia . Ulos, a Batak textile with deep cultural meaning, faces challenges from modernisation and reduced interest among younger generations. By combining design innovation and traditional craftsmanship, the study demonstrates how Ulos can evolve as both cultural heritage and a creative resource. As designer, the author and team developed interior design applications, while weaving was executed by local craftwomen artisans, ensuring both authenticity and transformation.

Findings reveal that applying Ulos in contemporary interior furnishings elevates women's roles as artisans and entrepreneurs, fostering cultural pride, resilience, and intergenerational continuity in co-creation design. Beyond economic benefits, weaving sustains identity and extends Batak cultural narratives globally. Women-led weaving, supported by contemporary design innovation, proves Ulos is a living heritage adaptable to modern contexts.

Keywords: Cultural Sustainability, Interior Fabrics, Sense of Place, Ulos Weaving, Women Empowerment.



Introduction

Women have historically played crucial roles in preserving and evolving cultural heritage through craft practices. In Indonesia's Batak culture, the weaving of Ulos exemplifies how women sustain traditional knowledge while reinforcing community identity. Yet, their contributions often remain under-recognised in cultural and design discourses (Brogan & Dooley, 2024; Nugroho et al., 2021; Simbolon et al., 2022).

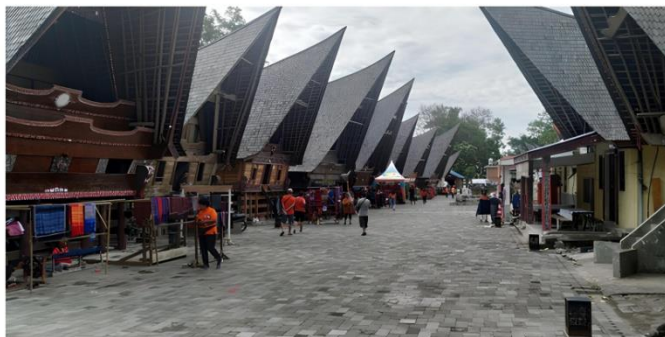


Figure 1. The View to Lake Toba (left) and The Tourism Village, Kampung Ulos Lumban Suhi-Suhi, Sumatera near Lake Toba (Right). Source: Private Document, 2024.

In the context of Ulos weaving, women artisans in villages such as Lumban Suhi-Suhi face social and economic challenges. Brown and Vacca (2022) describe craftsmanship as an evolving knowledge system, highlighting how Ulos weaving negotiates tradition and modernity. The revitalisation of Ulos as an interior fabric offers financial benefits while affirming cultural pride (Guo & Ahn, 2023; Simbolon et al., 2022). Once limited to ritual functions, Ulos is now adapted for contemporary use, improving both quality and marketability. This positions traditional crafts not as relics but as dynamic contributors to modern narratives (Nugroho et al., 2021; Simbolon et al., 2022).



Figure 2. The woven Ulos Fabrics as one of the traditional ceremony materials (Left) and the woman weaver (right). Source: Private document, 2024.

Through education, design, and community engagement, women-led initiatives in Ulos weaving demonstrate how cultural heritage can be sustained while shaping future identities (Brown & Vacca, 2022; Guo & Ahn, 2023).

Background and Context

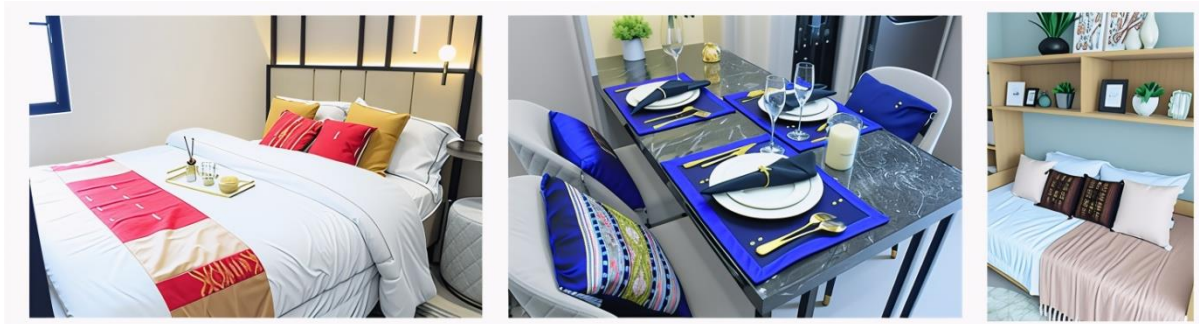
Ulos holds deep symbolic meaning in Batak society, Traditionally used in rituals marking birth, marriage, and death, it functions as

both material culture and social identity. Women in Lumbar Suhi-Suhi have preserved this heritage through generational transmission of skills (Jiniputri et al., 2021; Simbolon et al., 2022). However, modernisation poses threats. Urban migration and mass-produced textiles reduce interest among younger generations (Shafi et al., 2019).

Economic viability remains another obstacle, as weaving alone rarely sustains households. Yet, reimagining Ulos as interior design fabric enables women to expand markets and reclaim agency (Jiniputri et al., 2021; Simbolon et al., 2022). Collaborative initiatives with academics encourage innovation while retaining traditional motifs (Valentine et al., 2017). Education and design exchanges further enhance the relevance of Ulos, revitalising its cultural and economic role. Thus, Ulos operates as both ritual artefact and living medium that reinforces place identity.

Ulos for Interior Fabrics

The adaptation of Ulos for interior fabrics bridges tradition and design innovation. Its geometric patterns and rich motifs suit contemporary aesthetics, making it versatile for furnishing and architectural installations (Atifah N Tarigan & Andrea, 2020; Nugroho et al., 2021). Integrated into interiors, Ulos transmits cultural narratives, creating spaces that embody tradition



and modernity (Simbolon et al., 2022).

Figure 3. The result of interior furnishing from Ulos, the traditional woven fabric. Ulos fabric transforms interiors with cultural beauty, refined craftsmanship, and a touch of Indonesian heritage. Source: Private Document, 2024.

Sustainability strengthens this transformation. Reliance in local materials reduces dependence on imports (Nugroho et al., 2021). Practices such as repurposing leftover threads and incorporating recycled materials align weaving with global sustainable design standards (Alimin et al., 2022; Indrie et al., 2023). The balance of craft and ecological innovation supports local economies while enriching cultural expression (Jiniputri et al., 2021).



Figure 4. Ulos fabric reimagined in modern interiors. From living spaces to dining tables and bedrooms, each piece brings cultural warmth, craftsmanship, and timeless elegance into contemporary homes. Source: Private Document, 2024.

Integration into design elevates artisans' recognition and embeds Batak identity within modern architecture. Collaborative education and design projects ensure continuity and innovation (Jiniputri et al., 2021). Cultural tourism enhances these efforts, as visitors admire weaving practices and support artisans, positioning Ulos as a symbols with regional and global resonance.

Case Insight from Field Observation

Fieldwork in Lumban Suhi-Suhi emphasises women's central role in weaving. Interviews reveal that weaving is often seen as spiritual practice linked to patience, familial duty, and self existence. Women express pride in preserving heritage while acknowledging economic pressures.

Collaborative design projects have introduced new product lines, interior accessories, and lifestyle goods co-created with designers. These projects diversify income and inspire innovation. Younger women, once reluctant to weave, now see its potential value as peers gain recognition.

Empowerment through design is both tangible and aspirational: it provides income and markets while also building confidence, agency, and visions for the future. Weaving thus functions as a cultural and development force, positioning women as artisans, innovators, and custodians of heritage.

Discussion

The intersection of design, empowerment, and cultural identity offers lessons for global practice. The Ulos case shows that heritage textiles can be repositioned in design industries without losing cultural meaning. Heritage is not static; through design, it evolves and engages new audiences. Women weavers emerge as transmitters of culture, entrepreneurs, and leaders.

The challenge lies in balancing authenticity and innovation. Empowerment emerges not by imposing new aesthetics but through co-creation that respects tradition while expanding opportunities.

Conclusion and Future Opportunities

This article demonstrates how design empowers women in Lumbar Suhi-Suhi by revitalising Ulos weaving for interior use. Innovation generates economic opportunities, cultural pride, and strengthened identity.

Future prospects include digital platforms, training programs, and exhibitions that connect artisans to global markets while ensuring sustainability. As Ulos continues to evolve, it may inspire design languages that balance heritage and modernity. Ultimately, women's empowerment through design transcends textiles. By weaving

together tradition, innovation, and identity, women artisans illustrate how design can shape inclusive, sustainable, and culturally resonant future.

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Professor Archana Shekara

Professor of Graphic Design, the Harold Gregor Endowed Professor of Art, and Creative Director of Design Streak Studio at Illinois State University

Archana Shekara is a Professor of Graphic Design, the Harold Gregor Endowed Professor of Art, and Creative Director of Design Streak Studio, a research-based social innovation lab at Illinois State University. Shekara's design research interests and scholarship encompass cultural identity, design for belonging, social justice, and community engagement. As an Indian-American socio-cultural design researcher, she explores transnational identity and decoloniality through a brown cultural lens, using ethnographic narratives to foster critical awareness. Her creative practice spans type design, participatory experiences, and interactive installations that incorporate mixed and emerging digital media to evoke multi-sensory engagement. Her scholarship has been featured in several national and international exhibitions, publications, and conferences, including AIGA's *One Designer, One Work*. She has been invited to

speak at various universities across India, China, and the United States, and was the keynote speaker at the 2025 Typography Day Conference at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Mumbai. She is also the founder and chair of the South Asian Design Educators Alliance (SADEA), a global platform dedicated to advancing South-Asian design histories, pedagogies, and perspectives.

Seva in the Kitchen: Mysuru Masale Dosai as Relational Design, Embodied Memory, and Generational Inheritance

Archana Shekara

Abstract

This article explores Mysuru Masale Dosai as a cultural love language rooted in memory, care, and generational continuity. Drawing on personal experience and ethnographic observation, it highlights cooking as a form of *seva* — care enacted through hands-on engagement, sensory attention, and attentive labor. Recipes function as adaptive systems, guided by intuition, inherited gestures, and environmental constraints rather than fixed measurements. In diasporic contexts, cooks navigate ingredient substitutions, technological tools, and modified fermentation methods while preserving flavours, textures, and lineage. Language, gesture, and rhythm act as vehicles of memory and pedagogy, transforming domestic labor into shared care, collective healing, and intergenerational learning. Framing cooking as a form of design expands the field to include intimate, sensory, and adaptive practices that sustain heritage, identity, and belonging, demonstrating how the kitchen mediates memory, care, and cultural survival.

Keywords: *Food Design, Familial Stories, Co-creation, Cultural Identity, Adaptation, Seva*

Introduction

Across cultures globally, food operates as a medium of care, memory, and relational connection. Cooking, for me, embodies *seva* — giving without expectation, an ethic of attentiveness and hospitality that renders love and joy tangible. Mysuru Masale Dosai offers a lens into relational and cultural practice, with the kitchen functioning as a dynamic design system where embodied knowledge, sensory engagement, and familial rhythms converge. In diasporic contexts, these practices reveal how migration reframes culinary adaptation while sustaining intergenerational continuity, offering insights into food as a site of design, identity, and belonging.

Kitchen as Relational and Sacred Space

The kitchen is a lived environment where memory, labor, and social relationships intersect. Ingredients, tools, and gestures carry generational knowledge, learned through observation and repetition. Preparing Mysuru Masale Dosai — spreading thin batter in circular motions to create peaks and valleys using a ladle on a hot *tava* (griddle), layering *kempu kara* (red spicy) chutney, golden potato *palya* (masala), and *benne* (butter) — is both a culinary and relational performance. Monday evening *dosai* prepared by *Amma* (mother) in the family home in Mysuru, for instance, becomes a weekly ritual of togetherness, signalling care and presence beyond the immediate act of eating.

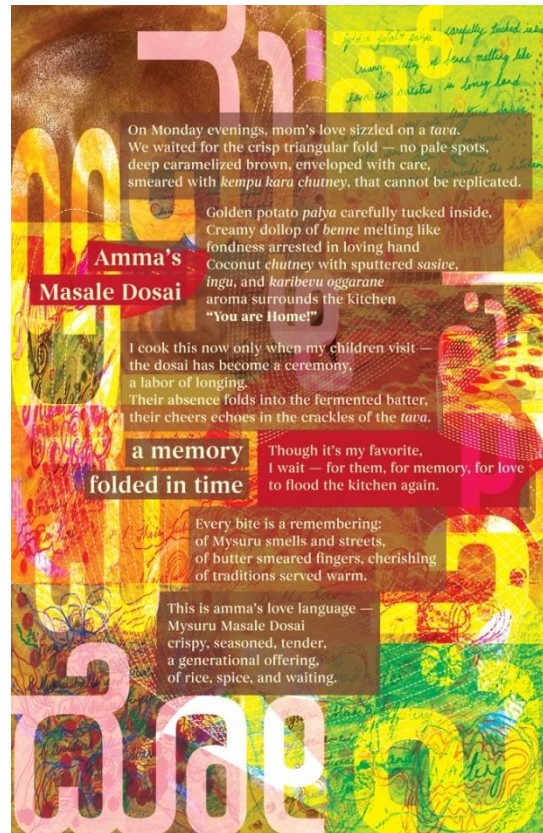


Figure 1: "Amma's Masala Dosai: A Memory Folded in Time" — I wrote the poem and designed this poster as a cherished expression of love, a keepsake that preserves memory. Design Credit: Archana Shekara

Cooking becomes an emotional labor: performing care through sensory attention when family is present and enacting longing when absent. In diasporic kitchens, these layers of memory gain intensity. Cooking for family who have traveled far becomes an act of holding them close. The fragrance *Oggarane* for the chutney, the crackle of, the gentle folding of the *dosai* — all become bridges across distance, carrying longing, presence, and love.

Sensory Knowledge and Adaptive Design

Preparing the batter for Mysuru Masale Dosai is a tactile, body-centred practice. Grinding rice and dal on a granite stone establishes

a rhythm the hands learn through repetition — how much pressure to apply, when to add water, and when the texture feels just right. Allowing the batter to ferment overnight fills the kitchen with the distinct aroma of fermentation and signals readiness through its light, aerated consistency, yielding crisp, golden. The distinctive red *kara chutney* transforms the *masale dosai* into what is known as the “Mysuru special.” *Byadgi menasu* (red chilies) are soaked and ground with spices and tamarind to achieve its deep colour and balanced heat. This chutney is then spread across the *dosai* according to individual preference sparingly or generously, depending on one’s tolerance for spice. A portion of *palya* (potato filling) is placed in the centre before the *dosai* is folded into a roll, a half, or even a cone. Alongside, the coconut chutney is prepared, followed by the *oggarane* (tempering) of mustard seeds, asafoetida, and curry leaves, releasing an aroma that guides the cook more reliably than any written instruction. These gestures are inherited and transmitted through embodied memory — they live in the hands, not on paper.



Figure 2: “Amma’s Oggarane: Taste Comes Alive” — A design work capturing the onomatopoeia of tempering, illustrating the sizzling and crackling of spices in ghee. Design Credit: Archana Shekara

Recipes in the kitchens function as adaptive systems rather than fixed formulas. “A handful,” “the size of your palm,” “until it smells right” — these measures are grounded in sensory experience, intuition, and care. At participatory design events, attendees are often surprised to see me cook without measurements, yet tasting confirms the flavours are balanced. To pass down generational recipes, I invite my children to cook alongside me. Initially skeptical, they are learning to feel ingredients and adjust intuitively, much like working with adaptive and reciprocal design materials.

In diasporic contexts, adaptation is constant. When I arrived to the United States in 1991, I had to substitute the aromatic long grain jasmine rice for medium grain sona masoori, frozen coconut replaced fresh, and store-bought vegetables took the place of seasonal produce. These adjustments altered flavour and authenticity but did not dilute intention; they demonstrated how culinary design is iterative and responsive, guided by memory, environment, and care.

The large hand-operated stone grinder in my *Aggis'* (grandmother) kitchen was more than a tool — it carried rhythm, touch, and time. Ingredients passed down through generations, gestures learned through observation, and sensory memory all inform the practice of making *dosai*. Kitchens are sacred spaces because they embody lineage, where attention and care are exercised, relationships are nurtured, and memory becomes tangible. Many South Indian households rely on motorised grinders or powerful blenders to prepare *dosai* batter. My *Amma* replaced the stone grinder for

convenience, yet my *Aggi* insisted the taste was different — as our native tongue remembers, it is the guardian of memory and flavour. I have also observed that many diasporic South Indian households in the United States negotiate the fermentation process carefully. *Dosai hittu* (batter) that was once left covered outside for eight to ten hours now often must be stored in the oven with the bulb on in colder climates so it rises to become fluffy and airy. Despite these technological conveniences, such practices preserve the aromas, textures, and techniques that evoke ancestral homes and sustain familial traditions.

Language, Gesture, and Cultural Expression

I have made a conscious effort to keep our native language, Kannada, alive at home. Preserving language is a deliberate act, because when language thrives, culture endures. I have witnessed the loss of ancestral cultural identity as people migrate — many either assimilate or struggle to survive, often compromising their native stories. Protecting these stories ensures that future generations can embrace and connect with their heritage.

Kannada flows through my kitchen in a blend of Kanglish (Kannada and English). Words like *rasam*, *uppu*, *hittu*, *oggarane*, and *anna* carry layered meanings that resist direct translation. Recipes are rarely written; they are narrated and retained in the mind through rhythm, timing, and gesture. This multilingual flow sustains cultural continuity, affirming that diasporic identity is layered, evolving, and deeply connected — a legacy I can pass to my children, just as my *Amma* passed it to me.

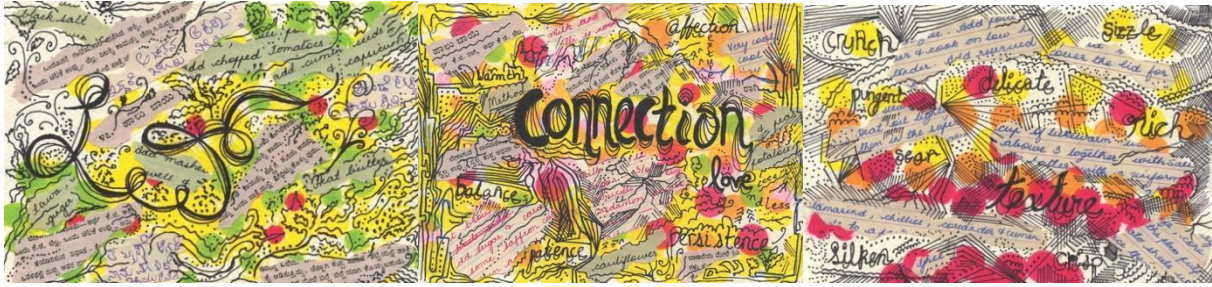


Figure 3: "The Kitchen Holds Memory as its Tools" – A design collaboration with my family for Dialogues & Dishes.

Art & Design Credit: Archana Shekara, Swapna Srikanth, Aniruddha Shekara, Aishwarya Shekara

Conclusion

Cooking together transforms domestic labor into shared care. Mysuru Masale Dosai is more than a recipe, it is memory, lineage, and design embodied through dedicated practice. Grinding, stirring, tasting — each act teaches empathy, attentiveness, and presence. Meals become opportunities to connect, listen, and share stories. The kitchen becomes a site of collective healing, a space where family, memory, and identity intersect. It is about care, continuity, and belonging.

In the United States, ingredient scarcity reshaped what we cooked, but not its meaning. Rice, lentils, coconut, and vegetables changed in form and availability, yet memory and intention endured. As the

South Indian population grew, so did the number of Indian grocery stores, restoring access to familiar ingredients. In diasporic contexts, the kitchen mediates adaptation, longing, and connection. Recognising cooking as a form of relational design and *seva* expands our understanding of design itself — to include sensory, emotional, intergenerational spaces that hold culture together. Within our kitchen, through time, we continue to design love, identity, and home.

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Mariam Sarahneh

Palestine Polytechnic University, College of Applied professions, Hebron, Palestine.

Mariam Sarahneh, a multimedia lecturer at Palestine Polytechnic University, specialising in animation and motion graphics. She holds a Master's degree in Multimedia, with a thesis examining Hyperreality through Jean Baudrillard's perspective, focusing on simulation, simulacra, and symbolic representation. Her research interests include animation, UI\UX, and the philosophical dimensions of digital media. She continues to explore how theoretical concepts can be visually articulated through animation and contemporary multimedia practices.

Evoking Heritage and Culture Symbols in Design Visual Identity

Mariam Sarahneh

Abstract

Visual identity depends on many sources for shaping and building its identity, with its content elements often coming from original symbols within their context that present implicit meanings and indicators, such as cultural symbols and visual heritage. This article aims to read and explore these kinds of symbols and their representation to reveal the nature and mechanisms of evoking cultural symbols and visual heritage in visual identity design within a new context. It seeks to understand how to revive the past in new and modern forms that visually evoke collective memory and connect it emotionally.

Keywords: Culture, Symbols, Visual identity, Design, Heritage.

Introduction

Cultural symbols and visual heritage reflect and mirror the essence of societies, playing a functional role in artistic expression to encapsulate values and beliefs through their adaptation to multimedia. We are referring to a visual text that transcends language and offers a clever metaphor with profound meanings (Xu, 2024). This convergence of meaning and form comes together through our perception of the message and our attempt to interpret it in its new context. With this impact on visual communication, we

refer to a conscious invocation that relies on collective memory and cultural identity (Udris-Borodavko et al., 2023). Perhaps the evocation of this type of symbol and visual elements stems from nostalgia of old memories in a new context through the creation of associations and emotional arousal (Li & Liu, 2023).

This article aims to explore the relationship between visual heritage and cultural symbols through their representation in the field of visual identities. It examines whether the nature of this relationship, constitute a metaphor and revival of the past in a new formulation to give it a new identity and connection to achieve greater intellectual and aesthetic value that carries the spirit of the past?

Evoking Cultural Symbols and Visual Heritage from Their Original Textual

Symbols have hidden meanings that are significant, ideological, or even prevalent within society to varying degrees in terms of their connection to their subject matter (Griffin, 2012). Cultural symbols take on different forms alongside visual heritage, functioning as signs that carry meanings contextually linked to identity, traditions, history, and culture of a society. Based on these visual formations, objects acquire meanings that are assigned by groups of individuals. Thus, they become part of a discourse expressing collective memory, the memory may connect to history, place, or religion, capable of signifying and metaphorising, just as visual signs do (Hall, 1997; Liu & Zhao, 2024).

These symbols hold special value when used or reproduced. Therefore, when invoking or simulating them, designers must act carefully, when invoking them, as this can lead to either positive or negative results. For example, the representation of The Last Supper at the 2024 Olympics in France, which caused widespread controversy over its insult to Christianity (Örsoğlu, 2025).

Specifically referring to culture symbols that is not merely representations from the past that can be transferred or reused by removing them from their context without considering their semantic significance, which is saturated with identity and values. This may create a gap between historical values and acquired meanings, leading to a loss of authenticity or distortion of meaning. Here, it becomes the designer's responsibility to strike a balance between authenticity and revival—i.e. innovation. In this regard, Walter Benjamin discusses the loss of the aura in a work of art despite its widespread, but that recalling it may result in the emergence of a version that is devoid of content and a mechanical copy (Benjamin, 1935). As Barth mentioned, the symbol may lose its historical basis and appear empty, without content, but this does not mean that it is completely lost. Rather, it weakens its connection and distances it from its origin, forming a dual presence (Griffin, 2012).

These contextual differences are reinforced based on the time period. In the modern and postmodern era, we find that the postmodern style is completely different and reflects a profound change in society. Formal features tend to be recycled “pastiche,” to evoke the form and feel of the past within a new visual space. This creates a distortion of the original truth, with what is known as

"schizophrenia," meaning that the old design and symbolism have been reinvented with a desire for renewal, experimentation. This may be conceptually linked to the recipient, the experience maybe disconnected, isolated or successfully connected (Moszkowicz, 2013).

Using Heritage and Culture Symbols in Visual identity

Some visual identity are created by borrowing visual elements through the representation of cultural heritage or symbols. We may see that the meaning has a historical and cultural affiliation that forms a transition from the past to the present, which forms perceptions that reflect the values that institutions aim to achieve and broaden the perspective around that culture. This also helps to market and spread it (Xu, 2024).

The integration and invocation of this kind offers a unique design that carries conceptual and aesthetic significance due to the symbols they evoke (Liu & Zhao, 2024). Visual identity, in its various stages, specifically in the logo creation stage, consists of semiotic structures that rely on encoding when incorporating elements such as colour, iconic or textual signs, or symbols that may contain metaphorical or cultural associations (Udris-Borodavko et al., 2023).

A question arises: how do these visual metaphors contribute to the design of visual identity through their components? Xu (2024), notes that brands that rely on cultural symbols in their identities foster the creation of connections (evoking symbols in new version), the formation of identity, and the perception of value. This type is a

dynamic interaction between heritage and traditions in a modern and innovative image.

Maybe these symbols have the ability to transcend the boundaries of society's culture; they are not merely artistic designs but rather preserve and honour cultural heritage and enhance a sense of belonging. For example, the visual identity of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar, specifically the logo, reflects a clear cultural identity through the use of visual symbols that reflect Qatari heritage (Kerry et al., 2024).

Qi and Sawatdee (2024) emphasises that the strategic use of cultural symbols is a clever move that summarises the form through conscious practice and consideration of the original models in the extraction process, which in turn promotes urban heritage. The researchers explained that through cultural symbols extracted from the city of Jinan, they helped revive the spirit of the old city and increased awareness and historical consciousness of it as a type of cultural narrative associated with the place. Similarly, a study by Liu and Zhao (2024) confirmed that designing products that incorporate and borrow cultural heritage and symbols enhances the perception of the metaphor, and cultural identity has a direct or indirect influence on the emotional value of the product, which in turn helps reinforce purchasing decisions.

Conclusion

Integrating cultural heritage and symbols into visual identity design is a complex task that demands sensitivity to the symbol's historical and cultural significance, as well as creativity in handling it, in order

to realise the deeper intellectual and moral value of the revival process.

Design as technique extends beyond aesthetics to play an essential role in shaping a cognitive and cultural role, showing collective memory visually. Visual identity, is a space for reviving symbols through new simulation that create dialogue between past and present, becoming intersected with cultural heritage through reconstruction and deconstruction to form new concepts that identity aims.

This representation or simulation should be carefully done; it is not a mechanical reproduction, and as a result, if misshapen will reflect a negative reputation on identity. In conclusion, I pose a reflective question: considering our contemporary circumstances and the era of fluid symbols and artificial intelligence, can cultural and visual heritage preserve its original meaning in the face of these challenges?

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Letter from the Chairman's Desk By Sunil Bhatia PhD

My heartiest congratulations to our contributors (1000+), Guest Editors of special monthly issues (200+), and our esteemed readers (in millions) from every nook and corner of the world for making 'Design for All' (ISSN: 2589-8304) a success story. Together, we have achieved the milestone of publishing the October 2025, Vol. 20 No. 10 special issue—celebrating our '250th' consecutive monthly issue since 2006', without missing a single month. This is your celebration!

My role has been to facilitate the 'Design for All' platform with discipline and fairness—never being judgmental about the materials submitted by our contributors—and to ensure that every issue is published on time. Working continuously for over 20 years without feeling tired remains a mystery, especially without any revenue model, as all expenses were met through personal resources. It has truly been a divine wish to continue this publication, and I consider myself merely a humble instrument in its realization.

Once again, thank you all. Enjoy the continuation of celebration of 250 the landmark of Design for All

Dr. Sunil Bhatia

Human, Nature, and the Lost Sense of Design

When I look at every living being in the known universe, I admire their sense of care and sensitivity toward the planet. They are born designers — or, in simple words, they live not by greed but with contentment, taking only what meets their needs.

I salute the wisdom of the primitive people who laid the foundation of modern humanity through their natural instincts and sheer observation of nature. The values they tried to pass on through generations were gradually lost, giving rise to a different kind of person — one far more selfish than the early human.

In nature, no being harbors hatred for another. A predator kills its prey only to satisfy hunger, and the prey bears no grudge — for it is simply the law of survival. When a prey struggles to escape, it seems to ask, “Why me, and not another?” — and that becomes the essence of life’s struggle. Predators attack only when hungry and follow nature’s law: they kill only what is necessary to satisfy their hunger. They seldom attack minors or pregnant animals.

In many herds, when escape is impossible, the males encircle the pregnant females for protection, and one member willingly sacrifices himself for the safety of others. They know the predator kills only until its hunger is satisfied.

I have seen a similar sense of responsibility in fishermen. When they catch small fish, they throw them back into the water; if they accidentally catch a pregnant fish full of eggs, they do the same. This humane practice, inherited from ancient times, still survives among some modern people.

The designers of ancient times understood how to protect the planet without disturbing its ecological balance. They wove fishing nets with carefully measured gaps — allowing water to pass through while trapping only fish of a certain size. Smaller fish could escape through the gaps, and any small or pregnant fish caught were released back into the water.

Our ancestors also showed great restraint when using nature's resources. To make bows and arrows, they selected just enough wood from a single stem, taking only what was needed.

The discovery and control of fire was another milestone — a tool that made humans powerful. While other living beings feared fire, humans learned to manage it, using its two properties: 'heat' to protect or destroy, and 'light' to see through darkness. But once fire was turned into a weapon, it became a tool of threat and domination.

The struggle for superiority grew uglier when humans began to kill one another under the guise of authority and moral justification. Weapons inflict physical pain, but their true destruction lies in the emotional and psychological wounds they cause.

From knives and swords forged from the earth's metals to the atomic bomb designed for mass destruction — the journey of weapons is the story of human greed.

When ancient humans learned to keep a fire alive using tinder and large logs, it was considered a step forward for humanity. Later, the invention of the matchstick — the ability to spark fire anytime, anywhere — liberated people from dependence and allowed them to cook freely. But when the same principle of controlled fire was used

to create mechanisms of destruction, it became a threat to the planet.

Even the care shown to the injured or immobilized — such as a fractured person receiving shared food — laid the foundation of a caring society. This compassion led to the birth of medicine and science, discovering cures to prolong life. Yet, the same science became dangerous when turned toward biological warfare.

About 99% of people seek local solutions to local problems — and that is good. Progress came when small local inventions like the comb or mirror became universally accepted without fear or greed. But trouble begins when the 1% — the greedy — impose their ideas as universal solutions. We witnessed this mindset during the COVID-19 crisis.

If the world came to a standstill — with no commercial activity and minimal human intervention — the Earth would recover swiftly. COVID showed us how nature heals when humans retreat; skies cleared, rivers ran cleaner, and life found balance once again.

Our ancestors knew the value of pain and safety. When danger arose, they used a stick to strike a predator from a distance, forcing it to release its prey. It was a brilliant design — to inflict pain without risking oneself. But over time, humans used this concept not for safety but for domination — turning sticks into tools of torture to control others. What began as a way to save lives evolved into methods of punishment and oppression.

History offers countless examples showing that societies rooted in care, sensitivity, and simplicity thrive. I belong to Punjab — my parents migrated from Pakistan's Punjab to India during the 1947

Partition. The ancient Indus or Harappan civilization flourished there without formal government or religion, yet people lived happily.

During my recent visit to Finland, locals told me their country had functioned for over two years without an elected government — and everything still worked better than under politicians. I thought: 'They are so advanced that their country runs on auto-mode — progress without greed or encroachment, respect for personal space.'

Similarly, in tribal areas, I found people living harmoniously without government interference. They protect rivers, ponds, mountains, and forests as custodians for future generations. Each year, they celebrate their success in preserving natural resources through festivals and carnivals.

Their lives are simple; they live without greed, domesticate animals responsibly, and allow them to roam freely. Dogs, for example, wear metal collars with spikes to protect their necks from predators but are never chained or caged.

The transformation of open amphitheaters into walled auditoriums marks humanity's shift from collective joy to commercial exploitation. What once belonged to all became restricted to those who could pay. As long as humans continue to exploit life under the pretext of "progress," the planet will never know equality or harmony.

Nature itself offers great lessons. When a small bird feels threatened, it sometimes carries a burning straw and drops it into the forest — setting it ablaze to drive predators away. In no time, centuries-old trees turn to ashes. This tiny bird, fragile yet powerful,

mirrors humanity: capable of immense destruction in moments of fear or greed.

In contrast, the humble squirrel becomes a silent farmer — burying seeds for future use, forgetting them, and thereby planting forests. Nature rebuilds itself quietly, without human help.

Once, during the construction of the Metro Rail, engineers debated what to do with the excess soil dug from deep underground. Some suggested using it in public gardens. I asked my superior, “Do you have any sense? Soil from fifty or sixty feet below has no fertility — only the top two meters contain life-giving bacteria, formed over centuries. If we use deep earth for gardens, we will destroy fertility, not renew it.”

No human can create even the smallest bacterium that sustains life, nor can we create mountains or rivers. Before humanity existed, the Earth already had rivers, mountains, and the endless cycle of construction and destruction. Yet, man acts as the planet’s custodian, as though he owns it.

We are nothing in the eyes of nature. The universe’s canvas is vast beyond imagination. As designers, we can perhaps delay destruction, but we cannot control it. Man’s intellect, once a gift, has become explosive — driving him to control even other planets like the Moon or Mars.

From the discovery of fire to the invention of the atomic bomb, every stage of our progress reveals one thing — the greed to dominate. Even massive dams, built under the guise of human benefit, slow the Earth’s rotation slightly — yet we call it progress.

We are like the small bird that burns her forest for survival, forgetting that her fire consumes her home too.

Worst of all, man has exploited nature's greatest gift — reproduction — for commercial gain. He has violated fellow humans, animals, and plants alike. Such a being cannot be trusted to save the planet.

My humble request to all humanity: 'Do not interfere.'

Simply leave the planet as it was before humans arrived.

That would be the greatest service mankind could offer to this beautiful Earth.

We are very fortunate that Dr Dolly Daou was introduced to us by Prof Christian. He was invited as Guest Editor for our special issue and that issue she was invited as contributor by Guest Editor.

I am admirer of her for her dedication, sincerity and passion for design. She has such vast network of designers and has creative idea of designing special issue different from run of the mill format was not known to me. I hope you will enjoy voices of creative women designers from every part of the world with the theme of 'Limitless'

With Regards

Dr. Sunil Bhatia

Design for All Institute of India

www.designforall.in

dr_subha@yahoo.com

[Tel:91-11-45793470\(R\)](tel:91-11-45793470)

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Forthcoming Issues

Year 2025 declared as Women's Designer December 2025 Vol-20 No-12



Josyane FRANC

**JF- International Design Networks Expert, independent consultant,
Knight of French National Order of Merit / Chevalier de l'Ordre
National du Mérite de France**

Ms. Josyane Franc is an international expert with over 35 years of experience in the field of international cultural relations, art and design project conception, management and coordination, co-curating exhibitions, jury design competitions, mentor etc. She is a Design networks Expert and independent consultant since 2019 involved in European and international projects. In 2021, for her career and commitment to culture with outstanding contributions, she was awarded Chevalier de l'Ordre National du Mérite /Knight of the National Order of Merit, one the highest French National civilian awards.

Her career includes the roles of Director of international affairs for the Cité du Design and Saint-Etienne School of Art and Design (ESADSE)- France 1989-2019, member of the founding committee of the Biennale Internationale Design Saint-Étienne in 1998 till 2019, Human Cities Challenging the city scale leader 2014-2018 and focal point for Saint-Etienne UNESCO creative city of design 2010-2019.

January 2026 Vol-21 No-1



Jani Nayar

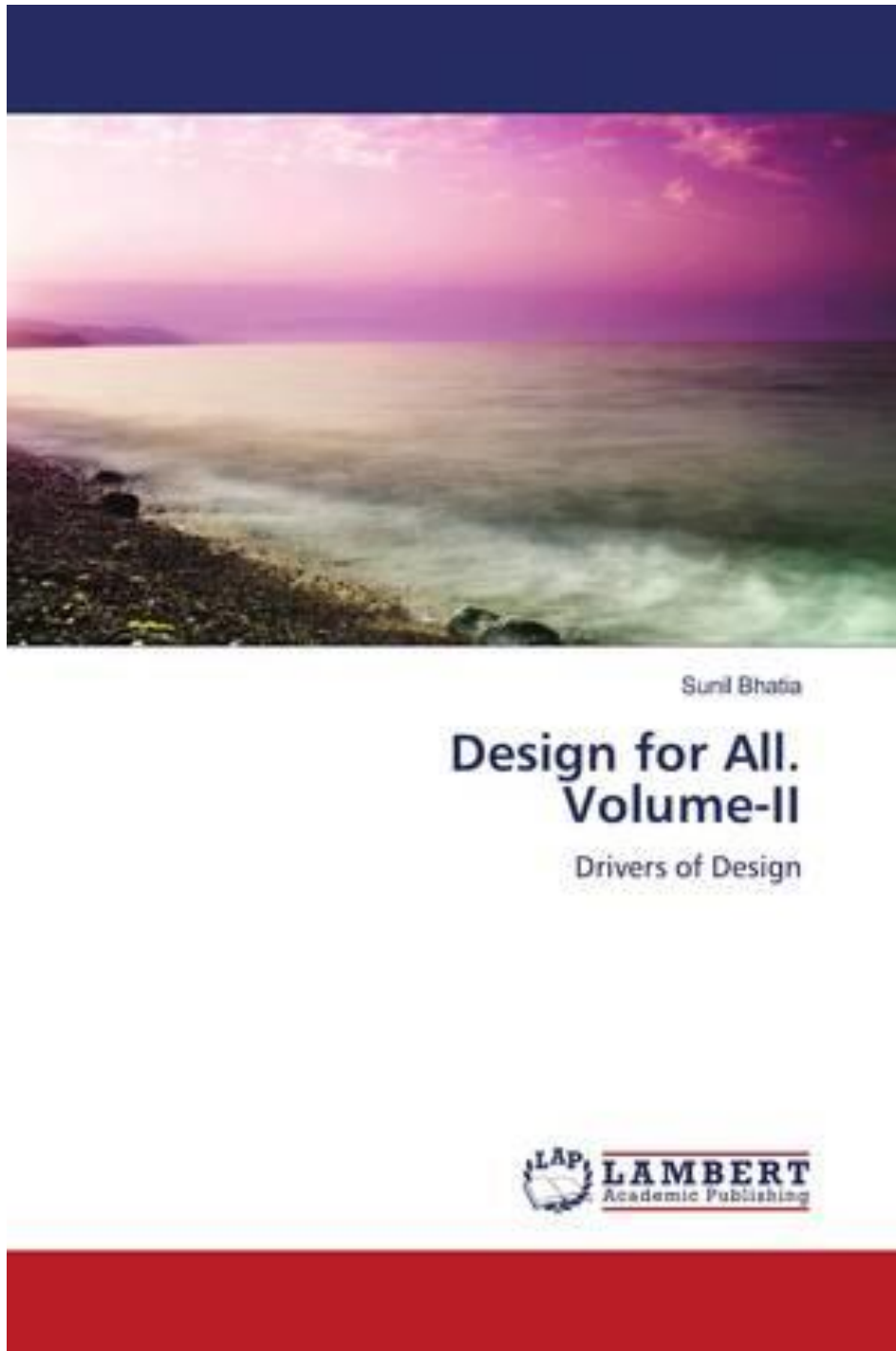
She found it in the Society for Accessible Travel & Hospitality (SATH), an organization dedicated to making the world more welcoming for travelers with disabilities. Since 2024, the name was changed to Society for Accessible Tourism & Hospitality, keeping the acronym SATH.

What began as a role in tour operations quickly grew into a deep, lifelong commitment. Jani served as SATH's Executive Coordinator before becoming its Executive Director, a role in which she now serves as the organization's voice, advocate, and bridge between communities, governments, and industry leaders. Her mission: to ensure that travel is a right, not a privilege, for people of all abilities.

Her work has taken her to some of the world's most significant platforms for accessible travel. She has spoken and led workshops at events including the World Summit Destinations for All in Montreal, the Adventure Travel World Summit, the Africa Travel Association, the New York Travel Show, the Caribbean Tourism Conference, the Abilities Expo, the World Congress on Disabilities, the International Institute on Peace through Tourism, the Adventure Tour Operators' Association of India, SATTE in

India, ReaTech and the World Tourism Forum in Brazil, and the First Symposium on Accessible Tourism in Ecuador—among many others.

New Books



<https://www.morebooks.shop/shop-ui/shop/book-launch-offer/74414a1df61c3d2ea8bf46ae7e3c0cf31769f261>



Sunil Bhatia

Design for All

Drivers of Design

Expression of gratitude to unknown, unsung, unacknowledged, unnamed and selfless millions of heroes who have contributed immensely in making our society worth living, their design of comb, like, fireworks, glass, mirror even thread concept have revolutionized the thought process of human minds and prepared blueprint of future. Modern people may take for granted but its beyond imagination the hardships and how these innovative ideas could strike their minds. Discovery of fire was possible because of its presence in nature but management of fire through manmade designs was a significant attempt of thinking beyond survival and not

doubt this contributed in establishing our supremacy over other living beings. Somewhere in journey of progress we lost the legacy of ancestors in shaping minds of future generations and completely ignored their philosophy and established a society that was beyond their imagination. I picked up such drivers that have contributed in our progress and continue guiding but we failed to recognize its role and functions. Even tears, confusion in designing products was marvelous attempt and design of ladder and many more helped in sustainable, inclusive growth.

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it is available on www.morebooks.de one of the largest online bookstores. Here's the link to it:

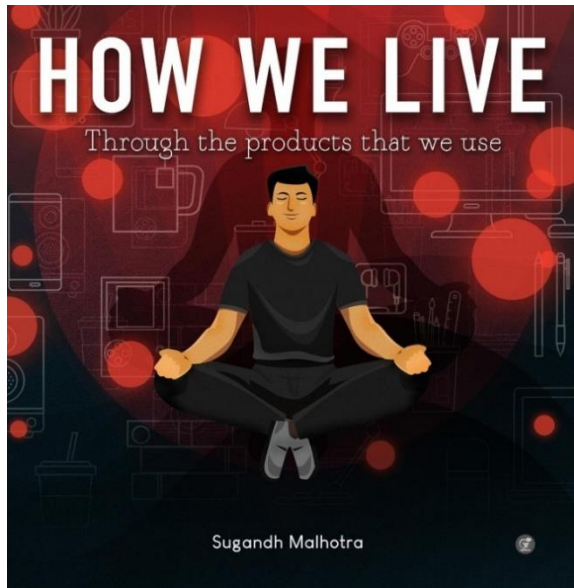
<https://www.morebooks.de/store/gb/book/design-for-all/isbn/978-613-9-83306-1>

HOW WE LIVE: Through the Products that We Use

Authored by : Sugandh Malhotra,

Professor, IDC School of Design, IIT Bombay (INDIA)

Sugandh(at)iitb.ac.in



Products tell stories about their users, their likes, tastes and journeys. 'How We Live' book aims to outlay, document and study the used products and create a persona of the users through a brief narrative. This visual documentation book is an excellent resource to observe and acknowledge the subtle differences in choices that are driven by nuances other than personal preferences.



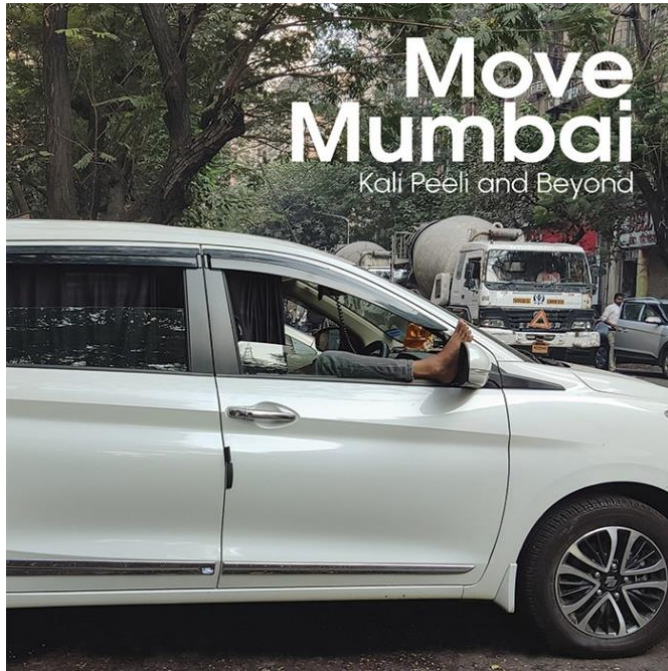
Available at: [Amazon.in](https://www.amazon.in), [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com), [Astitva Prakashan](https://www.astitva.com)

MOVE MUMBAI: Kaali Peeli and Beyond

Authored by : Vivek Kant, Sugandh Malhotra, Angshuman Das, Tekhenutso Theriah

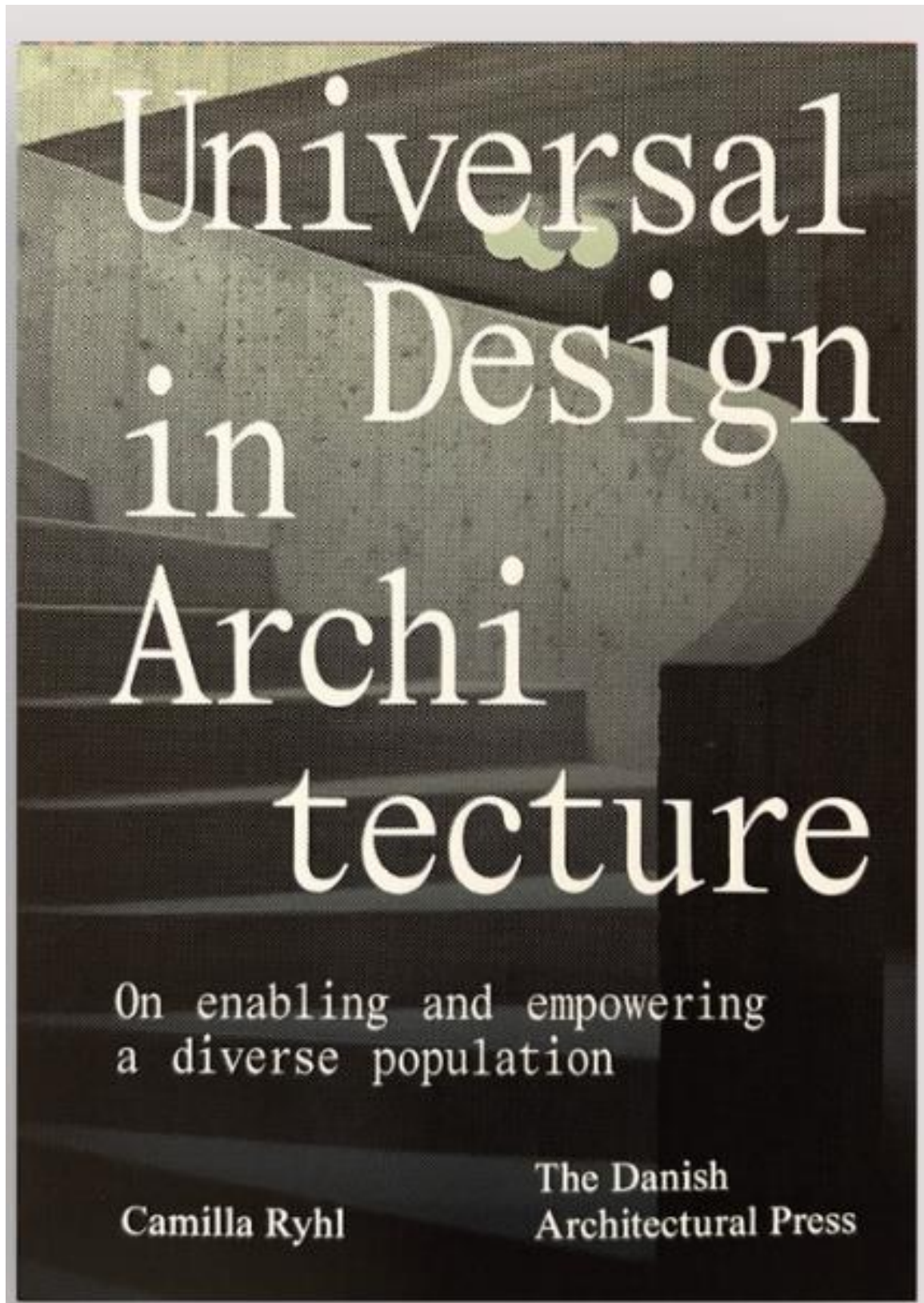
IDC School of Design, IIT Bombay (INDIA)

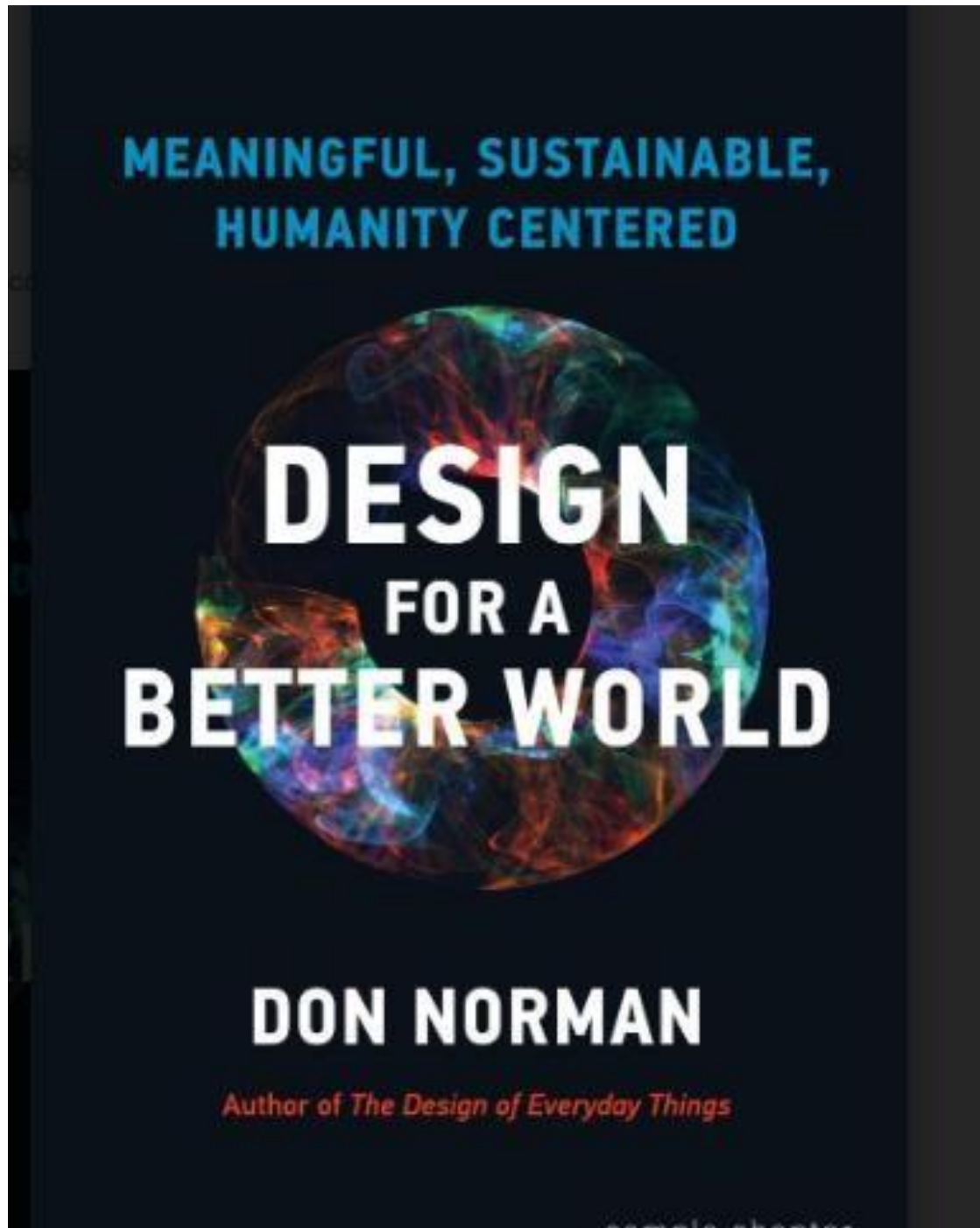
Sugandh(at)iitb.ac.in



Move Mumbai” is an incredulous yet everyday traffic story from the streets of Mumbai captured through a series of photographs. We closely observe how Mumbaikars use their vehicles, and live with and around them. From cab drivers to bus passengers, from goods carriers to bikers, to children, and pedestrians, Mumbaikars encounter hundreds of vehicles daily while commuting between any two places whether they may or may not be in one themselves. While a two-wheeler motorbike is designed to carry two people. Mumbaikars still manage to fit multiple, especially younger children, in ways that a designer would typically not envision. This reflects in certain ways the economic constraints faced by many Indian families, the cultural value placed on integrated family living, and their resourcefulness. This is one of the many ways in which the city dwellers have appropriated vehicles. We hope that the readers relook at these everyday images with a new pair of eyes to understand the seemingly mundane yet incredulous images of the mobility of Mumbaikars.

Available at: [Amazon.in](https://www.amazon.in), [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com), [Astitva Prakashan](https://www.astitva.com)





Emilio Rossi (Editor)

Innovation Design for Social Inclusion and Sustainability

Design Cultures and Creative Practices for Urban Natural Heritage



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News

1 UNDP strengthens Ukraine's inclusive driving system via training in Netherlands

Study visit by staff of Ukrainian interior ministry to Dutch driving agency for training enhances national capacity to ensure accessible and safe driving instruction.



Photo credit: Denys Kuzmenko / UNDP Ukraine

The Netherlands, 17 November 2025 — Six staff from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine have completed a two-week intensive training course in the Netherlands aimed at advancing Ukraine's system for providing inclusive and accessible driving instruction.

The training was organised by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Ukraine at the request of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, in cooperation with the Central Driving License Bureau of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (CBR), and with the financial support of the Government of Japan. The completion of the course is an important milestone in strengthening Ukraine's institutional capacity to ensure that everyone – including people with disabilities – can access safe and high-quality driving instruction.

The training visit is part of a broader training programme delivered by the CBR, which combines both online and in-person learning. Its goal is to expand access for people with disabilities to driving instruction, and to integrate European Union (EU) driving licence coding standards into Ukraine's emerging inclusive driving system.

Building on previous cooperation between UNDP, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and Japan – which included the delivery of specially adapted vehicles to barrier-free driving schools – this new stage focuses on institutional development and the introduction of modern approaches to training instructors and assessing driving fitness.

Reflecting on the initiative, Auke Lootsma, UNDP Resident Representative in Ukraine, emphasised that lasting progress towards inclusion depends on sustained cooperation and shared vision.

"This training demonstrates how sustained cooperation can turn inclusive principles into long-term change," Lootsma noted. "With the continued support of the Government of Japan, UNDP is helping to build systems that make accessibility part of everyday life. When partnerships like this combine expertise and shared vision, inclusion becomes not just an ambition, but a lasting reality that defines Ukraine's recovery and public services."

The Netherlands' structured, evidence-based approach to assessing driving fitness – which combines a medical evaluation, practical testing, and the use of assistive technologies – offers valuable insights for Ukraine's own reforms. The experience gained will help shape national standards for driver assessment, advancing Ukraine's commitment to building a barrier-free environment.

As part of Ukraine's broader vision of equal access to mobility, the Ministry of Internal Affairs is introducing Barrier-Free Driving Schools and new methods for instructors and examiners.

"The development of inclusive driving education is one of the ministry's priorities, as it directly affects people's ability to live and work independently," said Kateryna Pavlichenko, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of Ukraine. *"By learning from the Dutch model, we can enhance the way instructors and examiners work with people with disabilities, making Barrier-Free Driving Schools a nationwide standard and ensuring that equal access to mobility becomes a reality for all."*

During the two-week programme, the Ukrainian delegation took part in a comprehensive session hosted by the CBR in Rijswijk and Andelst, combining theory with field practice. The training covered key topics such as physical fitness assessments, the use of assistive devices and vehicle adaptations, and the application of EU driving licence codes. Participants also observed real-life assessments by Dutch experts, gaining first-hand experience in how inclusive approaches function in practice.

CBR Chief Operations Officer Jan Jurgen Huizing underscored the value of institutional partnerships in building inclusive mobility systems.

"Sharing our practical experience is an important part of supporting countries that are developing inclusive models of driver assessment and training," noted Huizing. *"Partnerships like this help transform technical expertise into real improvements in people's mobility and independence."*

This initiative shows how strong partnerships, shared expertise, and a commitment to inclusion can create sustainable systems that ensure equal opportunities for all. Through continued cooperation, Ukraine is taking tangible steps towards a future where mobility is accessible, safe, and empowering – for everyone.

Media enquiries: Yuliia Samus, UNDP Ukraine Head of Communications and Advocacy; e-mail: yuliia.samus@undp.org

(Courtesy : UNDP)

2. CEUD: Report published on AI and Disability Inclusion in Ireland



With the European Accessibility Act having come into effect in June 2025 and the EU AI Act the summer prior, policies around accessibility and artificial intelligence are converging. For organisations in Ireland, this means considering accessibility and inclusion from the get-go when designing and deploying AI systems.

For people with disabilities, AI offers significant opportunities to enhance accessibility and independence, while also raising new risks that demand careful oversight. [A recent report by the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design](#) at The National Disability Authority explores these dynamics in the Irish context, analysing how AI may reshape six critical sectors—education, employment, healthcare, financial services, active citizenship, and leisure.

AI technologies—particularly multimodal systems that combine text, speech, images, and video—are opening new ways for people with disabilities to communicate, learn, and engage with services. For example, Large Language Models (LLMs) can convert text to speech, simplify technical documents, or generate real-time translations. In healthcare, AI holds potential for early diagnosis and personalised treatment. In education, it can adapt learning materials to individual needs. Irish employment services could use AI to match people with disabilities with jobs more effectively, while AI-driven tools in finance may improve access to banking and benefits. Even in leisure,

AI has begun to make cultural, gaming, and travel experiences more inclusive.

The thread connecting these developments is AI's potential to remove barriers that have historically limited participation for people with disabilities. If designed using a universal design approach, AI could help build a more inclusive society where accessibility is embedded in the core of digital and public life.

Yet, alongside these opportunities lie serious risks. People with disabilities are significantly underrepresented in AI training data. This means that systems may produce biased or exclusionary outcomes, from job-screening tools to credit scoring models. Moreover, AI interfaces are designed around limited interaction modes, excluding people who rely on alternative communication methods. Even "explainable AI" tools that aim to make decisions transparent often rely heavily on visuals, leaving out users with visual impairments. Privacy and security concerns also loom large, particularly when sensitive health or disability data is involved and when poorly designed systems might deny supports or misinterpret disability-related needs.

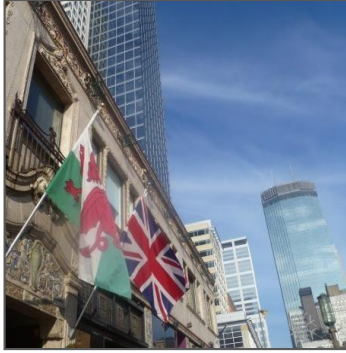
These risks underline the importance of involving people with disabilities in AI development and ensuring universal design principles guide both technology and policy.

The aforementioned report from the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design underscores that Ireland is at a pivotal moment. The promise of AI lies in its ability to transform services and daily life for all people, including those with disabilities, but this potential will only be realised if universal design is prioritised from the outset. Effective regulation, cross-authority collaboration, and ongoing involvement of disabled people are critical to ensuring AI enhances inclusion rather than creating new barriers.

As AI moves from concept to lived reality, the choices made today—in design, regulation, and oversight—will shape whether it becomes a tool for empowerment or exclusion. As AI implementation expands, the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design will continue

to share relevant information about AI, accessibility and Universal Design: universaldesign.ie/ai.

(Courtesy :Business and Finance)



Programme and Events



Spark Student Design Awards: Any current University-level (or above) student, in any design category. (All entries in this competition must be student work, not professional work. Entries may be submitted from any time period of the student's study –could be a piece from last year).

Meet the changemakers driving the future of Humanity-Centred Design



19 - 21 Nov 2025



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Best of KBIS Awards Now Open for 2026 Entries



Best of KBIS Awards Now Open for 2026 Entries.jpg

The Kitchen and Bath Industry Show (KBIS) has opened applications for the premier awards program, Best of KBIS, that will spotlight industry excellence in 2026.



Purpose:

To conceptualize and prototype digital/tech solutions that make accessibility audits faster, richer, and easier to implement across campuses, public buildings, and heritage sites.

**Who can apply:**

Open to all current students (UG/PG) of SPA Bhopal. Individual or team entries (up to 5 members) are permitted. Interdisciplinary teams are encouraged. If the students are making teams with students of other institutions, then 50% of the team should be from SPA Bhopal.

अंकेक्षण – 2025 STUDENT COMPETITION

UNIVERSAL DESIGN INNOVATION

“TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION TO FACILITATE ACCESS AUDIT IN THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT”

Sponsored by: Universal Design Innovation theme, Design Innovation Centre (DIC), Ministry of Education (MoE)

PROBLEM FOCUS

- Mobile or web apps for access audits (checklists, photo/GPS tagging, barrier scoring)
- GIS dashboards/heat maps of environmental barriers
- Sensor/IoT based hazard detection
- Voice command-based audit tools and report generators
- Data pipelines for audit compliance against standards (RPwD Act, Harmonised Guidelines 2021, NBC etc.)
- Plug-ins for quick BoQ/costing of retrofit options
- Any other innovation

EXPECTED DELIVERABLES

- 2-page concept note (problem, user, method, impact)
- Working prototype or interactive mock-up (APK/URL/video demo 2–3 min)
- Sample audit dataset and auto-generated report page/screen
- One-page implementation plan (pilot site, stakeholders, risks)

AWARDS & RECOGNITION:

1st Prize
₹15,000

2nd Prize
₹10,000

Certificates for winners and shortlisted teams

EVALUATION CRITERIA (100 MARKS)

- Relevance to Universal Design & audit workflows (20)
- User-centricity & inclusivity (15)
- Technical soundness & feasibility (20)
- Innovation & originality (15)
- Impact, scalability & replicability (20)
- Clarity of pilot documentation/ demo (10)

• Mentorship & support:

DIC will host one online session on methods, datasets, and standards; shortlisted teams may access SPAB lab/software support for final refinements

• Intellectual Property & ethics:

IP generated will follow DIC/MoE norms. Solutions must respect data privacy, consent, and safety. Use only lawful/open datasets or those created by the team with permissions.

• How to submit:

Single ZIP (max 200 MB) named TeamName_ProjectTitle.zip containing all deliverables to be sent to udihapp@spabhopal.ac.in

REGISTRATION LINK:

<https://forms.gle/EcFZHr5DKcePfKbY8>

KEY DATES:

- Call launch: **3rd October**
- Registration deadline: **15th October** (by 5:00 PM IST)
- Final submission: **10th November** (by 5:00 PM IST)
- Jury presentations & results: **15th November** (by 5:00 PM IST)

Coordinator: Prof. Rachna Khare,
Professor, Department of Architecture

Co-Coordinator: Ar. Aditi Dwivedi,
Assistant Professor, Department of Architecture



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Chief-Editor:



**Dr.Sunil Kumar Bhatia Faculty Member,
13, Lodhi Institutional Area, Lodhi Road, New Delhi-
110003(INDIA)
E-mail:dr_subha@yahoo.com**

Editor:



**Shri L.K. Das
Former Head Industrial Design Center, Indian Institute of
Technology (Delhi),
India E-
mail:lalitdas@gmail.com**

Associate Editor:



**Prof Dr Rachna Khare, School of planning and *Architecture* ,
Bhopal,
India
E-mail:
rachnakhare@spabhopal.ac.in
Editorial Board:**



**Prof Dr.Gaurav Raheja, Indian Institute of Technology,
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Mumbai, India**

Email: sugandh@iitb.ac.in



**Prof Dr Ravindra Singh, Delhi Technological University,
India**

Email: ravindra@dtu.ac.in

Special Correspondent:

**Ms. Nemisha Sharma,
Mumbai, India**

Nemisha98@gmail.com

Address for Correspondence:

**13, Lodhi Institutional Area,
Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110 003India.**

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**Special request should be addressed to
Dr_subha@yahoo.com**

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