

Exploring Environmental Histories of Design: Reflections and Insights (W2)

Hello! Welcome back to my blog!

This week I kept on reading the 'Environmental Histories of Design' article and which did eventually get a little challenging to understand but that I overall found very interesting.

Figure 1: Venn Diagram illustrating Environmental Histories of Design.



I actually really resonated with the first part of the article and what the authors were saying about the lack of exchange between environmental history and design history and how it is limiting our broader understanding of the environmental histories of design. Something I thought about a lot as well is what they were saying about design as an 'ideology' versus as a 'materiality' and how it is not just the physical design that has an impact on its surrounding environment but also, and sometimes

mostly, the ideas and symbols that come with it and how it can condition ways of life and shape society, especially in the consumerist world we live in today. It is interesting to notice that modern consumerism is more concerned with that matter of ideology rather than the matter of materiality. I don't know if that is necessarily is a bad thing but it definitely should be considered when designing, and especially when designing for the environment. In the world we live in today, it is hard, even for dedicated environmentalists, to place ourselves completely out of society. This made me think back on the 'environmentally conscious' design example I used in my last blog (a reusable cup) and how an object like that technically still contributes to consumerism.

As I said before the second half of the article is when I started to get a little bit lost but I did agree with their main point being that environmental histories of design would benefit from a wider variety of approaches. I later understood that this article serves as an introduction to the rest of the Journal of Design History which makes the brief summary of various article make more sense.

During the seminar on Thursday, I got to share my thoughts and questions and was reassured in noticing that quite a few people also seemed confused by the second half of the article. Together and with the help of our teacher we slowly made sense out of the structure of this second half. It was also very interesting to see the relevance of articles like

the one we just read in different sectors of art and design. For example, I personally really resonate with what was being said in this article and feel that the field of interior design could immensely benefit from a environmental histories of interior design but another classmate who studies animation found it harder to resonate with as most of the work she produces is digital.

I look forward to the debate next week and am very interested in seeing what comes out of it. Until then I hope to continue reading resources from the list and put together arguments for the debate.

Bibliography:

Deleted: Fallan, K. and Jørgensen, F.A. (2017). Environmental Histories of Design: Towards a New Research Agenda. *Journal of Design History*, 30(2), pp.103–121. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1093/jdh/epx017>.

Figure 1: Noel, E. (2024d). *Venn Diagram Illustrating Environmental Histories of Design*. own work.

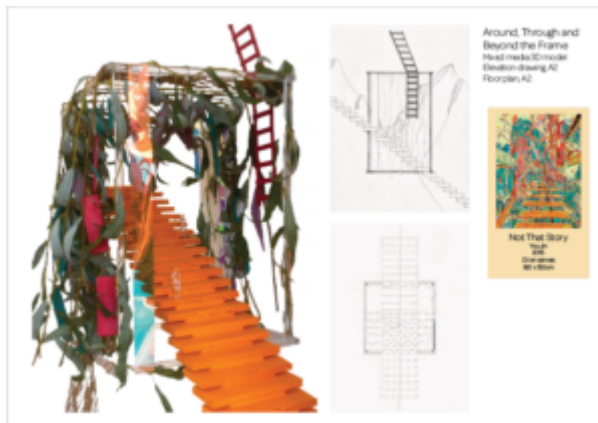
Hello, I'm Emilie! (W1)

Hello! I'm Emilie!

I'm a third-year interior design student from Waterloo, Belgium and I am really looking forward to this course.

I am very passionate about art and design, but I am equally passionate about our beautiful planet and its conservation. Growing up, I was lucky to move around the world and explore the amazing wonders of nature, so I want to learn more about how we can avoid harming it or, even better, help protect it. I have always been very interested in the relationship between design and the environment and, a couple years ago, got to have a closer look at it with a research paper on ecological safari lodges in the Masai Mara in Kenya and the different approaches they undertake to minimise their environmental impact in a place where their surrounding environment is key to their business and success. Nature is always such a big source of inspiration in my works and can almost more or less be found in them.

Figure 1: Pages from my portfolio of works inspired by nature.





In my field of study, I am now particularly interested in scenography and set design which are areas that could do a lot better in terms of its environmental impact and quantity of waste material produced. I also look forward to applying what I learn in this class to the retail project for my interior design course.

I unfortunately could not make it to the first seminar this week but had prepared the environmentally conscious piece of design I wanted to bring along which is simply the reusable coffee cup that I use everyday. As a coffee lover, the number of disposable coffee cups I was using and throwing away every week was quite a lot and investing in a reusable cup is a simple investment

that has significantly reduced the amount of disposable cup I use. The cup I use is also made of recycled materials which further reduces its environmental impact. Single use plastics and containers make up a big portion of individual waste and is something that can easily be reduced by everyone.

This week I got started on reading the 'Environmental Histories of Design: Towards a New Research Agenda' article by Kjetil Fallan and Fin Arne Jorgensen. So far, I find their argument that there is a need to make more efforts to connect environmental history and design history very true. Their question 'what does it mean to be an environmentalist and live in a world of things?' has really stuck with me and is something I would like to pay more attention to in my everyday life. I look forward to hearing my classmates' thoughts on this article during the reading group next Thursday.

Bibliography:

Fallan, K. and Jørgensen, F.A. (2017). Environmental Histories of Design: Towards a New Research Agenda. *Journal of Design History*, 30(2), pp.103–121. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1093/jdh/epx017>.

Figure 1: Noel, E. (2024c). *Pages from My Portfolio of Works Inspired by Nature*. own work.