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THE WOMEN'S MAKING



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PAD

via Festa del Perdono 1 – 20122 Milano – Italy

via Roma 171 – 90133 Palermo – Italy

info@padjournal.net – editors@padjournal.net

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IV

INTERVIEWS

Women Sensibility Applied to New Materials and Technologies Processes / 2

Interview to Nicole Hone

Shujun Ban

Qingdao University of Technology

Marinella Ferrara

Politecnico di Milano

Abstract

Nicole Hone is a young designer who completed her master's degree in Design Innovation with professor Ross Stevens as the supervisor, at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, in 2018. Her master thesis is focused on the design of organic performance and the choreographed movement with emerging technologies. Her project Hydrophytes shows the feminine perspective on digital fabrication for designing alive physical objects inspired by research into the biology and synthetic biology to imagine solutions to the climate change problems of the ocean and marine species. Her futuristic creatures are made of multi-material 3D/4D printing and create immersive physical-based experiences through the video recording of their movements. The futuristic function of Hydrophytes encourages thought about the health of our future climate and the role of design in connecting man and nature. During the early stages of his project, experimenting with multi-materials 3D printing, Nicole found that the materials perform smoother and more organically in water as fragile parts are better supported. Having known that there were plans to redesign the National Aquarium of New Zealand, Nicole proposed to have a future-focused exhibition with moving aquatic creatures models that visitors could interact with. This idea, combined with her personal be fascinated with nature, lead to the concept of the futuristic aquatic plants, that include arrow pods, feather nurses, nomadic cleaners, haven flowers. Nicole chose to use PolyJet technology as it is excellent for printing small objects with fragile parts and complex organic forms with internal structures. We interviewed Nicole with questions focusing on her project and women's sensibilities in design and technology.



Figure 1. Nicole Hone and her biological creature sketches. Courtesy of Nicole Hone.

Q: What are the motivations of this project? What did they inspire you? Why did you want to create aquatic plants with multi-material 3D printing? Why were aquatic plants? What is the meaning you want to transmit with the new forms of life of your creations?

A:

- Futuristic Aquatic Plants

I have always been fascinated with nature; it inspires my design ideas and aesthetic. For this project, I became particularly interested in botany and marine life. I was amazed by the way sea creatures and corals moved and wanted to reflect similar qualities in my designs. During the early stages of test prints, I found that the materials performed smoother and more organically in water as fragile parts were supported better. At the beginning of my master's project, I also discovered that there were plans to redesign the National Aquarium of New Zealand. I thought “wouldn't it be really cool to have a future-focused exhibition with moving models that visitors could interact with?”. This idea, combined with my personal

interests and discoveries from the testing phase lead to the concept of futuristic aquatic plants.

- Hydrophytes. Research for the Film and Exhibition Industry

The *Hydrophytes* were created as part of a research project for a Master of Design Innovation degree at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. My thesis focused on how to design and choreograph movement with multi-material 3D/4D printing. I was also looking at how this technology could be applied within the field of entertainment/education. I found that immersive experiences are becoming a growing trend in the film and exhibition and industries. Contemporary museums are becoming more *visitor-centered* and offering content that encourages us to think about the future and challenging issues. Filmic worlds are expanding into theme parks to provide multi-sensory visitor experiences. With the alluring visual effects seen in movies, there is also a desire to reach out and touch the objects behind the screen. Within these contexts, I noticed that digital-based experiences were thriving but physical-based ones perhaps seemed less exciting and showed slow progress with the integration of new technology. My research proposed that physical objects, created with multi-material 3D/4D printing, have value in creating immersive physical-based experiences.

- Multi-Material Printing with PolyJet

I chose to use PolyJet technology as it is excellent for printing small objects with fragile parts and complex organic forms with internal structures. One unique opportunity is the ability to simultaneously print rigid and flexible materials which is beneficial for crafting the movement of objects. Existing de-

signs have not fully utilized the flexibility offered by PolyJet technology, leaving the aesthetics and application of organic movement relatively unexplored. Designs that were dynamic tended to focus on a single or basic motion or lacked a supporting context. My research aimed to showcase the artistic potential and industry application of this new technology by exploring a range of complex movements with 4D printing. Adding the dimension of time allows the creation of 3D printed objects that can move or change their shape or appearance – 4D printing. With multi-material printing, the appearance and behavior of objects can be designed with minimal post-processing.

- Speculative Design

The futuristic function of the *Hydrophytes* was inspired by research into synthetic biology and how climate change is affecting the ocean and marine species. Contextualized within the film, the Hydrophytes encourage thought about the health of our future climate and the role of design in connecting man and nature.

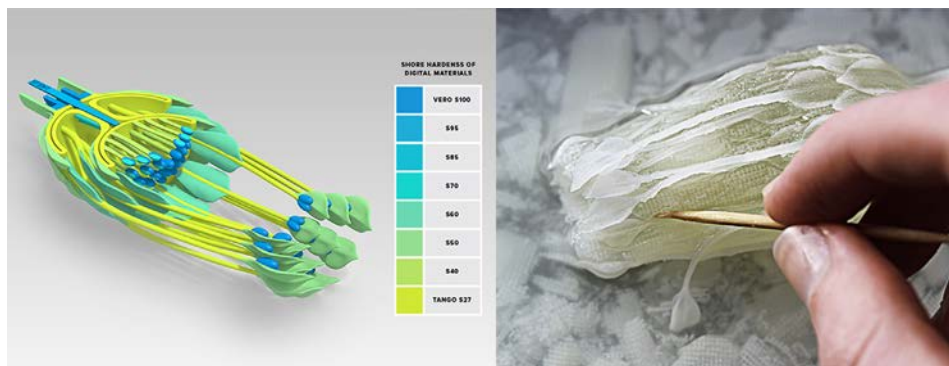


Figure 2. Nicole Hone, a digital drawing of the cross section view of the *Heaven Flower* (from *Hydrophytes* project), and Nicole carefully cleaning off the support material after 3D printing. Courtesy of Nicole Hone.



Figure 3. Nicole Hone, *Nomadic Cleaner* from *Hydrophytes* projects, a futuristic aquatic plant, 2018. Courtesy of Nicole Hone.

Q: How did you get the films of aquatic plants? They're really amazing! How long did design and printing take? What were the major difficulties for you in approaching the 4D printing technology and advanced materials in your project?

A: The *Hydrophytes* were filmed in a small fish tank while their movement was activated through a series of hand-held pumps. Coloured light was applied using an LED projector to complement the personality of each plant and enhance the perception of sentience. Filming took place across two days. The final film is true to life with no effects created in post-production. The *Hydrophytes* were developed over approximately four months within the master's research project. This included generating ideas, sketching, 3D modelling, material testing,

3D printing, cleaning, filming and evaluating. The objects themselves only took a few hours to be printed on the Stratasys machine. More time was required to carefully clean off the jelly-like support material that encased the objects. One major challenge for this project was the initial unpredictability of the materials and the resulting movement. The soft Tango material used at the time has low elasticity and durability levels, meaning a large amount of testing was required to understand tolerances and the behaviors of the materials.

Q: Do you think this technology is much better used for simulating natural creatures?

A: The way that PolyJet technology creates objects is becoming more like biology. A designer can control variation in material shore hardness, opacity and colour. With blends of hard bone-like structures and soft flesh-like areas printed in a single object, the materials feel and behave in strangely organic ways. Due to these aesthetic and performative qualities, multi-material 3D/4D printing is well-suited to simulating natural creatures.



Figure 4. Nicole Hone, interacting with the *Imp-root Hydrophyte* creature. Courtesy of Nicole Hone.

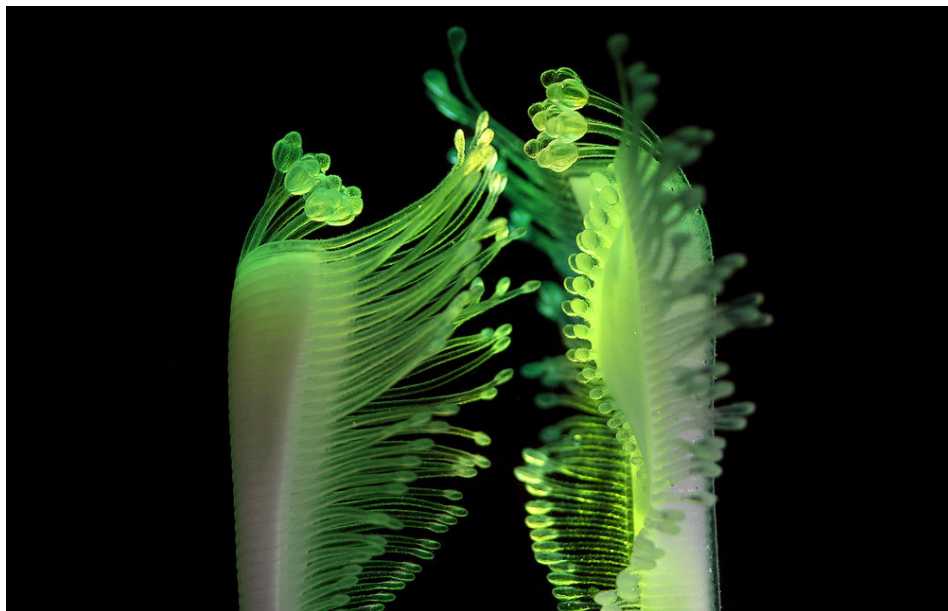


Figure 5. Nicole Hone, *Features Nurse* from *Hydrophytes* projects. Courtesy of Nicole Hone.

Q: Is there any audience or market demand for this project?

A: This type of 4D printing offers advantages for the film and exhibition industries. Film props designed with multi-material 4D printing could help prompt genuine reactions from actors and create convincing object-environment interactions. These props could even be used at promotional events or theme parks based around the film. There is also the possibility to create immersive educational experiences within the contemporary museum space. For example, natural history museums or aquariums could feature 4D printed animals to create exciting, interactive encounters for guests. With the efficiency of designing and manufacturing multiple variations of creatures such as the *Hydrophytes*, entire “forests” could be created with

diversity in character and movement. I think the tangible aspect of this technology is quite amazing making it great for use in the film collectables market – printing functionality directly into the objects and seeing them come to life in your hands. I have received many messages from people in a range of disciplines that have been interested in my work – from artists and designers to engineers and scientists, as well as the general public. They have been interested in potential collaboration projects, including the Hydrophytes in exhibitions, 3D printing awards and even showing enthusiasm to purchase the models. I am amazed that my work has been so well-received and I am thankful for all of the messages!

Q: Could you explain your words “this balance between controlled design and uncontrolled natural interaction leads to the creation of compelling organic performances”?

A: This sentence is explaining how believable organic movement can be created through a combination of the designer’s hand and nature’s hand. I will use the Haven Flower as an example to illustrate this. I designed the technical parts of the multi-stage blooming motion by controlling the shape and flexibility of each part in the computer (controlled design). Once printed and inflated the Haven Flower’s movement conforms to the “rules” of the real world as opposed to being designed through digital animation. Such real-world factors include gravity, water ripples or currents and interaction with other physical objects. This results in features such as the irregular arrangement and swaying of tentacular branches, sideways wiggling upon blooming and the bending action of the branch-

es caused by human touch (uncontrolled design). Elements of randomness and serendipity from the physical world enhance the lifelike qualities of the organic performance.

Q: Could you please tell us about your project team? What is the gender composition of your project team?

A: I created the *Hydrophytes* on my own as part of my master's thesis. I had two male supervisors – Ross Stevens and Bernard Guy.

Q: Imagine if this same project was approached by a male designer. Do you think it would be very different, apart from a difference in personality? Do you think there are differences between the female and male approaches to design in designing and approaching new technology?

A: Perhaps a male designer would have approached the project from a more technical perspective, looking more at the scien-

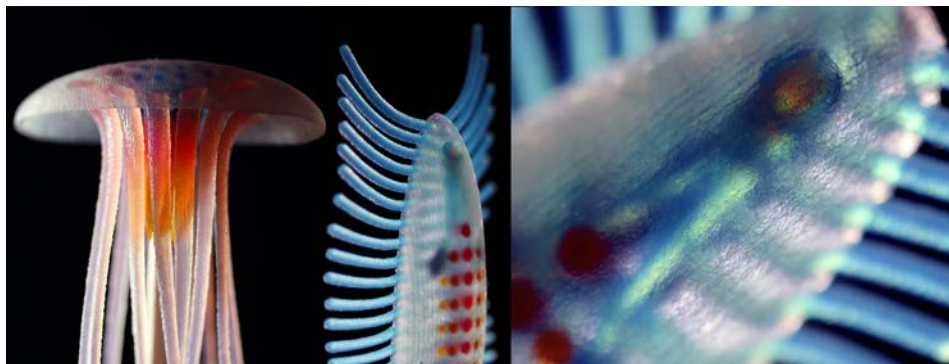


Figure 6. Nicole Hone, *Synthetic Jellies*, an exploration on 3D printed objects move independently thanks to a unique digital material memory, 2017. Courtesy of Nicole Hone.



Figure 7. Nicole Hone, *Sap Dwellers*, fantasy creatures that inhabit the dark depths of the forest, made up of varying degrees of flexibility allowing different parts to move when triggered. Courtesy of Nicole Hone.

tific properties of the materials and how they affect movement. While I did carry out my own material testing, I also assessed the designs from a more intuitive perspective in terms of whether the movement communicated the right character and emotion. I cannot say for sure if this is due to myself being a female designer. However, I do know that this perspective was an important part of being able to connect audiences with new technology and create immersive experiences.

Q: Do you think women's sensitivity is more suitable for arts and crafts or for the new technologies? Why?

A: I think women's sensitivity could actually enhance the connection between arts and crafts and new technologies. The digital age has brought about a variety of digital modelling and manufacturing tools that I believe has made industrial design more accessible to women. With these digital tools comes a new era of craft – where we harness the power and nuances of computers and machines to develop a new style of making.

Q: Do women have special sensitivities and contributions in future applications and implications of the fastest developing technology? Could it be said that they are closer to nature and have a stronger perception of “environmental footprint,” they have more environmentally conscious, and they are more able to produce friendly environmental works?

A: I think that it is important for people of all genders to work together to develop new technology and innovate applications, to incorporate multiple perspectives. Generally speaking, the caring, protective nature of women and our ability to slow down and think holistically could be an advantage to creating works with consideration for the environment.

Q: What role do you think women will play in the future of design?

A: Computer technology is allowing greater design freedom with the ability to model and manufacture nearly any imaginable form, once difficult to create with traditional methods. With such technology becoming of greater interest to women, I think we will continue to advance the digital aspects of design. We can expand our knowledge through coding and generative/procedural design, gaining enhanced skill with machines and ultimately strengthening the connection between technology, art, nature and people.

Q: What’s your plan with your design in the future? Are there any specific plans for further development and continuation of this project?

A: In 2019 I was working on a research project at Weta Workshop that involved combining voxel technology with multi-material 3D/4D printing. A voxel is a three-dimensional pixel. Voxel technology allows control over colour, transparency and materials on a particle by particle basis. This offers exciting opportunities to create more complex and realistic 4D printed objects with microscopic control. Voxel printing requires the use of procedural modelling tools during both the design and print slicing stage. I started to develop such methods in Houdini to advance on the research I did during the Hydrophytes project in 2018. While such research is currently on hold, I would like to continue exploring voxel 4D printing with organic themes – ie. printing animals, humans, environments or fictional creatures. Being able to incorporate sensors, 3D print with ‘smart’ materials or even living materials that can grow and evolve would also be fascinating. This would offer an enhanced ability to programme movement into the materials and create objects that really are alive!

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<http://made.ac.nz/project/hydrophytes/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e008jxkAQ-4>



Figure 8. Nicole Hone, biological camera concept for advanced visualization and 3D Modelling.
<https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/design-innovation/study/student-profiles/nicole-hone>.

V

BIOGRAPHIES

Ana Julia Melo Almeida

Ph.D. Student in Design at Faculdade de Arquitetura e Urbanismo, Universidade de São Paulo (FAU-USP), Brazil (research supported by Fapesp). Currently, she is attached to École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (Ehess-Paris) for a doctoral internship. Her current research is concerned with: women's history, gender history, design history, textile artifacts, Brazilian modern design.

ajuliamelo@usp.br

Shujun Ban

Shujun Ban is a lecturer of Department of Product Design at School of Arts and Design in Qingdao University of Technology. She is an experienced and welcomed teacher in industrial design for 16 years, with continuous enthusiasm in innovation and follow-up interactive guidance of teaching. She has taught more than 50 subjects, averaging 360 in-class hours annually. She keeps on exploring interdisciplinary in design and arts, focusing on traditional handicrafts research. She is good at planing, designing and promoting cultural brands. She has self-created a media brand, "Second Air". She is an expert judge of industrial design competition in Shandong Province and an excellent instructor in design competitions and workshops. She graduated from Nanjing Forestry University with a master's degree of Mechanical Design and Theory with specialization in Industrial Design in 2004. She will be a visiting researcher at Politecnico di Milano.

banshujun@126.com

Roberto de Paolis

Graduated *cum laude* in architecture at the Politecnico di Milano in 1983, and gained a Ph.D. in Industrial Design in 1996. Assistant Professor at the School of Design since 2001, conducts research in Department of Design, focusing on furniture design, textile design, interior design, and history of design. He has published essays and reviews in magazines, book contributions and international conference papers, and has participated in national and international research programs.

roberto.depaolis@polimi.it

Umberto de Paolis

After completing his classical studies at the "A. Volta" High School in Como, he took composition at the "G. Verdi" Conservatory in Como, studying the cello and the piano. At the same time he undertook historical, archival and documentary research studies on authors and performers of Italian artistic, musical and performance culture between the late nineteenth and twentieth century, rediscovering and enhancing figures representative of an eclecticism often neglected by official historiographic critics. Since 2012 he has carried out independent research and historical-critical in-depth study for the purposes related to the progress of current research, coming into contact with academic figures of reference in the scientific-disciplinary fields of relevance, conducting research in archives and cultural institutions such as the State Archives in Rome, Bibliothèque National de France in Paris, Patrimoine de la SBM and Archives du Palais Princier in Monaco, Archive of the Teatro Regio in Turin, and The National Archives in London.

umbertodepaolis@libero.it

Marinella Ferrara

PhD, associate professor of product design in the School of Design of the Politecnico di Milano. Since 2014 she has been the head of MADEC, the Research Centre of Material Design Culture in the Department of Design. Her researches are mainly focused on design-driven innovation, design for materials (advanced and smart materials), news technologies integration in product and interior design, Future Design Scenarios. With her research, she has made a significant contribution to methodologies of Design for Materials and historiographical work. Moreover, she deals other research topic like the design in Mediterranean countries, gender issues in design and Design History. Co-founder of *PAD. Pages on Arts & Design* journal, since 2011 she has been the PAD editor in chief. Since 2015 to 2017 she has been a member of ADI's executive board, and currently coordinates the technical-scientific committee for long-life professional training of design professionals. Since 2019 she has been a member of the executive committee of *AIS/Design. Storia e Ricerche* scientific journal. Authors of more than 140 scientific publications, she is a member of scientific committee in international conferences, reviewer for international scientific journals, and research evaluator for academic research application in NL and PT.

marinella.ferrara@polimi.it

Debora Giorgi

PhD, Architect, she is Researcher in Design at the Dipartimento di Architettura of the University of Florence (DIDA-UNIFI). Since 1991 she works on the issues related to Sustainable Local Development and the social implications of the project starting from the Cultural Heritage. For over 20 years she worked in projects in Ethiopia, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Yemen, Jordan, Haiti, with the most important national and international donors WHC - UNESCO, UNCCD, World Bank, European Commission, WMF, AICS... Since 2011 she has been collaborating with the DIDA UNIFI especially in projects around Maghreb countries and in the social field promoting Social Design projects and workshops using co-design methodologies. She is professor of Service Design at DIDA UNIFI, professor of Design for Cultural Heritage in the License Course in DesignS at Ecole Euro-Méditerranéenne d'Architecture Design et Urbanisme de l'Université Euro-Méditerranéenne de Fès EMADU – UEMF in Morocco and visiting professor in some universities in Mediterranean countries.

debora.giorgi@unifi.it

Melanie Levick-Parkin

Dr. Melanie Levick-Parkin's research is focused on visual communication and design & making practices in relation to intangible cultural heritage, heritage and archaeology, framed by Design Anthropological approaches. Most of her work is about the agency of visual and material language and informed by a feminist lens. She is particularly interested in how gender manifests in/ affects how meaning is made within the public sphere, both materially and visually and how power circumscribes who is able to make meaning and give form in different spheres. She is currently the MFA Design Programme leader at the Sheffield Institute of Arts, Sheffield Hallam University, and also supervises doctoral candidates across Art & Design and for the Research England funded, Lab4living 100 Year Life Project.

m.levick-parkin@shu.ac.uk

Vittorio Linfante

Art Director and Professor of Fashion Design, Branding, Communication Design, Curation at the Politecnico di Milano, University of Bologna, Poli.design and Milan Fashion Institute. Curator –with Paola Bertola – of the exhibition *// Nuovo Vocabolario della Moda italiana*, Triennale di Milano (November 2015–March 2016).

vittorio.linfante@polimi.it

Cathy Lockhart

Cathy has a PhD in Design and a Graduate Certificate in Higher Education. She has undertaken course and program leadership roles within the Faculty of Design, Architecture & Building at the University of Technology Sydney, Australia, including Industrial Design, Interdisciplinary Studies and Product Design. She has overseen program reaccreditations and renewals to address the global readiness of graduates. Her role as senior lecturer concentrates on introducing design process and methods for first year students; and facilitating industry projects to assist senior students in the transition from education to practice. Cathy worked for many years as a professional designer including her own consultancy business and she is a Member of the Design Institute of Australia. Her research explores the gender mix of the student population in industrial/product design education. In particular, she is interested in the educational experience for students and their transition into the profession.

cathy.lockhart@uts.edu.au

Maria Cecilia Loschiavo dos Santos

Philosopher and Full Professor of Design at Faculdade de Arquitetura e Urbanismo da Universidade de São Paulo (FAU-USP), Brazil. She coordinates the Workshop of Social Design at the Institute of Advanced Studies (IEA-USP). Her work encompasses Brazilian design, discarded products, design, homelessness and recyclable material collectors.

clschia@usp.br

Virginia Marano

Virginia Marano obtained a Master's degree in Contemporary Art History at the University of Siena. She is currently in her second year of her PhD at the University of Zurich under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Tristan Weddigen. Her studies are funded by the Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship (ESKAS). Her dissertation topic is on Alberto Giacometti and the

Post-war sculpture in New York. She did a four-month internship at Mumok (2017, Vienna) and a three-month internship at Artipelag (2018, Stockholm) and is a committee member of the Fondazione Centro Giacometti in Stampa.

maranovirginia@gmail.com

Anna Mazzanti

Assistant Professor in History of Contemporary Art, at Politecnico di Milano –Department of Design. PhD (Venice) and research fellow (Siena, 2000-2011) her specific fields of research circulate around the XIX to XXI centuries artistic culture, as well exhibitions and relationship between art and design. She has curated various exhibitions including: *Mondi a Milano. Culture ed esposizioni 1874-1950* (Milano, 2015) when she worked about the “thread designers” (Papini, 1923) between the two wars. She studied and wrote about Anita Pittoni, Rosa Menni Giolli, Marcello Nizzoli. She is responsible since 2017 for the group of research D.E.SY (Designing Enhancement Strategies and Exhibit SYstems for the Italian House Museums and Studios) at the Politecnico di Milano.

anna.mazzanti@polimi.it

Marianne McAra

Dr Marianne McAra (PhD, MDES, BA, PG Cert) is the Creative Engagement Research Fellow at the Innovation School at The Glasgow School of Art and works in the areas of youth engagement and creative education. Her research practice is underpinned by human-centred and Participatory Design approaches, with an interest in experimental methods and an expertise working in ethically sensitive research contexts. Marianne teaches and supervises on the Master of Research and Doctoral programmes at GSA.

m.mcara@gsa.ac.uk

Lynn-Sayers McHattie

Professor Lynn-Sayers McHattie (PhD, MBA, BA, PG Cert, FRSA) is Programme Director for Research at the Innovation School at The Glasgow School of Art. Lynn's research foregrounds questions around “crafting futures” in the creative economy. Her research explores craft and textile practices that connect to the indigenous landscape and culture of island communities and the role innovation can play in socio-cultural. She works extensively in the Highlands & Islands of Scotland and S.E. Asia. Lynn is involved in supervising doctoral and M.Res. students whose interdisciplinary inquiries blur the boundaries between addressing contextually located social and cultural challenges and design innovation practice.

l.mchattie@gsa.ac.uk

Tiziana Menegazzo

Artist and teacher. She lives and works in Turin. She trained in Florence where she graduated in painting at the Academy of Fine Arts followed by a master's degree in Modern Literature, with a thesis in visual anthropology on photography as a mode of self construction. She is currently completing a master's degree in Cultural Anthropology and Ethnology. Always interested in the contamination between different artistic languages, she alternates projects of participatory art, with a particular attention to the female condition, investigated through photography, narration and performance, to a research with an intimate and dreamlike character. She develops her artistic research in the field of gender studies and visual anthropology.

tizianamenegazzo.65@gmail.com

Alfonso Morone

Associate Professor in Industrial Design, at the University of Naples “Federico II” Department of Architecture. Scholarship visiting student at Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Création Industrielle “Les Ateliers” of Paris. He was selected for the 20th “Compasso d'Oro” award, for the section Theoretical Researches and Design Studies, and he gained the Eco_Luoghi 2013 Contest launched by the Italian Environmental Ministry. His research, supported by many essays and writings, is especially concerned with Nature Based Solutions for devices able to face air pollution using natural systems through a combination of plants, phytoremediation mechanisms and bio-filters containing bio-absorbent nanomaterials and in the historical relationship between local manufacturing systems and industrial design. He is leading, as Principal Investigator, the AURA: industrial research and experimental development project for designing a new generation of green & smart

urban furniture supported by the Italian Ministry of Economic Development (2019-2022). In 2017 he wrote *La Fabbrica dell'Innovazione. Gli arredi del Palazzo delle Poste di Napoli 1936*, published by LetteraVentidue, Siracusa.

alfonso.morone@unina.it

Susanna Parlato

Architect and PhD student in design at Sapienza University of Rome. Received the bachelor's degree in Architecture at the Federico II University of Naples (2013) and the master's degree in Architecture for sustainable project at Politecnico di Torino (2016). Since 2017 she has been active within the Architecture Department of Federico II University of Naples being design teaching assistant, exam and degree committee member. She has been a research fellow at the CESMA of the Federico II University (2018-2019). From 2018 she started a collaboration with the Fondazione San Gennaro, an organization that promote social innovation, as a member of the ReMade lab research team whose purpose is to experiment innovative technology to recycle urban waste (plastic and metal) on a local scale. Her main research interests are in the areas of design for social innovation, design for territories, design for sustainability.

susanna.parlato@uniroma1.it

Vera Renau

PhD Student in the programme Society and Culture: History, Anthropology, Arts and Heritage at University of Barcelona (Spain). Her doctoral research analyses the process of recognition of a selection of Catalan visual artists of the early twentieth century (1900 – 1930), and thus the operation of Spanish and Catalan modern art system. She focuses on clarify how art value is constructed by the interaction of different intermediaries in the visual arts field: the mechanism of building their reputations, identify phases, protagonists and dynamics that form part of the process, from an interdisciplinary approach. Member of the Gracmon Research Unit – History of Art & Contemporary Design Research Grup at UB, she holds a master's degree in Art History from the University of Barcelona. Her main research lines are art history, sociology of arts and culture and design studies. She has collaborated with cultural institutions as Direcció General de Patrimoni (Generalitat de Catalunya), Modern Art Department at Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya or Galleria Comunale d'Arte Moderna di Roma.

verarenau@ub.edu

Antonio Stefanelli

Architect, PhD student in Philosophy of Interior Architecture at Università degli Studi di Napoli "Federico II". He takes a degree in Architecture at the Department of Architecture of Università degli Studi di Napoli "Federico II" in 2017. He is part of several research group in the same University and he collaborated in the production of scientific publications and published essays and articles in trade magazines.

antonio.stefanelli@unina.it

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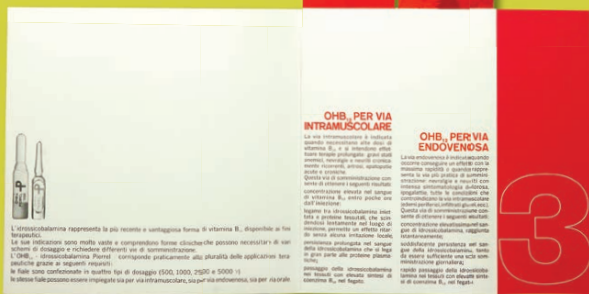
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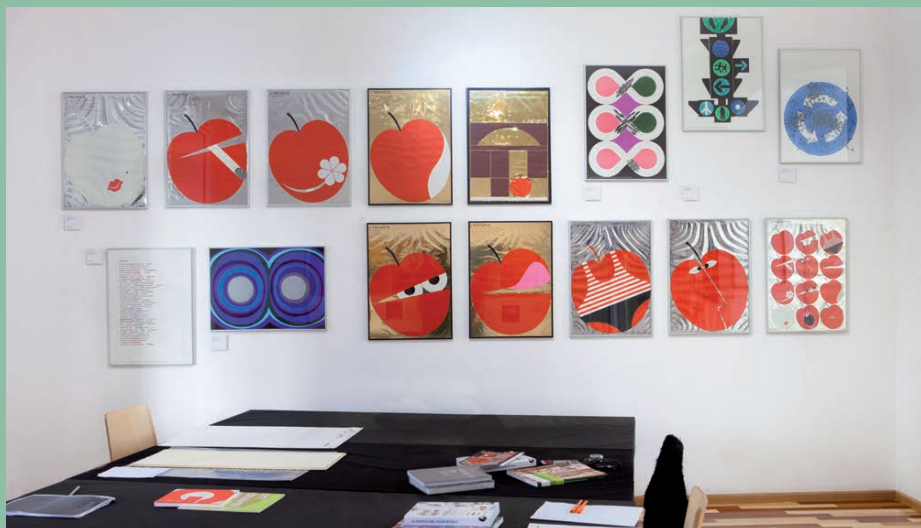


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