



2nd INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON DESIGN THEORY AND CRITICISM  
FAIR DESIGN 2018 | DESIGN AND THE CHALLENGES OF CONTEMPORARY TIMES:  
EXCESS

18th-19th May, 2018, Warsaw

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Ever since man has conquered the Earth, the scale of the effect on his environment has been increasing. The population is steadily growing (every eight years there are a billion more of us). The development of cities is matched by the spread of slums, there are more and more buildings, cars, household objects, services, there is more innovative technology, and the virtual realm is full of more and more data. Famine, poverty, and garbage are also on the rise. Designers are the spectators, but also the actors (and perhaps even the directors and the set producers) of this performance. Various design disciplines intersect in all aspects of man's existence – from design of public space or means of transportation, to designing mobile applications, bank services, or experiences. Never before have designers had such great opportunities before them; never have they borne such responsibilities.

**Excess** is the word that describes the condition of the modern man. Alongside the satiation felt by the citizens of "developed countries," billions of others are oppressed by poverty, famine, and homelessness. Though feelings of satiety and non-satiety are subjective, on a societal scale the presence of these phenomena indicates the extent to which the modern world lacks harmony – it has fallen into extremes. Economic instability in times of globalization means an unbalanced global economy. Economic crisis becomes the norm. Social stratification is growing, extreme poverty and unfathomable wealth are becoming exasperated. Excess breeds shortage, and the reverse. Societies that have experienced famine have a tendency toward oversatiety, they deal with their fear of shortage by creating artificial excess. Meanwhile, the consumer societies that suffer from this oversatiety seek solutions in strategies like reduction, re-using, selection, elimination, slow-life, minimalism, and conscious restriction of consumption.

Every second several dozen gigabytes of new data flood the Internet. The phenomenon of overproduction of information and services and the unlimited access

to them makes us helpless in the face of the vast quantities we are unable to consume or process. Our problems become making decisions, focusing on something that really has significance. We are constantly faced with an excess of objects, and the pressure of the new never subsides – things with short shelf-lives are forever pushing aside those that are built to last. The issue of famine remains unsolved, yet tons of food end up in the garbage piles. Our world of start-ups and corporations has given rise to a sort of hysteria that manifests itself in intensified work on innovative solutions. We suffer of an excess of ideas, religions, books, and even scientific breakthroughs.

Designers take various approaches to the tyranny of excess: some just design more objects and services, others try to smuggle in concepts that urge us to reflect and change our behavior. How can designers deal with excess, given that they are a large part of the problem? The theories of design developed in the twentieth century ignored these issues. Design methodology was mainly focused on efficiency, functionality, and aesthetic quality. For this discussion we have invited designers and figures from the social sciences: philosophers, sociologists, anthropologists, and economists. We believe that the conference will create a space for a trans-disciplinary exchange of opinions.

### **Date and Venue**

Date: 18-19th May 2018

Venue: new building of Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw,  
Wybrzeże Kościuszkowskie 37/39

### **Organizer**

Department of Design History and Theory, Faculty of Design,  
Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, [www.asp.waw.pl](http://www.asp.waw.pl)

### **Programme Board**

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## FAIR DESIGN | INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON DESIGN THEORY AND CRITICISM

In 2015, the Faculty of Design of Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw started to organize a series of conferences dedicated to the theory and criticism of design in terms of its functioning in the quickly changing social, cultural, economic and other circumstances. The conference is intended to serve as a forum for discussions which could stretch beyond the professional designer circles.

Such opinion exchange, ongoing in the world for quite some time now, is an opportunity for design theoreticians and practitioners to better understand the objectives, methods and strategy of designing both today, and in the nearest future. The notion of design is ever more often perceived in terms of a “design culture”, and for that reason the discussions have come to involve a whole range of specialists from other disciplines, such as philosophy, sociology, economics, or anthropology of culture. In Poland, however, such debate is still virtually non-existent, and the opinion exchange platform is limited to publications in academic and professional press, as well as popular weeklies or dailies. These texts are rarely exposed to a differing reflection or solid criticism, hence they do not provoke any genuine intellectual exchange, nor do they help shape a complex set of opinions on the state of the design today.

In light of the above, the series of FAIR DESIGN conferences, dedicated to design theory and criticism, could trigger a debate on defining or applying research tools for the description and analysis of the changes taking place in contemporary design. We hope that such meetings could help in the opinion exchange among theoreticians representing different disciplines and design practitioners. We expect the theoreticians to provide us with a description of the state of contemporary society from the viewpoint of the humanities and social sciences (including those dealing with design theory), while from the practitioners we expect to share with us their thoughts on their own experiences of designing in the unstable world of today. We invite to the conference both design professionals, as well as people representing the art world, philosophers, anthropologists, or economists. We would expect our guests to share with us their thoughts on the quickly changing relations in culture, politics, the society and – obviously – in design. The papers are delivered in Polish and English (with simultaneous interpretation).

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