

## Aesthetics and Design History

Since its formulation as an independent discipline in the 1970s, design history has taken a critical stance on aesthetics as a concept with relevance for the analysis of design. Privileging analysis of cultural, social, economic and political contexts for design, design history has dismissed aesthetics as, variously, affiliated with art history and with superficial stylistic changes of form without a connection to context. To avoid being labelled as a “form of pseudo art history” as stated by Daniel Miller in 1987, design historians have positioned aesthetics at a distance from the core of the discipline. Further, aesthetics is a concept originating in philosophy and not in the kind of cultural reflection and contextualization which has been central in the constitution of design history as a discipline.

At the same time, aesthetics is central concept for understanding design. In popular culture and the discourse on design among manufacturers, designers and consumers, the word “aesthetics” is often applied to the qualities of designed objects. Designers are interested in what aesthetics means in relation to design, and the growing public interest in design is often based on an interest in the aesthetic qualities of objects.

The special issue will examine how design history has approached aesthetics in the past and how it might do so in future. It will address the relationship of aesthetics and design history on several levels:

- Aesthetic as concept for design history as a discipline: The history of design history's own concern with aesthetics warrants critical evaluation. What did design history “lose” by delimiting itself from concerns of aesthetics? What is the role of aesthetic considerations in design for the future development of design history?
- Aesthetics as a historical concept for design: What is the history of the different roles that aesthetics has played in the broader cultural context of design? As a discipline design history may have dismissed aesthetics as a concept, but aesthetic concerns have been important in the design of objects as well as in their discursive settings and mediations. Which different “cultural roles” may aesthetics have played in relation to design?
- The role of aestheticization: “Aestheticization” is a label for the historical process by which the appeal to senses in e.g. advertisements, environments and products expanded. Mechanisms of aestheticization in history may be explored in order to understand why and how design objects were constructed to be aesthetically appealing.

The guest editors of this special issue invite contributions within the field of design history and aesthetics and, more specifically, within the three sub-themes.

Guest editors:

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Please submit manuscripts directly to the guest editors before this date. Queries about content and scope of articles can also be directed to the guest editors. Shortlisting by the guest editors does not replace the Journal of Design History's double-blind peer review process through which manuscripts are accepted for publication.