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*In memory of Anna Calvera (1954–2018)*

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# Back to the Future
## The Future in the Past

ICDHS 10th+1 BARCELONA 2018

Conference Proceedings Book

Oriol Moret (ed.)

*ICDHS 10th+1 Conference / Barcelona 2018*

# 0 Opening Pages

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INTRODUCTION

# 1.8 An Expanded Global Framework for Design History

*Since the beginning of human societies, informal design has formed part of culture. For most design historians, however, the history of formal design begins with the Industrial Revolution, although some scholars consider its origins to lie in the 15th century, which they regard as the start of the modern world. Traditional design histories primarily emphasise Europe, the United States, and sometimes Japan. In recent years, the outline of a new global history narrative has begun to emerge with the publication of several new books. These books have been made possible by research carried out by scholars from countries that were previously excluded from narratives. In addition, there is a great deal of material that addresses what may now be called "design" in the period preceding the 15th century.*

*This strand seeks papers that expand on the global design history narrative that is emerging. Papers may be case studies, historical accounts or theoretical topics related to a global design history framework.*

Anna Calvera / ICDHS 10th+1 Scientific Committee

The inspiration for Strand 1.8 came from none other than the late Anna Calvera, who wrote an initial proposal for the strand that encapsulated the core spirit of ICDHS in its quest to expand on the global design history framework by constructing new design narratives outside of Euroamerica, while filling in gaps and under-represented areas from within. The first group of papers focuses on recent regional studies on design in East Asia, including Japan and colonial Korea. Similarly, the second group focuses on regional case studies from Latin America, particularly Brazil. The design fields include clothing design, graphic design, product and craft design, and architectural and interior design.

Mori's paper reveals new transnational and political studies on the kimono in Japan's Southeast Asian colonies, while Senne reinterprets the metabolism-related ideas of the 1960s and examines their contemporary relevance. Omoya's paper presents an alternative regional narrative of floral decorative design as a challenge to the standard Japanese design narrative centred on simplicity.

The second session analyses the origin of the first design-related educational experiences in countries such as Indonesia, Singapore, Korea and Japan during the first half of the 20th century. These countries were colonised societies and faced a complex situation that allowed them to incubate a design dignification and professionalisation process. This took place through artisan processes and so-called commercial art, supported by schools and promoting bodies, which made it possible to train professional designers to collaborate in a developed system where innovation played an important role.

'Commercial art' is also at the core of the last paper of the session. The paper addresses corporate identity in pubs and inns (a rather neglected subject in design history) using a case study that emphasises the modern angle associated with corporate design practices.

Peixoto and Costa Junior's paper discusses an aspect of Brazilian modernism through research on the architecture of the Itamaraty Palace, a government building in Brasília designed by Oscar Niemeyer, together with its interior design, furniture and decorative objects. Dias's paper focuses on Latin American graphic designers and ICOGRADA executive board members and discusses how their idea of individualised cosmopolitanism advanced the overall postcolonial agenda.

The last two papers do not relate to regional cases from outside Euroamerica, but rather propose methodological questions to expand the design history framework. Houze's paper focuses on the case of Hopi House, the living museum and curio shop on the South Rim of the Grand Canyon, Arizona, and poses ethical and design questions relating to the problematic and complex situation presented by this cultural enterprise in relation to travel, tourism, heritage, national identity, cultural appropriation and preservation. Dellapiana and Tamborrini's paper questions the conventional methodology used in design history studies that is based on genealogy of styles, and proposes alternative methodologies drawn from recent design studies and interdisciplinary approaches.

In the last session, the authors offer a historical analysis of the development of East Asian design from the mid-19th century until today. Kikuchi has brought together different stories from colleagues for an anthology that can contribute to our understanding of the changes and development that this region has experienced, examining how the entities that form it have become economic powers and achieved an identity in their design. Wong, in her timeline mapping project, starts by presenting the design stories within the region illustrating the history of international design, and then builds up a conceptual framework based on a cultural nationalism that can help clarify the connection and transnationalisation of East Asian design with international design history.

*Yuko Kikuchi, Oscar Salinas-Flores*

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# Which Came First, the Chicken or the Egg?
## Sequences and Genealogies in between Architecture and Design for a Global History

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Design history / History of architecture / Data visualization / Global history / Interdisciplinarity

Some among the early "classics" of the history of projects, such as Giedion or Pevsner, united architecture and design leaning towards anonymity and industrialism and eliminating the division between the two disciplines. They were related with an ideological notion of style: the "Modern". Afterwards other approaches suggested another use of sequences of objects in a larger continuum instead of the use of notions of "style" (Kubler, Bloch and Foucault).

Joining these different starting points together with the latest contribution (Margolin, 2015) the paper aims to explore the possibilities given by compiling timelines and sequences that mix different approaches in a larger vision of project disciplines to obtain the web for a global history, implementable and queryable at different levels and using a broader range of design studies. The goal is to outline and schematically show a continuous conversation throughout time and space, maintaining the specificities of historical research and an inclusive and broader view on the flow of time.

To inform a reflection on this opportunity the paper will consider the ways to organize sequences on specific or general topics using tools for the managing of data flows and their representations.

### Diagrams and promotion of Modern

When Sigfried Giedion wrote, as early as 1948, *Mechanization takes command*, he contaminated and overlapped architecture and design focusing on anonymity and industrial production (tall buildings, balloon frames together with barber chairs, cheap kitchens and trains) and he eliminated the division between the two disciplines. In his *Pioneers of Modern Design* (1936) Nikolaus Pevsner, even if in a different way, also crossed the boundaries between architecture and design. Both are however linked to an ideological notion of style: the "Modern", illustrated and promoted with militant faith and with an idealistic approach to history (Scalvini and Sandri, 1984; Watkin, 1983). This was an evolutionary approach, somehow Vasarian, in which the sequence of the authors and the works were organized to demonstrate the goodness of the "modern way", clearly explained also by Pevsner's book's subtitle, *From William Morris to Walter Gropius*, and by others in the same years, such as *Von Ledoux bis Le Corbusier* by Emil Kauffmann.[1] The historical sequence lends itself, obviously, to a graphical synthetic representation that can be functional in the diffusion of the data—intended as objective and shared.

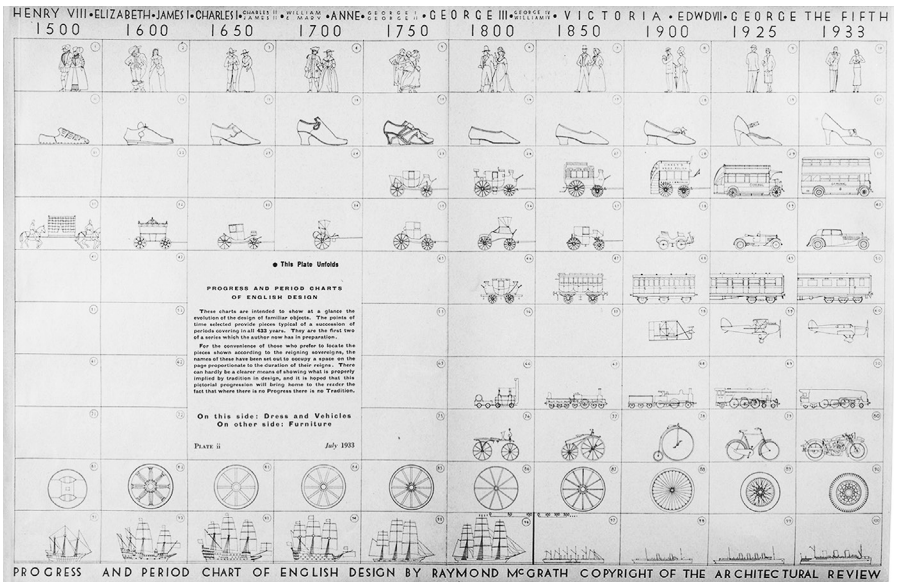


**Fig. 1** R. McGrath, "Progress and Period Charts of English Design", *The Architectural Review*, vol. LXXIV, 440, 1933 (7).

These are the years of the publication in the United States, at affordable prices, of the *Histomap* by John B. Sparks,[2] who followed not so much a precise historiographical model—as a simple enthusiast—but rather the need to make the information shareable and disseminated. He agreed with the conviction, borrowed from Spencer, that "When a man's knowledge is not in order, the more of it he has, the greater is his confusion in thought" (Rosemberg and Grafton, 2010: 217–219). Following this evolutionary approach, he thus drew "the actual picture of the march of civilization, from the mud huts of the ancients thru the monarchist glamour of the middle ages to the living panorama of life in present day America".

The family tree and the linear sequence very well represented this kind of idea and path. The historiography or the goals of "cultural politics" correspond to one specific depiction.

In July 1933, Raymond McGrath,[3] architect and early illustrator, entrusted to the pages of *The Architectural Review* a series of tables that showed the process of transformation of different items between 1500 and 1933 (Fig. 1), specifying the

[1] Kauffmann, E. (1933). *Von Ledoux bis Le Corbusier*, Vienna: Verlag.

[2] Sparks, J.B. (1931). *The Histomap. Four Thousand Years Of World History. Relative Power Of Contemporary States, Nations And Empires* Chicago: Histomap, Inc.

[3] *The Architectural Review*, vol LXXIV n. 440, July 1933.

timeline with the sequence of the British kingdoms (from Henry VIII to George V) and introducing gradually and in parallel, as specializations, the fruits of industrial progress: transportations are illustrated with the carriages from which the cars descend and, with them, buses, train coaches, bicycles, aircrafts, ships and some basic technical elements such as the wheel. In the same way he depicted furniture identifying the genealogies that led to chairs, sofas, fireplaces, tables, cabinets, bathroom fixtures or sound diffusion devices and making an explicit reference to the word "evolution". In 1933 Raymond Loewy conceived as a self-promotion his *Evolutionary chart of design*[4] with the aim to trace the line that lead to Streamlining.

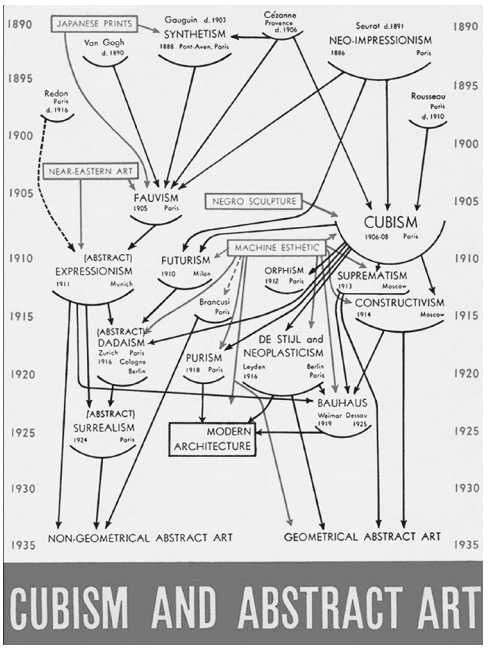


**Fig. 2** ALFRED H. BARR, cover of the MoMA exhibition *Cubism and abstract art*, 1936.

This system gradually became more common in the magazines, in the years of the "consecration" of the Modern, and was increasingly attentive to the arrival point of the path that had to be clearly and indisputably modern.

As some examples, in 1942 Giuseppe Pagano released the sequence (only photographic) of lighting systems[5] and Jack Waldheim, who authored the *Barwa lounge chair* with Edgar Bartolucci in 1949, wrote in 1949 an article in *Art and Architecture* with the aim of tracing "The story of an item first designed for functional reasons as portability and lightness, which later become a symbol of 'Class' and 'Pomp', and now is returning to basic principles—comfort, ease of production, lightness and a number of healthy-good hints to new concepts of sitting" (p. 26).[6]

In the same years of the celebration of the mythopoeia of modernity, we find in the North American cultural *milieu* a different and non-linear representation of sequences and genealogies. This shows in the intuition of Alfred H. Barr, who summarized sequences and overlays in the "Barr Diagram" (1936),[7] the cover of the MoMA exhibition catalogue *Cubism and Abstract Art* (Fig. 2).

In this case the linear sequence experimented up to now was critically revised, focusing, also graphically, on the intersections and the contributions of the "external influences" (in red), even if it was once again a progressive teleological model for the development of modern art.

The sequential narrative mode, still used by Barr for all the 1940s for internal MoMA communications,[8] was then shown in a series of exhibitions promoted by American museums, in particular by the MoMA itself, in the field of design culture until the 1960s. Curated by Bernard Rudofsky, these started with *Are the clothes modern?*, passing through *Roads* (1961) and *Stairs* (1963) and leading to *Architecture without Architects* (1964), with a vision that reflected the debate triggered by Focillon and Kubler, in which the sequences and the anonymous objects are meant to escape on one hand the concept of style and, on the other, the cult of authorship caused by the mythology of the Modern Movement.

In the same years, the use of sequences, especially in relation to single objects, was also introduced in the new magazines specialized in industrial design, even without representing any authentic historical contribution: sewing machines, motorcycles, telephones, combs were represented as a living matter in the different steps of their formal and technical evolution.[9]

This process of disciplinary self-assertion lead to increasingly detailed and precise design stories coinciding with the search for a methodological status and with the goal of demonstrating that "(Italian) design is NOT a pure appendix to the architectural culture of the Modern Movement",[10] the point of it being that starting from an everyday object allowed a wider reading: "If you study the chair you discover the world".[11]

This statement refers to the already mentioned George Kubler's interests in the field of archaeology research. He published *The Shape of Time* in 1962, suggesting an alternative approach which used sequences of objects in a wider continuum instead of using the notion of "style". The teacher–pupil relationship between Kubler and Focillon (KUBLER, 1962) somehow reproduced the one between Giedion and Wölfflin, who worked on art history without names, too (PREZIOSI, 2009). It was immersed in American design and architecture culture, which had always dealt with an industrialized and less authoritative context than the European one and provided interpretative tools as well as operational ones for the community of architects and historians of architecture and art (KUBLER, 1965: 299–302). As shown by the many attempts to establish theoretical bases in the history of design, the immediate effect and great success of Kubler's contributions was that they started from the objects enucleating their meanings in terms of material and formal qualities, but also of behaviours and economic reasons

[4] LOEWY, R. (1979). *Industrial Design*. Woodstock–NY: Overlook Press: 74–76.

[5] PAGANO, G. (1942). "Lampade di oggi e di una volta", *Domus*, 174 (6): 238–243.

[6] WALDHEIM, J. (1949). "The chair", *Art and Architecture*, 66, (7): 26–27, 52.

[7] GORDON KANTOR, S. (2002). *Alfred H. Barr Jr. and the Intellectual Origins of the Museum of Modern Art*. Boston: MIT.

[8] ROSEMBERG & GRAFTON, *Cartographie, cit.*, p. 222; MoMA Archives, Alfred Barr Jr. Papers, 9°. I5.

[9] "La macchina per cucire: invenzione, storia ed evoluzione della forma", *Stile Industria*, 1956 (2), 6: 2 -14; "Motociclette: produzione di serie e ricerca sperimentale", *Stile Industria*, 1956 (10), 8: 7–18; "Progettazione di un telefono", *Stile Industria*, 1957 (5),13: 8–11.

[10] GREGOTTI, V. (1986). *Il disegno del prodotto industriale. Italia 1860-1980*. Milan: Electa: 9.

[11] WALDHEIM, "The chair", *cit.* p. 26.

related to them. Furthermore, the historical approach that privileges events with repercussions in the social and economic structures, even minute, can be traced back to the "Annales"—renewed by Braudel—as well as to the history told as a genealogy of gaps and discontinuities following Foucault's epistemological method (Foucault, 1969).

"Marrying" the aims of the "Annales" *longue durée*, the attention for the background of the official historiography and for the pivotal approaches provided by the "idealist" histories of architecture and design such as that of Giedion, could thus be linked to the interest for sequences, or rather, on how to use them as an interpretative tool, as Kubler proposed.

**Representing a discipline**

Somehow closing this circle between the methodological innovations in history and their graphic representation could have solved the problem in telling and communicating stories in a linear or non-linear way but the historiographical debate around these seminal histories slowed down. The possibilities offered by both the sequences and the interdisciplinary approaches—and their respective representations—had ceased to be of interest, while stories continued (monographs, hagiographies, gender and all kinds of specializations). In fact, during the 1980s, the circumscribed effects of the Annalist approach were lost and, above all, the "record of death" of the metanarrative systems of Western culture from the Enlightenment onwards[12] halted the historiographical debate on the use of chronologies as a whole. On the other hand, the representation of data, implemented by technical tools, somehow allowed its use on sequences as an almost independent expressive medium, also artistic—but it's once again an egg or chicken problem.

It is to underline that the use of graphics which included lines representing different categories became a bit more frequent as a communication tool in "militant" studies, such as the one commissioned by the Club di Roma of MIT in 1972.[13]

The growing use of infographics as a mere communication method appeared again only at the end of the decade to order a fragmented outline which, in the specific area of design, led to some examples as comprehensive graphic histories, such as the *Ollo* timeline (Fig. 3)[14] or the *Map of Italian Design* from 1968 to 1988.[15]

[12] Lyotard, J.-F. (1979). *La condition postmoderne*. Paris: Minuit.

[13] Meadows, D.H.; Meadows D.L.; Randers J.; Behrens W.W.III (1972). *The Limits of Growth*, Washington: Potomak Ass. Book: 103–104, 160–169.

[14] G. Gregori, "Mappa del design", *Ollo*, 1988, 1, w.p.; magazine, without text, directed by Alessandro Mendini.

[15] Bosoni G.; Confalonieri F.G. (1988). *Paesaggio del design italiano 1972-1988*. Milan: Edizioni di Comunità: pp. 2–3.

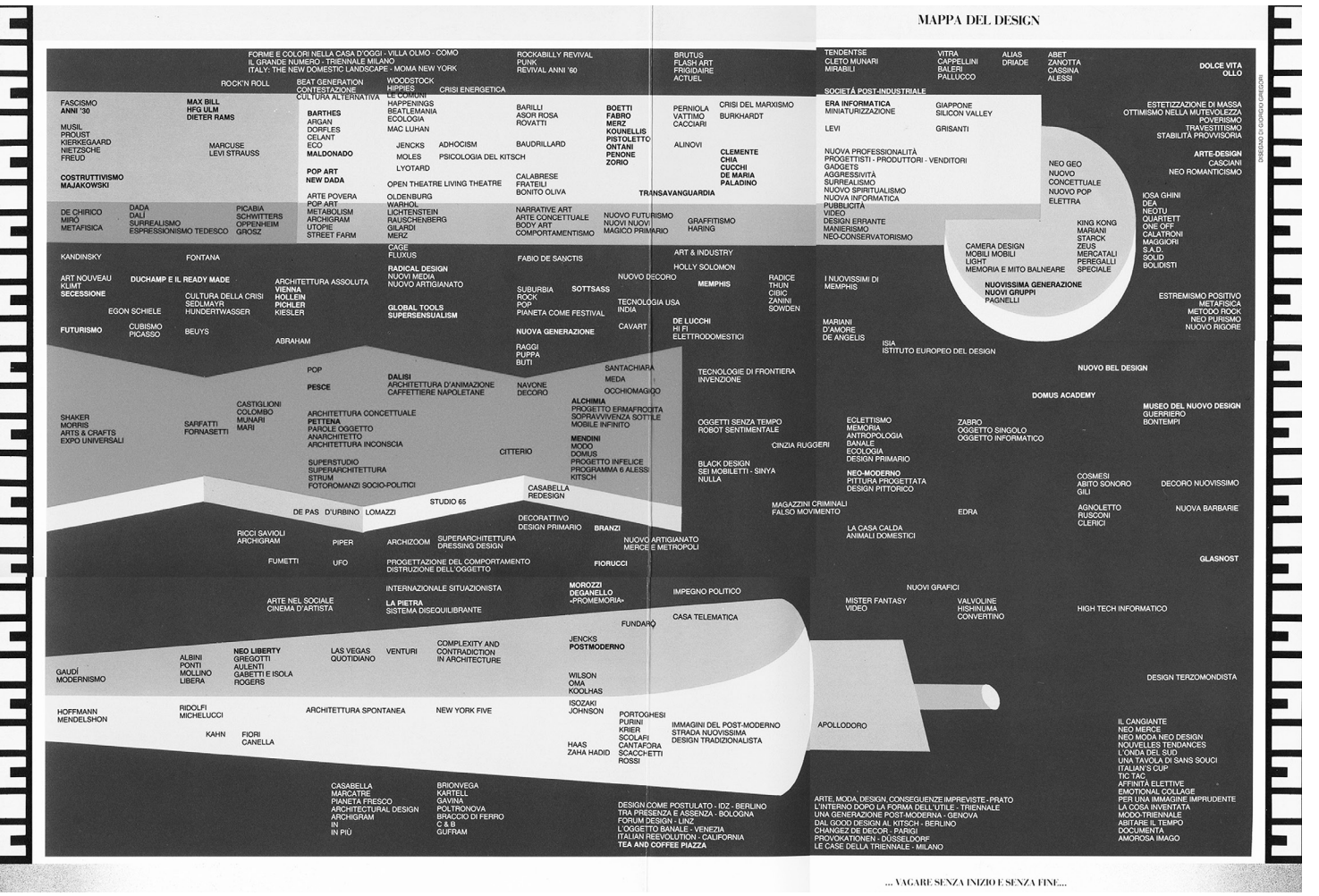


Fig. 3 G. Gregori, "Mappa del design", *Ollo*, 1, 1988.

Faced with the typically post-modern observation of the existence of fragments, archipelagos, rhizomes, enzymes and swarms that started processes of dispersion, but also of pluralism, apparently there was a need to systematize, scientifically and narratively, the different components that had gradually built the history of design.

In 1991, Enrico Castelnuovo in the afterword to his *History of industrial design* (Castelnuovo, Gubler and Matteoni, 1991: 404–413) suggested—and required—a broader look that, although anchored to the canonical chronologies of the evenemental history, put together different competences and variable reading scales.

The 1990s were a decade of debate about historical research in the field of design—one of the few disciplines still discussing methodological issues[17] (Margolin, 2015: 5–7; Pasca and Trabucco, 1995)—as it was trying to overcome the apparent contradiction between design history and design studies, highlighted sometimes as a disciplinary weakness (Margolin, 1995; Riccini, 1996).[18] Furthermore, design had been isolated from other sectors of the project culture historically deeply connected to it due to the overlap of training paths and roles (Dellapiana, 2016).

Nevertheless, some other maps concerning design and architecture history appeared, perhaps because of a necessity of appraisal marked by the turn of the millennium. It happened almost independently from the different tendencies of information design and was rather a need, within the environment of the historians trained as architects, to communicate in a scientifically effective way a story that seemed a disordered set of monads, even in its several graphic representations: biographies, genealogies of objects and technical achievements, collections of iconic products.

In this scenario, the continuous research and the project itself become fully intelligible only in relation to other events such as technological, cultural, economic, climatic and historical evolution. For these reasons it becomes essential to enable understanding by shifting the attention from a linear, structured and mechanical approach and a reading of the spatio-temporal phenomena towards a more systemic, circular, dynamic and interconnected vision. A more aware and conscious approach towards an information design.

Whether in values, techniques, methodologies, tools or languages, it is precisely the field of design that becomes a cultural catalyst, a reading tool for social, territorial and productive changes, an aggregator of knowledge and skills, and an answer to the complexity and systemic process to guide knowledge, education, but also innovation and sustainability.

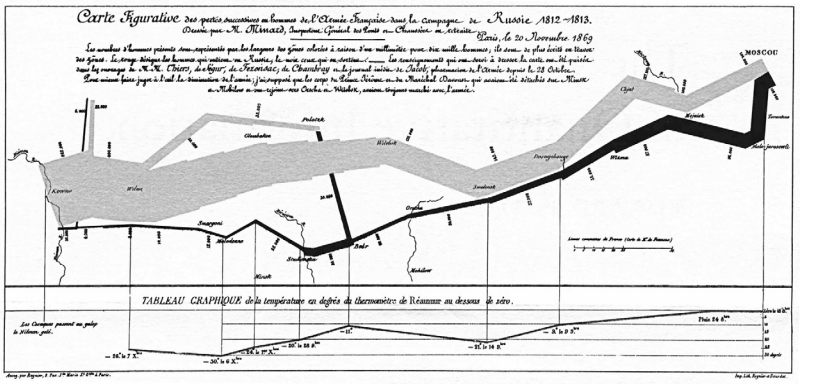


Fig. 4 Minard, C. J. (1869). *Carte figurative des pertes successives en hommes de l'Armée Française dans la campagne de Russie 1812–1813*. Paris: Graphics Press.

**Information design for a global—inclusive—history**

However, information design projects are not the latest outcomes. Great characters, won or lost battles, brave deeds or brilliant ideas are just some of the issues related to modern historiography. Issues that in their essence are numbers, quantities, positions that all can be summarized through the most different visual models (Tufte and Graves-Morris, 1983).

In the work of the French civil engineer Charles Joseph Minard (1869) (Fig. 4), it is possible to recognize, perhaps, one of the most famous, iconic and visionary spatio-temporal analyses based on a primordial ability to perceive directions, shapes, colours and proportions (Minard, 1869).[19] The *Carte Figurative des pertes successives en hommes de l'Armée Française dans la campagne de Russie (1812–1813)* summarizes, in a two-dimensional image, the army dimensions, the geographical references, the temporal flow and the meteorological variables of the defeat of the Russian Napoleonic campaign in 1812.

Whereas it is possible to find a more pragmatic approach in the formal experimentation of Giorgia Lupi, *Visualising painters' lives*, (Fig. 5) an anthology that describes life, styles, historical context, significant events of ten artists belonging to the abstractionism and surrealism painting movement.[20]

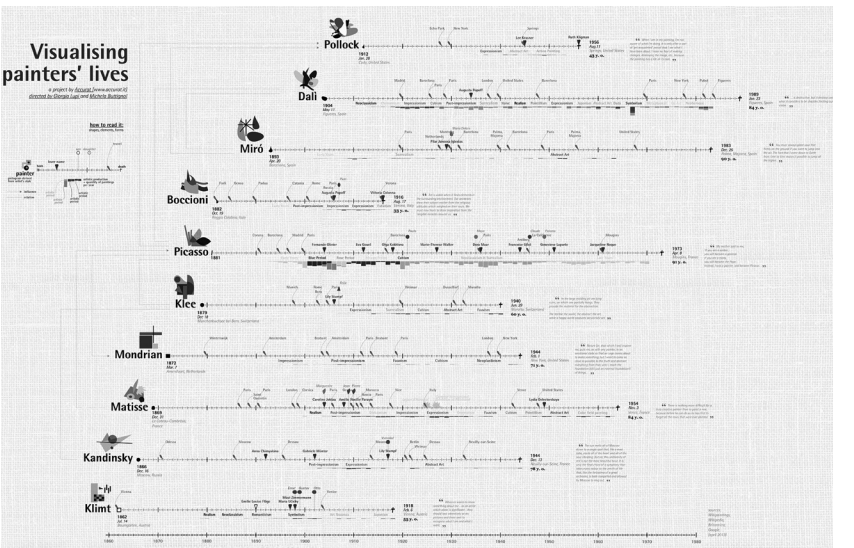


Fig. 5 Lupi, G. and Buttignol M., *Visualizing painters' lives*. giorgialupi.com/work#/visualizing-painters-lives, 2013.

Technological and digital development, especially in recent times, has led to a total rethinking of methodological processes as well as of the languages, researching, renewing and combining graphic/formal solutions and styles. Hypertextuality and interactivity thus enable new scenarios of understanding a holistic knowledge, qualifying both spatio-temporal phenomena comprehension and the creation of a dialogue aimed to tackle contemporary complexity.

Conceived as a continuous cycle between acting, evaluating, conceptualizing and applying, interpreted as a possibility to expand the conversation between past, present and future inclusively and collaboratively, education today sees in the design of information a useful support to enable knowledge. It might be a cross-cognitive tool built on a personal and collective understanding of history, based on open data availability and ability to transform them into a usable raw material. In this sense, the main trends we can mention are on one hand the digitalization of large archives and historical maps and on the other the ex novo creation of interactive visual tools. The first category mentioned above refers to the work of Santiago Ortiz: the digitalization of the *Histomap* by J. B. Sparks (1931)[21] (Fig. 6). For the second category, we can refer to *Here is Today*, a simple and immediate interface based on a proportions game allowing the user to visually navigate the temporal history of the universe.[22]

The ethical role of the designer becomes accessory in this cultural, social and technological transformation in an increasingly evident way.

Furthermore, the creation of databases—as a basic result—with the possibility of multi-level queries, the reproduction of various kinds of archives and their networking following the rapid developments of Digital History, seem to provide the tools suitable for an information flow functional to research, making the historian almost an information manager (McCrank, 2002).

Regardless of the object of its representation, infographics is today a sophisticated tool offering in turn infinite possibilities of representation not only of simple sequences, but of general visions, which can make data communicable to the general public, and also to the community of experts in different fields, who do not necessarily practise the same specialized languages.

Putting the objects "in the indian line of before and after", to say it with Marc Bloch,[23] but, as he recommends, highlighting fractures and scraps and questioning them with the tools of the respective epochs and moments of belonging (Bloch, 1950: chapter 1), shelters them from purely disciplinary claims—however often legitimate and understandable—and, paradoxically, deprives both the sequence and its own interpretation of the patina of individuality: placed in the historical flow, the objects lose their authorship and find their authentic historical context.


[16] Branzi, A. (2006). *Modernità debole e diffusa. Il mondo del progetto all'inizio del XXI secolo*. Milan: Skirà; Rota, I. (2012). *Cosmologia portatile. Scritti, disegni, mappe visioni*. Macerata: Quodlibet Abitare.

[17] Fallan, K. (2010). *Design History. Understanding Theory and Method*. Oxford: Berg.

[18] Margolin V. (2013), "Il Design nella Storia", *A/I/S/design storia e ricerche*, #1.

[19] Minard, C. J. (1869). *Carte figurative des pertes successives en hommes de l'Armée Française dans la campagne de Russie 1812–1813*. Paris: Graphics Press.

[20] Lupi, G. and Buttignol M. (2013). *Visualizing painters' lives*. giorgialupi.com/work#/visualizing-painters-lives.

[21] Ortiz, S. (2013). *Histomap revisited*. http://intuitionanalytics.com/other/histomap/.

[22] White Vinyl Design. (2013). *Here is today*. hereistoday.com.

[23] Bloch, M. (1967). *Dialettica e speranza*. Firenze: Vallecchi.


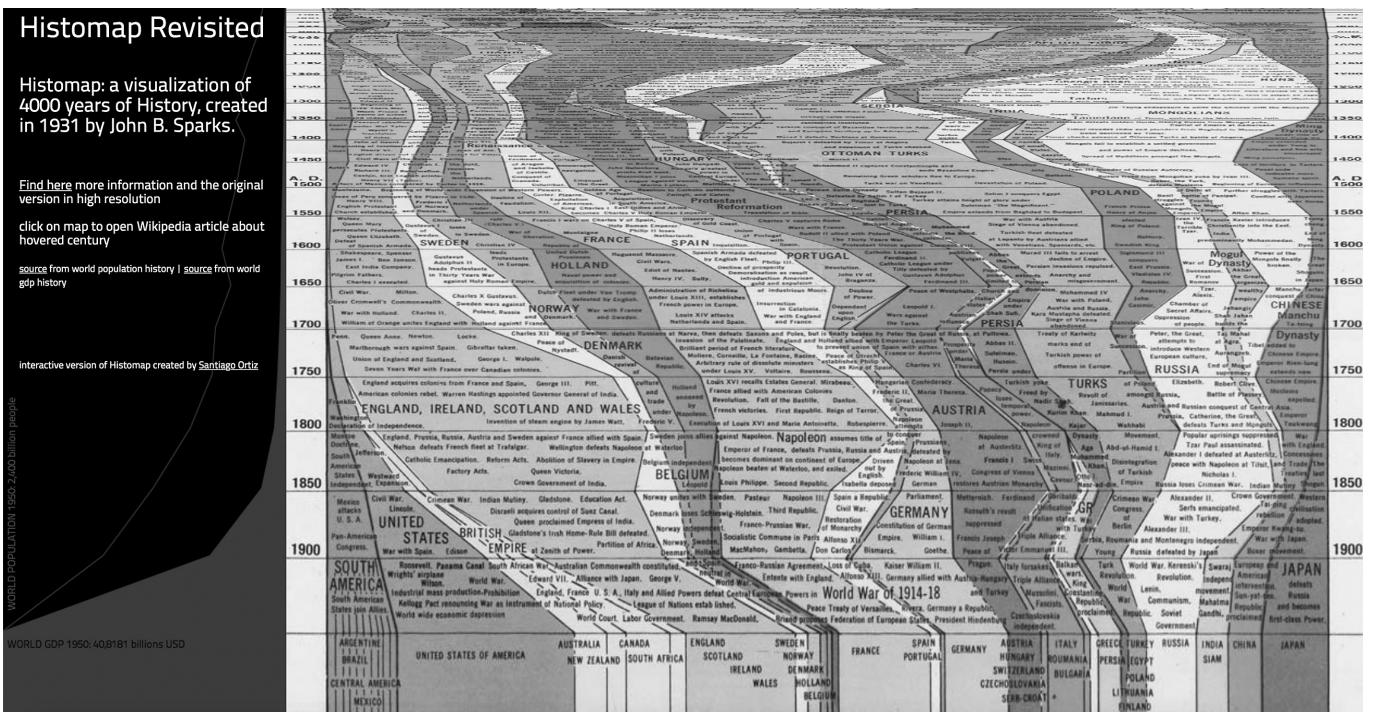


Fig. 6 Ortiz, S. (2013). *Histomap revisited.* http://intuitionanalytics.com/other/histomap/.

## Conclusion

The need to narrate the history of design and architecture in a broader sense—including both neglected authors or geographic areas (Margolin, 2015: 2)—poses the problem of how to widen chronologies and subjects, but also interpretative categories.

The enlargement required apparently collides with the urgency of defining the borders of design. The solution could be not so much in blurring its definition but in the awareness of its continuous overlapping and contaminations with art, technique, market, communication, as Castelnuovo recommended.

While this practice can be found in several recent works, especially regarding the different branches of the project, it is difficult to communicate these overlaps in a global history which has been extended to historical periods and to geographical areas.

Complex timeline-sequences that combine architecture, industrial design and graphics in a broader vision of the project disciplines can help to create an authentic mapping (the word often used by Margolin) and connect new figures and situations in a wider cultural and economic context.

The dilemma "Which came first, the chicken or the egg?" has the intent to define the roles and times of the historical data, its visualizations and interpretations. The most reasonable answer involves a change of the study model, going towards an action—more typical of design—based on disciplinary collaboration. In this case, therefore, it is not a problem of deciding whether the egg or the chicken came first but admitting that the path should be carried out in parallel. It should combine the skills of the historian with those of the graphic designer, applying them case-by-case and according to the analysis conducted by sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, geographers, etc. in order to achieve the best results in terms of comprehension and communication and the creation of a multidisciplinary team becomes essential. Indeed, data-visualization cannot simply be defined as the representation of information in visual form, but it is a complex multidisciplinary field, ranging from data mining to visual arts, from psychology of perception to graphic and systemic design (Remondino, Stabellini and Tamborrini, 2017).

Despite the promotion of interdisciplinary collaborations, there is still considerable resistance. The strength of multidisciplinarity, the openness to different know-how, knowledge, points of view and fields, shapes data representation as a multiform tool. It could be characterized by its dynamism in response to the latest technological, formal and contextual challenges, guaranteeing the right flexibility to the needs of a context and a history in which dynamism is intrinsic.

To a narrative of openness and knowledge, however, only occasionally follows an inclusive practice able to satisfy on one hand administrative/bureaucratic aspects, and on the other to operate at the level of imagination, culture and widespread and shared responsibility. Mentioning the thought of Margolin, in this complex information world, the democratic nature should not be understood and pursued in its more traditional sense but instead as a process articulated in the design of democracy as an essential condition coming from the contribution and collaboration of different involved actors and a process designed for democracy with a transparent point of view and bottom-up participation. A process rooted in a broader democratic system capable of highlighting and activating, through design, initiatives aimed at shaping a sustainable society.[24]

This work—all to be developed further—begins with the history data. It ends with the implications of trends that see data as an increasing, widespread and accessible manifestation to the individual as well as to the community. This work begins with a dialogue in the past between space and time. It ends with the awareness that knowledge is one of the most powerful tools to enable future sustainable behaviours.

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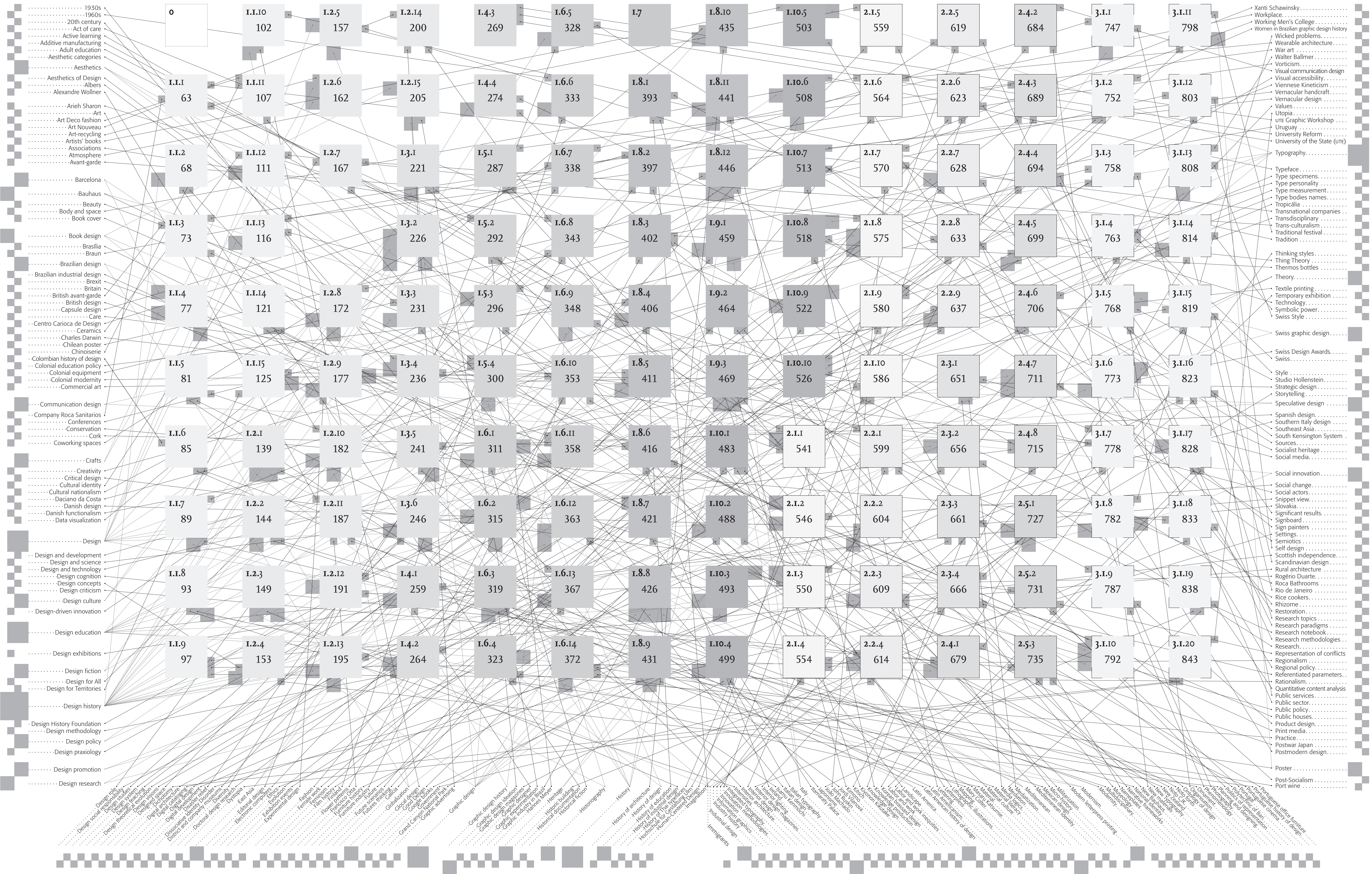
[24] Margolin, V. (2012). "Design and democracy in a troubled world". Lecture at the school of design, Carnegie Mellon University, 11.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# Back to the Future
## The Future in the Past

### Opening Pages

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