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# Disegno

**JOURNAL OF DESIGN CULTURE**

*Double-blind peer-reviewed, open access scholarly journal. Not for commercial use.*

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## **Aims and Scope**

*Disegno publishes original research papers, essays, and reviews on all aspects of design cultures. We understand the notion of design culture as resolutely broad: our aim is to freely discuss the designed environment as mutually intertwined strands of sociocultural products, practices, and discourses. This attitude traverses the disciplinary boundaries between art, design and, visual culture and is therefore open to all themes related to sociocultural creativity and innovation. Our post-disciplinary endeavor welcomes intellectual contributions from all members of different design cultures. Besides providing a lively platform for debating issues of design culture, our specific aim is to consolidate and enhance the emerging field of design culture studies in the Central European academy by providing criticism of fundamental biases and misleading cultural imprinting with respect to the field of design.*

*All research articles published in Disegno undergo a rigorous double-blind peer review process.*

*This journal does not charge APCs or submission charges.*

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# Introduction

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There is nothing more natural for the scholarly journal of the only university bearing László Moholy-Nagy's name than to edit a thematic issue to mark the occasion of seventy-five years since his death. This was an opportunity to invite scholars, researchers, and designers to present their thoughts and perspectives and thereby provide a critical assessment of one of the most important designers, educators, and thinkers of the early-twentieth century.

Intrigue still surrounds Moholy-Nagy and the issue is also an opportunity to address some of the more evasive and hidden aspects of his character. Though he is widely known and recognized as one of the most important Bauhaus-inspired thinkers—see, for example, Alysa Nahmias' recent documentary *The New Bauhaus*—many details of his life and work still need to be discovered and made available to the wider public. It is also very telling in this respect that the definitive intellectual biography of László Moholy-Nagy is still to be written. Much of this might be due in part to his early death, which left several of his projects unfinished, and also to the difficult times he lived through, when—as some of the papers published in this issue will show—the shortage of materials, lack of socio-political stability, and unpredictability of funding undermined many of his plans.

In the frameworks of contemporary design capitalism, design is generally understood as the chief booster of profit maximization whereas Moholy-Nagy always regarded design as a fundamental means of the practical criticism of the capitalist production system. Paradoxically, he is often considered a pioneering promoter of capitalist design even though he was also one of its sharpest critics, having understood very early the potential of design to humanize capitalism and alleviate alienation. As is claimed by many of the authors in this issue, Moholy-Nagy's unorthodox vision of designing—not as a profession, but an attitude—shows how he conceived the idea of the integral human as an alternative to the notion of sector-like human beings nurtured by capitalism. As he put it in *Vision in Motion*, “all problems of design merge into one great problem: design for life.” No matter how apocalyptic it may sound today, design for life is nothing other than design for survival, the searching for answers that could lead us out of the consequences of global ecological, cultural, and social crises that constitute the unsustainable posthuman condition in which we live.

The papers and essays collected in this issue present a complex and synthesized overview of the ideas and motivations that drove Moholy-Nagy's attitude towards art, design, and pedagogy. Our aim was to provide perspectives for understanding the relevance of Moholy-Nagy's ideas and activities as designer, artist and design educator within a contemporary design cultural context of different design attitudes, and the interconnectedness and relationality of different spheres of life and objects embedded in networks. Not only was our intention to offer a thorough presentation of his work, but also to contemplate the contemporary relevance of his ideas. We were interested in how his approach can be evaluated in the twenty-first century within the context of climate change, ecological thinking, criticism of capitalism, and disability studies—aspects that seem to guide the most innovative design practices and philosophies today. The papers published in this issue underscore that many of his projects and ideas could be integrated within the contemporary discourse on the role of design and creativity, and paint a portrait of a thinker whose work is still able to function as a source of inspiration. Thus, the issue also aims to assess his legacy in the widest sense, and to this end includes papers on design culture topics that analyze processes, practices, discourses, products, and services in the spirit of his philosophy.

Finally, in addition to the critical reinterpretation of the legacy of László Moholy-Nagy, this issue is dedicated to the memory of Victor Margolin, former editorial board member of *Disegno* and a great Moholy-Nagy scholar. It is our honor to celebrate his legacy with a personal remembrance by his daughter, Myra Margolin, and an intellectual biography by Alain Findeli.

***the Editors***



