

TAKING POSITIONS

AN INCOMPLETE HISTORY OF ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN EXHIBITIONS

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Quiet, please. I am analyzing.

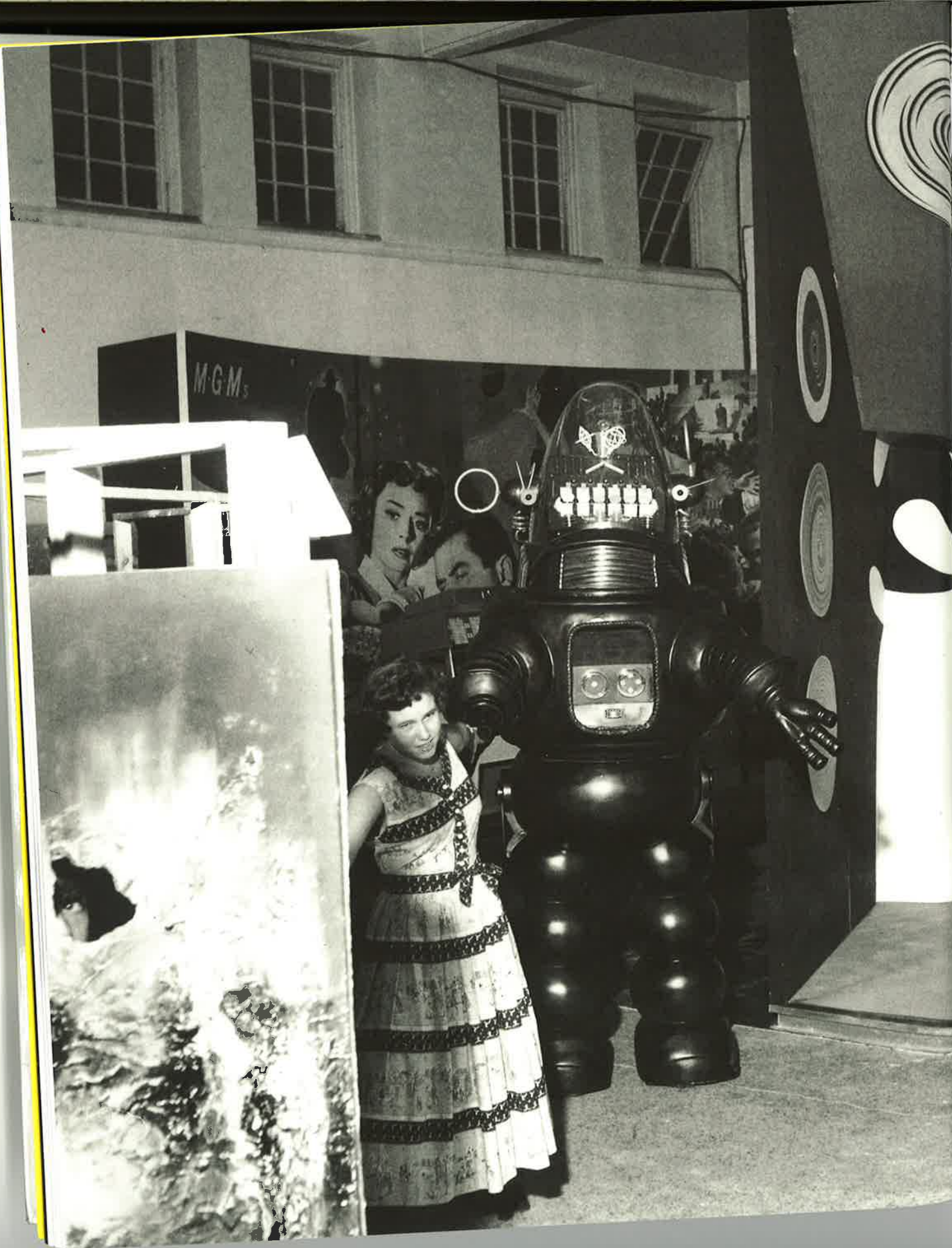
—Robby the Robot, *This Is Tomorrow*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1956¹

Exhibitions have long played a vital role in making and remaking architecture and design history. They bring together key figures and bodies of work, position ideas and present arguments, shed light on current concerns, suggest future directions, and draw connections with larger theoretical, political, and cultural conversations. They accomplish these goals through the choice of works to display, the exhibition design, the interpretive materials, the associated programming, and the catalogue. Moreover, within the fields of architecture and design, exhibitions have been critical to advancing ideas. It is impossible to gain a thorough understanding of these fields without evaluating them. It is therefore surprising how little has been written on these exhibitions and their significance and influence.

This publication studies eleven exhibitions—all organized between 1956 and 2006—that have proven to be watershed moments in the history of architecture and design. It explores how they positioned ideas through the aforementioned strategies; how they are remembered; and how their legacies have affected subsequent practice. The focus is exclusively on group exhibitions that treat contemporary architecture and design and its future. They were selected for the perspectives and ideas they presented and the range of issues they examined. A rich sampling, it is by no means exhaustive. Rather, the selection presents a snapshot of how past exhibitions have shaped moments in history and become part of the collective memory of practitioners in the field.² The first exhibition, staged in 1956, reflects the intense social and cultural transformations of the post-World War II period; its architects and designers rethought the potential and direction of their fields and their relationship to everyday life. The last exhibition included is from 2006. The more than ten years that have passed since this show allows the distance necessary for reflection, even as the ideas and content of the exhibition still comprise a fresh and active part of contemporary discourse, and its legacy is still in the making. In their totality, the eleven exhibitions provide fifty years of influence and impact for study.

Five primary themes thread through these exhibitions: the generative potential of interdisciplinarity and collaboration, evident above all in *This Is Tomorrow* (1956); the complex relationship between the corporate world and the world of ideas, as displayed in the IBM Pavilion (1964) and Expo '70 (1970); the interrogation of design as a specialized, discrete discipline, especially in *Mutant Materials in Contemporary Design* (1995) and *Massive Change: The Future of Global Design* (2005); the appropriation, reinterpretation, and re-presentation of cultural objects and motifs, as in *MAN transFORMS* (1974), *Memphis* (1981), *Droog* (1993), and *Super Normal: Sensations of the Ordinary* (2006); and the necessity of thinking about architecture and design as the fabrication of not only individual objects but also holistic, multisensory environments, as in *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape* (1972) and *Sense of the City: An Alternative Approach to Urbanism* (2005).

¹ Robby the Robot at the Whitechapel Art Gallery (now Whitechapel Gallery), London, 1956.





- 2 Installation view of the Image Economies section in *Massive Change: The Future of Global Design*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, 2006.
- 3 Installation view of *The Exhibition as Manifesto*, Istanbul Design Biennial, 2014.
- 4 Installation view of *As Seen: Exhibitions That Made Architecture and Design History*, Art Institute of Chicago, 2015-16.

The exhibitions were created by a range of professionals including curators, critics, and practicing designers and architects, attesting to the multifarious voices that have shaped the field. The methods used to engage audiences were also varied, including such innovative practices as inviting their participation or providing multisensory experiences. In addition, the exhibitions appeared at a range of venues: museums, galleries, trade fairs, an international exposition, a World's Fair, and a center for architecture. Finally, the shows were developed with varied budgets, for diverse audiences, and within dissimilar social, cultural, and political contexts. And yet they shared common goals: to bring together professionals, institutions, and the public to reflect on current dilemmas, to provoke inquiry and debate, and to determine architecture and design's implications for everyday life.

Just as the forces that shaped the exhibitions varied widely, so too did their popular receptions. *This Is Tomorrow* broke attendance records, with "up to 1,000 [visitors] a day."³ Expo '70 was also well attended, welcoming sixty-four million people over a six-month period. Similarly, MoMA's *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape* recorded 176,000 visitors—to that point, the largest audience for any exhibition at the museum.⁴ *Massive Change* attracted large numbers, too: reportedly, 300,000 visitors across the three venues to which it traveled (see fig. 2).⁵ However, not all the shows surveyed in this catalogue fared so well; some fell short of projected attendance figures. For instance, although the IBM Pavilion proved popular, with a recorded 12,500 visitors a day, the New York World's Fair as a whole recorded around fifty million attendees over its year-long run, a full twenty million below expectations. However, as the eleven exhibitions explored in this book demonstrate, attendance numbers are not always a marker of whether a show is relevant and will prove influential.

Not surprisingly, critical receptions also ranged widely and were frequently mixed. Responses encompassed surprise, excitement, bemusement, and outright dismissal.⁶ This matters because reviews not only affect attendance while a show is up but also influence how that show will be understood and remembered. One reporter referred to *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape* as "Designing the Death of Design—But Stylishly,"⁷ whereas another saw "Mind-Opening Designs for Living in the Future."⁸ As a number of essays in this volume attest, reviews have played an essential role in framing exhibitions in their own time, in addition to providing insights for future generations who, with the advantage of hindsight, can come to understand these projects quite differently and appreciate how they have shaped architecture and design practice and discourse.

The initial research for this publication was presented as an exhibition at the second Istanbul Design Biennial in 2014 (see fig. 3) as a way to position the young biennial in a history of architecture and design exhibitions and to demonstrate how exhibitions can identify urgent issues and suggest future directions for these fields.⁹ An expanded version was presented in 2015 at the Art Institute of Chicago (see fig. 4).¹⁰ The present publication builds on this research and invites further reflection and inquiry with essays by diverse scholars, critics, and designers. It draws inspiration from the growing popularity of architecture and design exhibitions and on seminal publications such as *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art* (1998) and *What Makes a Great Exhibition?* (2006). But its ultimate goal is to contribute to the conversation on exhibition practice by focusing specifically on architecture and design, as well as to help reignite conversations about the influence of exhibitions on the practice and perception of these disciplines.¹¹

This is a particularly important moment at which to examine the role of such projects. Spurred by a multitude of cross-cultural and global conversations, the fields of architecture and design are being redefined more broadly, in ways that take into account their social and cultural implications,



- 5 Superstudio (Italian, active 1966-82). *Microevent/Microenvironment*. This work was featured in *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1972.
- 6 Installation view of *Mutant Materials in Contemporary Design*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1995.

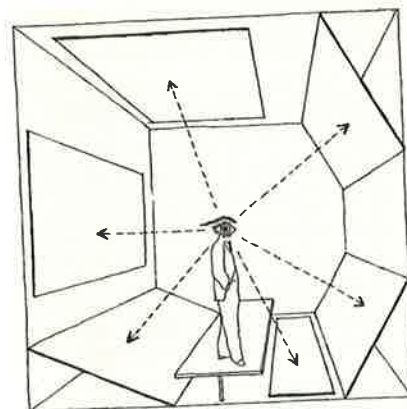
as well as new methods of working and new design and production processes. For example, social, conceptual, critical, and speculative design have sparked new lines of inquiry focused as much on asking questions as suggesting solutions. It is also a crucial moment to examine exhibitions because of how rapidly and dramatically cultural institutions are evolving. Not only are new curatorial approaches and exhibition platforms emerging, but new tools, especially digital ones, are changing how we experience and engage with shows, creating new opportunities for feedback and critical discourse.

THE CHALLENGES OF ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN EXHIBITIONS

Much has been written about how challenging architecture exhibitions are to mount. The primary critique is that they rely on displaying representations—drawings, sketches, collages, models, fragments, photographs, and the like—rather than built forms. But these documents are, for many practitioners, their principal form of communicating architectural ideas. Indeed, for visionary 1960s groups such as Archigram and Superstudio, drawings, sketches, and collages were the predominant expression of their unrealized building designs and are no less vital a part of architectural discourse for being "paper architecture" (see fig. 5). Even the drawings of many architects whose designs are constructed should still not be read as preparatory sketches, as they aren't intended to become part of a larger composition but rather depict a complete idea. As Mirko Zardini argues, a diverse range of material—"designs, physical or digital reports, letters, airplane tickets, videos and photos, books and magazines"—is needed to explain architecture, for these are "by no means inadequate substitutes for something that is absent, but . . . primary sources—the specific, original material representing the development of architectural ideas, their interpretation and effect."¹²

This wasn't always the case. For many years, buildings were the main attraction at architecture exhibitions, as architectural historian and critic Sylvia Lavin notes.¹³ Perhaps the most obvious example is the Crystal Palace, built in London's Hyde Park for the Great Exhibition in 1851. This began to change around the middle of the twentieth century, when architecture exhibitions started to privilege drawings and models. This may have been because of practical considerations such as the expense and logistics involved in showing actual buildings, but it also may have stemmed from the circumstances surrounding the formation of departments of architecture in museums, especially American ones. For example, the collection of the Art Institute's Department of Architecture (now Architecture and Design), established in 1981 (the second such museum department established in the United States; the Museum of Modern Art's launched in 1932), grew out of the archives of the museum's Ryerson and Burnham Libraries, which consisted of architectural drawings and fragments.

The other main criticism of architecture shows is that they are excessively didactic, with over-long texts and too many facts and figures. This tendency is understandable given that exhibiting architecture often means displaying not a single object but rather a range of materials. Thoughtful exhibition design can, however, help. *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape*, for example, was lauded by many as an exciting mix of displays interpreted through a range of media, from videos and wall texts to pamphlets.¹⁴ Although one critic found *Mutant Materials* to lack coherence, running "all over the place like Silly Putty," he also praised it as a "lively, colorful show that makes design seem once again like a field where the action is" (see fig. 6).¹⁵



7 Sloane Peterson, Ferris Bueller, and Cameron Frye viewing paintings at the Art Institute of Chicago in John Hughes's movie *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* (1986).

8 Herbert Bayer, "Inclusive Picture of All Possibilities" from "Fundamentals of Exhibition Design," *PM* (Dec. 1939–Jan. 1940). The New York Public Library, Rare Book Division. This diagram illustrates how to create a 360-degree immersive experience through the design of the exhibition space.

Creating the appropriate context, especially for design objects, can pose challenges, given that these items are often commercial products that are already designed for display.¹⁶ Should the exhibition embrace this and mimic a shop or trade fair, or even take place at one? Or, given the ubiquity of shopping experiences, is it more important to enable the public to view the work with some critical distance?¹⁷ The organizers of *Memphis*, which was held at the Salone del Mobile in Milan, took advantage of the mechanisms of the furniture fair to attract attention, make sales, and promote their ideas in the international media. However, by showing their work in a gallery in an informal, scattered display rather than at the more formal main trade convention, they implicitly argued that the social and cultural import of design was more significant than its pecuniary value. Curator Paola Antonelli foregrounded similar priorities when developing the installation design of *Mutant Materials*. Not wanting the exhibition to look like a "trade show," she painted the walls blue and used spotlights to dramatic effect to "change the viewers' state of mind . . . to make them focus on what is behind and inside each object independent of the objects' trade value."¹⁸

Indeed, exhibition design can help provide a frame that brings the work alive. As the Austrian-American designer Herbert Bayer wrote in 1937, creating a rich visual and physical relationship between the viewer and the works on display encourages engagement: "the theme should not retain its distance from the spectator, it should be brought close to him, penetrate and leave an impression on him" (see fig. 8).¹⁹ Moreover, Bayer argued that every aspect of design—from graphic design to interior design and lighting design—should be brought to bear on an exhibition's installation plan. His ideas are still influential today. As art historian Mary Anne Staniszewski notes, "It is in the installation design of the first half of the twentieth century that the sources of such practices as viewer interactivity and site specificity, as well as multi-media, electronic, and installation-based work, are to be found."²⁰ Given the increasing variety of types of materials that fall under the rubrics of architecture and design, exhibition spaces must be increasingly tailor-made to foster meaningful experiences for viewers, especially given the ubiquity of digital media. At the Art Institute we have provided the tried-and-true one-on-one viewing experience (see fig. 7) while also encouraging more interactive engagement that brings people together and, when possible, subverts traditional museumgoing experiences. For example,



9 Installation view of Konstantin Grcic: *Decisive Design*, Art Institute of Chicago, 2009.

10 Installation view of *Fashioning the Object: Bless Boudicca*, Sandra Backlund, Art Institute of Chicago, 2011.

11 Installation view of *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1932.

we have invited visitors to touch the artworks, sit on the furniture, and enter full-scale architectural installations to test them out for themselves (see figs. 9–10).

A BRIEF PREHISTORY OF EXHIBITIONS

The history of architecture and design exhibitions is a history of presenting ideas that then alter the direction of these fields. It is also a history of the moments when these ideas were introduced to the public and became part of larger discourses. To better understand the shows explored in this publication, it will help to look back at two seminal exhibitions: the Museum of Modern Art's 1932 *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition* and 1934 *Machine Art*. They were among the first to position architecture and design as the equals of the other visual arts, forever changing these disciplines' position among them. In their promotion of the modern ideas that dominated these fields during the first half of the twentieth century and their employment of display methods that greatly informed subsequent museological practice, these shows continue to represent a point of reference for exhibition-making today, be it as a starting point or a point of departure.

The Department of Architecture and Design at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), founded in 1932, was the first curatorial department of its kind to be established in a museum. Its importance is inarguable and its influence is still felt today. Its inaugural exhibitions, *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition* and *Machine Art*, remain milestones in the history of architecture and design. But, as then-director Alfred H. Barr, Jr., noted, MoMA wasn't the first to chart this new territory. "Expositions and exhibitions have perhaps changed the character of American architecture of the last forty years more than any other factor," he wrote, describing projects such as the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago and the 1922 *Chicago Tribune* competition and exhibition.²¹ Yet where he felt these had prompted "successive and simultaneous architectural fashions," MoMA's *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition* was intended as an "assertion that the confusion of the past forty years, or rather of the past century, may shortly come to an end" (see fig. 11).²² Part of MoMA's larger mission to promote modern art, the exhibition made the case for a new direction or "movement" in architecture in the age of the machine. These ideas were expressed in the style, materials, and construction methods of the buildings included in the show. The exhibition was divided into three sections: the first looked at work by nine architects from Europe and America; the second included the work of a more international group—forty projects from fifteen countries, by thirty-seven architects; and the third section concentrated exclusively on housing.

The exhibition, which has been well researched, was groundbreaking and not without controversy.²³ It stimulated a new direction in architectural thought and practice, founded on the ideas of the European avant-garde, at a time when these ideas had been incompletely embraced in America. It was not well attended, however, and reviews were mixed.²⁴ Nonetheless, the exhibition was so important to the field that we can now speak of pre- and post-1932 understandings of architecture in America. It inaugurated a dialogue and debate about the pros and cons of the International Style and its legacy and had a profound influence on the field and its exhibitions that has continued to the present day, thanks not only to its bold curatorial statement, its selection of architects, and the critical attention it received, but also to the fact that it was revisited in a 1992 exhibition and book.²⁵



12 Installation view of *Machine Art*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1934.

The original installation design was particularly influential. Its clean lines and rational layout affirmed modernist principles. The display system was inspired by exhibitions at the Bauhaus, with architectural models set on pedestals, accompanied by plans and large photographs of each project, which were hung like paintings and clearly labeled. This has been a template for architecture exhibitions ever since, either faithfully copied or explicitly rejected.

Two years later, as part of MoMA's resolution to promote the modern, Philip Johnson organized *Machine Art*, a three-story display of everyday, machine-made objects such as airplane propellers, ball bearings, laboratory flasks, pots and pans, and springs (see fig. 12). A press release for the show stated, "For the first time, the Museum is giving as much importance to the installation as to the Exhibition itself."²⁶ Indeed, the show was carefully conceived, especially in its presentation of the objects, and no expense was spared. Placed on cedar and walnut pedestals like sculpture, and displayed in front of walls covered in oilcloth, stainless steel, aluminum, and natural Belgian linen, the objects were highlighted as works of art, exemplars of modern design to be admired as much for their formal beauty as their functionality. Visitors were even invited to vote on their favorites. In this way, the exhibition constituted an implicit argument that these objects belonged in the museum. At the same time, the exhibition catalogue included a price list and manufacturers' contact information, encouraging visitors to also behave like consumers and purchase the objects for their own homes. MoMA itself acquired a selection of objects from the exhibition, which became the foundation of its design collection.



13 View of Patio and Pavilion installation, Alison and Peter Smithson, Nigel Henderson and Eduardo Paolozzi, *This Is Tomorrow*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, 1956.

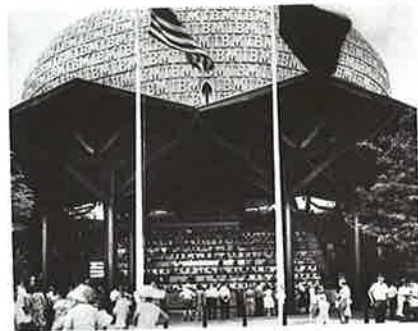
ADVANCING IDEAS: ELEVEN EXHIBITIONS

The eleven exhibitions discussed in this book are interesting case studies because of the arguments and ideas they advance and the ways in which they do so. All of them fundamentally repositioned architecture and design and explored the relationship between these fields and the economic, social, and political changes affecting everyday life. Read together, they assert architecture and design's capacity to challenge the status quo. They play with the conventions of exhibitions, both in their form and in their content, opening up areas of exploration for future shows.

THIS IS TOMORROW

This Is Tomorrow is, perhaps, most interesting for highlighting an "antagonistic cooperation" among artists, architects, and designers.²⁷ The exhibition, held at the Whitechapel Art Gallery (now Whitechapel Gallery), London, in 1956, was organized to encourage collaboration among disciplines that until then had been viewed largely as separate and exhibited discretely. Rather than an attempt to present a unified vision, however, *This Is Tomorrow* was envisioned as a platform for asking questions about the disciplines' similarities and differences. The works in the exhibition were executed in a diverse range of media that made reference to sources from across high and low culture. Some were hung on walls but others were displayed more unconventionally in informal arrangements on the floor, necessitating that visitors move around the space to view each installation. The exhibition questioned modernism's goals and was seen as documenting "evidence of attempts towards a new sort of order, a way towards that integration of the arts that must come if our culture is not merely to survive, but come truly to life."²⁸ Instead of showing existing work, its curator, Theo Crosby, then editor of the magazine *Architectural Design*, brought practitioners together in twelve small groups to develop multidisciplinary projects that would reflect the confluence of ideas characteristic of the post-World War II period. The exhibition, remembered for its multimedia display, which included pop-culture references such as Robby the Robot (quoted at the beginning of this essay) (see fig. 1), publicity stills of Hollywood actress Marilyn Monroe (including a cutout version), and a working jukebox, broke with the past in both subject and presentation. Some of the show's content may now seem dated, but its immersive installation remains fresh. As the British art critic Lawrence Alloway noted in the exhibition catalogue: "An exhibition like this is . . . a lesson in spectatorship."²⁹

Patio and Pavilion (see fig. 13), created by architects Alison and Peter Smithson and artists Nigel Henderson and Eduardo Paolozzi, exemplifies the legacy of *This Is Tomorrow* for exhibition-making. A "symbolic habitat" designed to defy the neatness of modernist form, it also challenged traditional viewer-artwork relationships. The pavilion was constructed in the gallery, with work placed on its roof, its ceiling, and the surrounding floor. The messy display, which included sand, rocks, and found materials such as bicycle parts, propelled visitors to look around them and view the work up close. Rather than illustrating architectural ideas through materials related to a built project, this conceptual installation referenced architectural elements in an open-ended way to prompt discussion, contemplation, and discovery. It thus participated in a broader push in the art world of the time to engage audiences through theoretical and performative installations, pioneering an approach that continues to influence exhibition-making practices today.



- 14 Ovoid Theater at the IBM Pavilion, New York World's Fair, New York, 1964.
 15 Installation view of the film *Think* in the Ovoid Theater at the IBM Pavilion, New York World's Fair, New York, 1964.
 16 Charles and Ray Eames with a model of the *Think* film installation.

Although the exhibition was conceived as a bridge between art and life, it wasn't directed at a "completely unsophisticated layman."³⁰ The show challenged audience members to think for themselves and draw their own conclusions, as the lack of interpretive material in the gallery and the absence of wall labels attests. The exhibition catalogue, however, was conceived as a reference guide, to be read in tandem with viewing the show. In the book, each of the twelve projects was assigned a number that appeared next to a descriptive passage and on a map of the exhibition, thereby helping visitors navigate the space and identify the authors of the installations.

IBM PAVILION

The IBM Pavilion at the 1964 New York World's Fair was also a product of its time, with attractions such as the Computer Court, the Probability Machine, and the Typewriter Bar. The Ovoid Theater (fig. 14) was, however, the centerpiece. The design was completed by Kevin Roche and John Dinkeloo of Eero Saarinen and Associates following Saarinen's untimely death in 1961. Its interior featured a multiscreen extravaganza, *Think*, developed by Charles and Ray Eames with Glen Fleck, Ralph Caplan, and I. A. L. Diamond (see figs. 15–16). The visually compelling show didn't just showcase the latest in computer technology; it was conceived to foster a new, more positive relationship between people and computers. The pavilion, although fundamentally a branding exercise for IBM, also afforded a platform for Charles and Ray Eames's ideas about the changing role of architecture and design in the new era of computerized communication. Design, they believed, was no longer about creating independent objects based solely on formal or functional imperatives but about generating design solutions based on an understanding of how these objects fit in an entire system of human interactions and relationships.

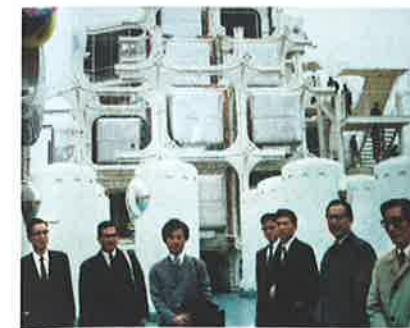
The excitement around the project is palpable in Walter Carlson's article for the *New York Times*:

After 57 seconds of travel-time, yesterday's guests found themselves sitting under a darkened dome. A great trap door closed behind them, sealing them in darkness. Suddenly the darkness was broken by light and sound, and the interior came alive with synchronized projections of moving and still pictures on 16 screens. The viewers' eyes flash frantically from side to side and up and down. And because of the steepness of the seats and the resulting absence of heads in front of him, the viewer feels he is all alone.³¹

Occurring in an era that witnessed the rise of the brand as a marketing tool, the IBM Pavilion can be read as an early example of designers understanding the power of design to communicate ideas and harnessing the exhibition format to present those ideas on a grand scale.

EXPO '70

Like the New York World's Fair and many other such large, complicated events, Expo '70 in Osaka proved highly controversial and contested.³² And yet despite the turbulence surrounding its conception and planning, experimental ideas flourished. One of the lasting legacies of Expo '70 was the realization of the ideas of the Metabolists, a loose collective of avant-garde architects who emerged after World War II with a belief that new visions were needed to renew urban communities. They brought their visionary



- 17 Kisho Kurokawa and colleagues standing outside the Takara Beutilion at Expo '70, Osaka.
 18 The Takara Beutilion at Expo '70, Osaka.
 19 Interior of the Takara Beutilion at Expo '70, Osaka.

schemes to an international audience, thanks in part to "sponsorship by the Japanese government and corporations [which] made the previously impossible, possible."³³ Particularly successful was the space-frame construction of their pavilions (discussed below), whose lightweight, cost-effective, and flexible structural system provided a model for future built structures for international events of this kind. The group's name, derived from the biological concept of metabolism, and its members—architects such as Kisho Kurokawa (see fig. 17), Kiyonori Kikutake, Fumihiko Maki, Kenzo Tange (who was the father of the movement), and others—became known for creating ambitious and visionary city plans that were adaptive and responsive to their environments, just like living organisms. Only a small fraction of their designs were permanently realized, but Expo '70 provided an important temporary platform for their ideas, which, thanks to that exposure, continue to be a point of reference for experimental practices in both exhibition-making and the built environment.

Responding to the theme of the exposition, "Progress and Harmony for Mankind," Tange's master plan for Expo '70 was conceived as an urban design solution connecting pavilions and buildings spanning 820 acres, centered around the Festival Plaza. A number of critics cited Kisho Kurokawa's Takara Beutilion (see fig. 18) as "by far the most imaginative."³⁴ The pavilion, sponsored by Takara, a company that produced beauty supplies and furniture, was designed to exemplify Metabolist thinking but also emphasized the tension between ideas and corporate relationships. The design was made up of capsules that plugged into a space-frame construction, made from interlocking struts arranged in a geometric pattern. It had a deliberately unfinished quality to suggest how it could be expanded in the future—a key concept of Metabolist architecture. As Kurokawa noted, "assembly was extremely easy to complete. . . . Disassembly was similarly easy to perform, and was a beautiful process. . . . In Buddhism it is considered noble to fulfill one's life and pass away beautifully, in accord with nature. . . . This building is a classic example of Metabolism and one in which Japan's Buddhist aesthetics can be seen."³⁵ At Expo '70, however, the capsules also served as ever-expandable mini showrooms for Takara's products (see fig. 19). The design, like the rest of the festival "was thus characterized by the contradictions between idealism and consumerism, between social agendas and commercial propagandas, and between the search for eternal order and the pursuit of material goods and entertainment."³⁶

Although Metabolism as an architectural approach was short lived following Expo '70, curtailed by the depressed economy of 1970s Japan and the worldwide oil crisis of 1973, the fair provided the Metabolists an opportunity to present their ideas and persuade audiences of their potential. As one critic noted, the Takara Beutilion presented "a feasible future for construction," illustrating the possibilities inherent in flexible building systems, particularly space-frame designs.³⁷ The festival grounds provided a temporary platform for exhibiting the greatest concentration of work by Metabolist architects then or since. Expo '70's complex narrative and conceptual underpinnings continue to engage the art and architecture community; subsequent exhibitions and books about the festival have revisited its themes and goals for new audiences.³⁸

ITALY: THE NEW DOMESTIC LANDSCAPE

Two years later, *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape* also took advantage of relationships with the commercial world. Curated by architect Emilio Ambasz at MoMA in 1972, it positioned Italian design at the forefront of changes in the field. The exhibition was one of the first to treat design as a "mainstream concern," in part because it envisioned architecture and



20 Installation view of the Objects section of *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1972.

21 Installation view of Mario Bellini's *Kar-a-Sutra* in the Environments section of *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1972.

22 Installation view of Superstudio's *Microevent/Microenvironment* in *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1972. Photograph by Cristiano Toraldo di Francia, courtesy of Emilio Ambasz. Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts.

design as challenging entrenched thinking and initiating dialogue about the "preoccupations of a changing society."³⁹ The show was a watershed moment in the history of architecture and design exhibitions because of its scale (it was the largest exhibition at MoMA to date) and the visual impact of its displays. It was also the first time that the avant-garde ideas of Italian designers were presented at a major American museum, to an audience who until then had "little understanding of the ideological positions" these designs represented.⁴⁰

In the catalogue, Ambasz identified "three prevalent attitudes to design": "conformist," "reformist," and "one of contestation." In the exhibition, however, the work was divided into two main groups, Objects (see fig. 20) and Environments (see fig. 21), within which these ideas played out. The more than one hundred Objects (mainly conformist and reformist designs) included Achille and Pier Giacomo Castiglioni's Arco floor lamp (1962), Marco Zanuso and Richard Sapper's TS 502 portable radio (1964), and Giancarlo Piretti's Plia chair (1969). The twelve Environments (in which the contestatory attitudes were more readily legible) consisted of projects such as Joe Colombo's Total Furnishing Unit, completed posthumously by his associates for the exhibition, and Superstudio's *Microevent/Microenvironment* (see fig. 22).

The Objects were displayed in MoMA's garden in a city-like grid of tall custom-made packing crates fronted with glass-like shop windows. This encouraged visitors to act like consumers—a tendency reinforced by the display's adjacency to the major retail artery of Fifth Avenue.⁴¹ The Environments section was installed in the museum's first-floor galleries, away from outside influences, providing a different type of viewing experience framed by the institutional spaces of the museum. The Objects section could be interpreted as the "achievements" of Italian design, illustrated by the support the exhibition received from the Italian Ministry for Foreign Trade, the Institute for Foreign Trade, and Gruppo ENI, an oil and gas company, as well as from the companies who manufactured these products and furniture, all prominently credited in the exhibition and catalogue.⁴² Ambasz was unapologetic about the nature of the support for the show, justifying it as necessary to the realization of an exhibition of that scope and scale.⁴³ The Environments section reflected the "problems" of design with speculative installations that included provocative projects such as Superstudio's *Microevent/Microenvironment*, which challenged the very premise of the exhibition and the need for more designed objects, instead proposing a future devoid of commercially produced products.

The emphasis on the "new" and the ever-popular "domestic realm" in the title of the show caught the attention of the public, which attended en masse. The show also received substantial critical attention, including eight articles in the *New York Times* alone. Many critics found it an exciting counter to the then-dominant interest in American and Scandinavian design. Some critics, though, perceived the show as "disturbingly ambiguous," at once providing an overview of current developments in design and presenting conceptual projects that offered a polemical critique of consumerism.⁴⁴ Much debated since its installation, *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape* continues to be a point of reference for redefining design as more than a matter of questions of form and function and for harnessing its potential as a platform for investigation, even of the field's very purpose. In addition, the show continues to serve as a model of how to present diverse and provocative concepts about design and its relationship to industry, consumerism, and the communication of ideas.⁴⁵



23 Curator Hans Hollein in front of the hammer installation in *MAN transFORMS*, Cooper-Hewitt Museum of Decorative Arts and Design (now the Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum), New York, 1976.

24 Bread installation in *MAN transFORMS*, Cooper-Hewitt Museum of Decorative Arts and Design, New York, 1976.

25 Designed by Ettore Sottsass (Italian, 1917–2007). Manufactured by Memphis Furniture S.R.L. (Italian, active 1981–87). Carlton Room Divider, 1981. Wood and colored plastic laminate (Formica); 194.3 x 189.8 x 40 cm (76 1/2 x 74 3/4 x 15 3/8 in.). The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of the Antiquarian Society through the 1984 North Italian Trip Fund, 1984.1035.

MAN TRANSFORMS

The 1976 exhibition *MAN transFORMS*, the first at the newly reopened Cooper-Hewitt Museum of Decorative Arts and Design (now the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum) in New York, sought to enlarge the definition of design beyond consumer products and to eschew interpretations of work as "good" or "bad" in favor of a more philosophical perspective. The show was curated by Viennese architect Hans Hollein (fig. 23), known for his experimental approach and relationship to the European avant-garde. Rather than present commercially available objects, the exhibition explored the conceptual underpinnings of design and its relationship to the systems and practices of daily life. As Hollein explained, "Design is here understood as an approach to a problem, as an attitude towards action, towards shaping life and environment."⁴⁶ He invited an international group of architects and designers, including Ettore Sottsass, Arata Isozaki, R. Buckminster Fuller, and Peter Bode, to create custom installations. The exhibition included a display of different kinds of bread from around the world on a long table (see fig. 24). In another room, a collection of hammers from various eras was hung on simple wooden boards that partially concealed the ornate wood paneling of the Carnegie Mansion, the museum's home (a subtle critique, perhaps, of bourgeois taste). As Hollein asserted, "The visitor will get . . . information but also be brought into a certain mood, a certain receptiveness and willingness to experience, associate, transform, think."⁴⁷ His ideas reflect the Marxist theories of Jean Baudrillard, occupied at this time with analyzing our relationships with objects and offering a cultural critique of consumer society.⁴⁸

The exhibition received mixed reviews. Some felt its philosophical approach produced an "acute sense of embarrassment," whereas others praised "the extent to which it avoids clichés."⁴⁹ Either way, the counter-cultural message of *MAN transFORMS* was in tune with the times, and it continues to influence architecture and design today. For instance, the title of the Cooper Hewitt's 2006 design triennial, "Design Life Now," recalls Hollein's belief in "life-design" and his conviction that design should be conceived as more closely aligned with the quotidian.⁵⁰ *MAN transFORMS*'s rejection of the idea of design as a predominantly functionalist concern for commercial gain is evident now, thirty years later, in new types of design (such as conceptual, transdisciplinary, interaction, and critical) that all conceive design and its role as a social and cultural practice more broadly.

MEMPHIS

Five years later, in 1981, Memphis, a loose collective of designers intent on exploring both the emotional and intellectual sides of design, staged an eponymous exhibition during the annual Milan furniture fair, with an exuberance and anything-goes spirit that they felt "was in tune with the cosmos."⁵¹ As curator Barbara Radice explained, the show was conceived to "strike a blow against current circumstances, as well as against the weary 'good taste' and expressive poverty that continued to drag along."⁵² Wanting to break with the modernist tenets that they felt still dominated the design landscape—the strict codes of practice and the use of pared-down construction methods and industrial materials to facilitate mass production—the members of Memphis declared, "Traditional modern design resorts to the most basic elements of product language. . . . We of Memphis say the opposite . . . because we already consume so much imagery through photography, television, magazines, film and the like, and so fast, we need to produce stronger stimuli, more concentrated, more rapid, more complex."⁵³ Ettore Sottsass, the group's spokesperson, drew on the theories



26 Crowd standing outside the Memphis exhibition, Milan, 1981.
27-28 Installation views of Droog, Milan, 1993.

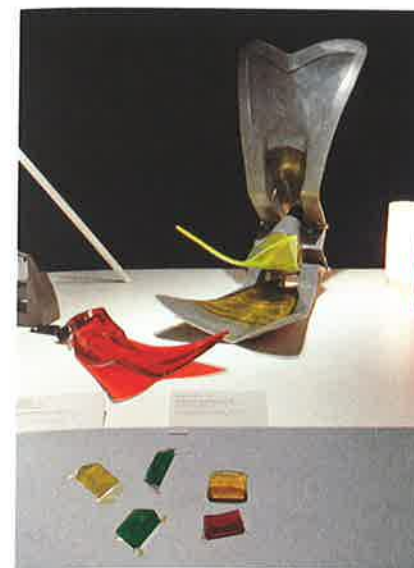
of Baudrillard and Roland Barthes, as well as semiotics more generally, to explore the role of objects as socially and culturally determined signifiers of ideas. The fifty-seven objects exhibited in the first show, made by thirty-seven designers, were relatively conventional in their manufacture. "What was most shocking was the colour palette—brash combinations of sweet-toothed nursery colours . . . and the willful way in which Memphis approached form."⁵⁴ Objects such as Sottsass's Carlton Room Divider (see fig. 25) borrowed visual and tactile references from across high and low culture to question how an object should look and function and what its relationship to the user should be.

No photographs of the exhibition installation are known to exist, although there is a memorable image of a crowd gathered outside on the opening night (fig. 26) that has only added to the myth and legend surrounding Memphis. Indeed, the show is remembered equally for being an event as for the objects on display. Jasper Morrison recalls breaking out in "a kind of cold sweat" on seeing the work, unaccustomed to its accessible visual language drawn from popular culture and unrelated to the objects' utility. The bright colors, animated shapes, and patterned materials ran counter to the then-dominant modernist-derived, more rational approaches.⁵⁵ As Dieter Rams acknowledged, the "uniformity of design has undoubtedly been given a poke in the ribs."⁵⁶

Memphis left an indelible mark not only on exhibition-making through its bold, do-it-yourself approach to collective display but also on design practice itself. Design in the decade after the show witnessed a return to bright colors, patterns, and formal expressions that marked precisely the sort of break with the past that the exhibition wished to encourage. Recently there has been resurgent interest in Memphis's inimitable approach. For example, various companies have commissioned one of the original members of the group, Nathalie Du Pasquier, to design graphic prints that recall her earlier designs for Memphis.

DROOG

The first exhibition of work by Dutch collective Droog in 1993 borrowed its methods from Memphis but was conceived as an antidote to the earlier show. Where the works in Memphis were expressive, those in Droog's eponymous exhibition had a more sober quality yet did not lack for personality. Subtle, ironic twists in their formal properties or construction techniques expressed the dry wit implied in their name (in Dutch, *droog* means "dry"). With government cultural funding supporting the exhibition, it was envisioned as a way to define and promote a design approach unique to the Netherlands. After an initial appearance at the Paradiso club in Amsterdam, it launched



29 Installation view of *Mutant Materials in Contemporary Design*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1995.
30-31 Visitors touching material samples in *Mutant Materials in Contemporary Design*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1995.

in Milan during the Salone del Mobile, like *Memphis*, but in a rented house, rather than a gallery, as befit the domestic nature of the first Droog collection (see figs. 27-28). Organized by designer Gijs Bakker and curator, design historian, and entrepreneur Renny Ramakers, the exhibition launched the careers of an entire generation of designers, including Ed Annink, Jurgen Bey, Piet Hein Eek, Richard Hutten, and Tejo Remy.

Made in a style that was labeled "Protestantism," the works—such as Jurgen Bey's Fabric-Strap Cupboard and Tejo Remy's Rag Chair—had a back-to-basics quality and were displayed modestly, without prices (see figs. 27-28). Although *Droog* was reliant on sales, the curators wanted to subvert the traditional commercial viewing experience of the Milan fair and encourage visitors to appreciate the work primarily for its conceptual ideas. Shown off-site in a venue away from the main convention center, the exhibition had an informal feel that encouraged visitors to perceive the works' theoretical underpinnings as much as their formal or aesthetic merits. This inspired subsequent generations of designers to use the Milan furniture fair as a platform for creating exhibitions that could inspire critical discourse around design as well as drive sales.

MUTANT MATERIALS IN CONTEMPORARY DESIGN

In the introduction to the exhibition catalogue for *Mutant Materials in Contemporary Design*, curator Paola Antonelli clearly stated her goal: "to offer an insight into the new relationship between designers and materials."⁵⁷ The show, staged at MoMA in 1995, challenged age-old design values, such as using materials and production processes deemed "fit for purpose," arguing that, in our new synthetic landscape, "truth in materials is no longer an absolute."⁵⁸ The exhibition illustrated how designers were working with new materials to create everything from consumer electronics to sports equipment and medical devices, allowing design to expand its influence into new areas. Objects displayed included Hella Jongerius's Soft Vase (1994) made from polyurethane resin, the Mazda MX5 Miata taillight (1983) made from substances such as acrylic-resin and polypropylene plastic, and Stephen Peart and Bradford Bissell's Animal wet suit (1988) made from neoprene and nylon jersey. The work, instead of being arranged by theme, was displayed based on "scientific convention" and "expressive considerations" (see fig. 29): for example, to emphasize their "logical beauty," hard and soft polymers were separated, and recycled materials were displayed with their parent materials.⁵⁹

The show played with exhibition conventions in various ways. It did recall earlier efforts, such as 1934's *Machine Art*, in its focus on industrial production. But inasmuch as *Mutant Materials* privileged initiating dialogues and "us[ing] aesthetics as a means of communication" over formal qualities, it had more in common with *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape*. Critic Jan Abrams praised *Mutant Materials* for how it "nimblely sidesteps all the stylistic debates that commonly bedevil design exhibits."⁶⁰ A key element of the exhibition design was the Touch Gallery. Material samples that could be touched were displayed on a gray ledge at an accessible height in front of the objects that employed them (see figs. 30-31). This element, which ran counter to the typical museum "do not touch" injunction, caught the attention of the public and the media. Critic and theorist Sylvia Lavin praised the choice, likening the experience to being at a "children's museum" and cited it as an example of how the exhibition played with art museum conventions. *Mutant Materials* was the first MoMA show to have a website component. Described at the time as an "electronic pilot project," it was hosted on a server at the School of Visual Arts in New York, as MoMA's own website wasn't yet live.⁶¹ The *Mutant Materials* website,



32 Bruce Mau and the exhibition team from the Institute without Boundaries reviewing a scale model of the *Massive Change* exhibition, Bruce Mau Design Studio, Toronto, 2004.

33–34 Installation views of *Massive Change*, Vancouver Art Gallery, 2005.

now available on MoMA's website, was envisioned as a companion to the exhibition.⁶² Now, more than twenty years later, exhibition websites and their proper role (companion piece or freestanding project?) are still a topic of fervent discussion and debate.⁶³

The curatorial approaches of individuals working in institutions are, to a large extent, determined by that situation. Antonelli, for example, began her career at MoMA wanting to "look beyond a limited definition of design."⁶⁴ *Mutant Materials*, her first major exhibition there, enabled her to "provide the museum with a statement about contemporary design" that was her own, helping her, as well as the museum, move beyond its modernist roots and open up dialogues about design as a creative and cultural practice. Remaining mindful of the history of MoMA's architecture and design exhibitions while mining methods and approaches to exhibition-making from across various types of museum, including both art and science museums, Antonelli created a layered but accessible display that engaged audiences in contemporary design practice and discourse. Her subsequent exhibitions, such as *Workspheres* (2001), *Safe: Design Takes on Risk* (2006), *Design and the Elastic Mind* (2008), and *Design and Violence* (2015) were equally issue driven and also focused on expanding dialogues about design.

MASSIVE CHANGE: THE FUTURE OF GLOBAL DESIGN

Massive Change: The Future of Global Design was billed as an exhibition, a catalogue, a radio program, and a website. But it was most of all an opportunity to advocate for a particular ideology that believes design is a powerful tool for communicating ideas about society and helping us think differently about the world. The project was developed by graphic designer Bruce Mau with a team of postgraduate students from the then newly established Institute without Boundaries at George Brown College in Toronto and first mounted at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 2004. Its visual communication strategy, however, revealed Mau's hand (see figs. 32–34). The exhibition employed persuasive and declarative language to great effect. Walls were covered with slogans—"It's not about the world of design. It is about the design of the world"—and questions—"Now that we can do anything, what will we do?"—thus implicating the viewer in the project to effect change. Mau's goals were manifold: advance design beyond modernist concerns and emphasize its potential to help society, illustrate this thinking using concrete examples drawn from across daily life, and test a new method of design practice that thenceforth became his calling card. At the core of the project, however, was a belief in the power of an exhibition as an open platform for situating ideas in a manner that enables audiences to engage with them on multiple levels.

Just as the IBM Pavilion had conveyed its message in the then-new language of mass media, *Massive Change* borrowed methods from emerging digital platforms such as social media, delivering information in sound bites. Indeed, if *Mutant Materials* understood design as operating in an increasingly wider sphere of influence thanks to the emergence of new materials, *Massive Change* understood design as having broadened its scope due to the emergence of digital technology. Mau had honed his rhetoric and visual communication techniques while working on projects such as Rem Koolhaas's celebrated 1995 book *S,M,L,XL*. The design of *Massive Change* used many different strategies to interrupt visitors' passage through its rooms in order to hold their attention better. The show was organized into eleven "economies" (understood as systems of exchange, broadly conceived), not by more traditional themes, in order to emphasize the essential relationships between people; design; and issues such as mobility, energy,



35–37 Installation views of *Sense of the City*, Montreal, 2005.

and distribution networks. Just as Charles Eames earlier claimed that the art of problem-solving was making "the connections, the connections, the connections" between information and ideas, Mau too was interested in communicating attention-grabbing concepts in easily digestible ways via provocative juxtapositions.⁶⁵ Ideas were illustrated through a variety of display methods: wall images and texts; hanging banners, maps, and graphs; and material samples—even balloons. In one room, Lucite spheres hanging like three-dimensional speech bubbles posed questions including "Is urbanization our unspoken belief system?"

Mau's ideological approach responded to theories put forth by the likes of Naomi Klein, whose 1999 book *No Logo* took a critical look at "branding," explaining how retail was no longer about selling products but values and lifestyles. Mau, however, embraced this shift creatively: rather than offer a conventional design exhibition of objects or "products," *Massive Change* primarily communicated its ideas, or "values," through a graphic language of images and data visualizations, and presented a collection of "lifestyles" in the form of ideas from experts such as Stewart Brand, founder of the Whole Earth Catalog; Janine Benyus, a scientist specializing in biomimicry; economist Hernando de Soto; epidemiologist Nancy Padian; and science fiction writer Bruce Sterling.

Mau used every available graphic means to visually impress on viewers the life-altering potential of design. "Design is evolving from its position of relative insignificance within business . . . to become the biggest project of all," he declared.⁶⁶ Indeed, *Massive Change* garnered an incredible volume of media coverage. Twenty-seven reviews of the show were published in Toronto's *Globe and Mail* alone. Calling for "greater public discourse and personal responsibility for designers," Mau positioned the exhibition as "the beginning."⁶⁷ And in fact the five-point, manifesto-like introductory text printed in the catalogue became the key to his ensuing practice.

SENSE OF THE CITY: AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO URBANISM

Sense of the City: An Alternative Approach to Urbanism, held at the Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA) in Montreal in 2005, also aimed to provide a lens through which to better understand our physical world. Like *MAN transFORMS*, it questioned conventional approaches to architecture and urbanism. Curator Mirko Zardini offered "sensorial urbanism" as an alternative to conventional urbanism; this new approach enlisted the senses as both subject and interpretive tool. "Challenging the dominance of the visual in the urban environment," the show proposed "a re-thinking of latent qualities of the city, offering complex analyses of the comforts, communication systems, and sensory dimensions of urban life—thus advancing a new spectrum of experience and engagement."⁶⁸ Zardini's desire to situate his project in a lineage of pioneering design ideas is made evident in the title of his introductory essay in the catalogue, "Toward a Sensorial Urbanism," which references Le Corbusier's influential 1923 book, *Toward a New Architecture*.

The exhibition, designed by Atelier in Situ with Tillett Lighting Design Inc. and graphic designers Orange Tango, had a bold and memorable graphic language. The surviving installation photographs (mostly devoid of human presence) make it difficult to judge the sensory aspects of the show, although we can see glass beakers of artificial smells of the city meant to be sniffed, and chunks of asphalt to illustrate metropolitan dust control (see figs. 35–36). The exhibition eschewed traditional chronological displays, instead illustrating five sections (nocturnal city, seasonal city, sound of the city, surface of the city, and air of the city) with images drawn from across the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries (see figs. 35–37).



38 Naoto Fukasawa (right) and Jasper Morrison installing *Super Normal*, Axis Gallery, Tokyo, 2005.

39–40 Installation views of *Super Normal*, Axis Gallery, Tokyo, 2005.

The exhibition was not meant to assault the senses but instead gently provoke visitors into unconventional relationships with the works on display. As Zardini noted at the time, “If you can smell a little bit of garbage, listen to a little bit of noise, see a label that says ‘Please Touch,’ all of those will give a little bit of change.”⁶⁹ In other words, the show was conceived to engage audiences in fresh ways.

Sense of the City exemplified Zardini’s interest in organizing exhibitions “about” architecture rather than “of” architecture by drawing materials from across disciplines to provide a broad context for understanding architecture’s challenges and potential.⁷⁰ As one critic noted, the exhibition “exploits an unusually diverse collection of urban imagery: magazine covers, contemporary and archival photographs, maps, and paintings.”⁷¹ Zardini’s exhibitions generally coalesce around a theme or set of issues (the senses, oil crisis, health) that are “about architecture, about the city, and about the landscape, using all available material, including, but not exclusively, architecture itself.”⁷² By creating exhibitions that situate architectural and design ideas within larger social, cultural, political, and environmental issues, and by illustrating these critical relationships, Zardini argues for the importance of these disciplines. In addition, by incorporating a range of materials that cuts across media and has a physical and visual presence, Zardini emphasized the exhibition as the essential platform for such investigations. His approach to *Sense of the City* amounted to a mission statement for the CCA: “trying to make architects more conscious of the complexity of the problem that they’re part of.”⁷³ By drawing from the archives of the center, the show simultaneously fulfilled the CCA’s mandate to contribute to scholarly investigations in the field and illustrated Zardini’s belief in the potential of architecture—and indeed the potential of exhibitions—to identify and shed light on urgent issues.

SUPER NORMAL: SENSATIONS OF THE ORDINARY

Jasper Morrison described the exhibition *Super Normal: Sensations of the Ordinary*, which he organized with fellow designer Naoto Fukasawa, as “an antidote to design that lets you down from the moment you open the box” (see fig. 38).⁷⁴ The exhibition, first staged in 2006 at Axis Gallery in Tokyo, was a pointed response to the rising tide of designer goods conceived as marketing tools with short shelf lives. Cross-cultural exchange was at the heart of the project; not only did the curators come from East (England) and West (Japan) but so, too, did the objects they selected. In addition, by including recent work by a younger generation of designers, such as Konstantin Grcic, who trained under Morrison, the exhibition illustrated how the organizers’ thinking was continuing to influence design.

Morrison and Fukasawa selected 209 pieces, including examples of their own work, that they deemed “super normal”: extremely symbolic and archetypal in form and function (see figs. 39–40). Selections ranged from a vegetable peeler to chairs, a set of shelves, and a bike. The household objects favored synthesis over innovation, invisibility over ostentation, and had achieved their super normal status through continued use over time. By focusing on the familiar yet often overlooked, the exhibition sought to emphasize the ties between everyday life and the ambitious world of contemporary design. Like *Memphis* before it, *Super Normal* was a reaction to the slickly styled designs of the preceding decades. But instead of advocating for a break with the past, as Sottsass had, Morrison and Fukasawa positioned their ideas as part of a historical lineage and tradition; among the objects they included was a stool designed by Alvar Aalto in 1933. In its approach, *Super Normal* recalled MoMA’s 1934 *Machine Art* exhibition, which presented scientific instruments and pots and pans by unidentified



41 Installation view of *Environments Counter Environments: Experimental Media in Italy: The New Domestic Landscape*, MoMA, 1972, Arthur Ross Architecture Gallery, Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, Columbia University, 2009.

42 Digital scale model of the original *This Is Tomorrow* exhibition displayed at the archive exhibition, Whitechapel Gallery Archive, London, 2010. The model is by Juan Cabello Arribas.

designers. Many objects in *Super Normal* were created by anonymous designers, such as a funnel and a package carrier handle. They were included for their functional properties, clarity of form, and how they had become seamlessly integrated into our daily lives. “There is a feeling of comfort in using anonymous things that have been around for a long time,” noted Fukasawa.⁷⁵ *Super Normal* was also indebted to the ideas of Japanese company Muji, which is known for its unbranded, minimalist household objects, relentless in their neutrality, designed by the likes of Fukasawa and Morrison. (Indeed, Muji means “no brand.”)

The exhibition installation highlighted *Super Normal*’s emphasis on the designs themselves, rather than the designers or the brand names. Each object was identified not by a wall label but by a number that corresponded to an item on a list of works like those in contemporary art galleries. Visitors could pick up this list or not, depending on how they wanted to experience the show. Unlike in a conventional art gallery, however, the handout did not include prices, even when the show appeared at trade fairs, as the curators were intent on encouraging examination of the objects for values other than monetary worth. For the same reason, the objects were displayed simply yet elegantly on white surfaces. This exhibition design was grounded in earlier experiments, including exhibitions at the Bauhaus and the 1930 Deutscher Werkbund show in Paris. But *Super Normal* updated these ideas. Pedestals were replaced with multilevel white tables with slender legs that still elevated the works off the ground, thereby calling attention to them, but in a more informal, less institutional way, somewhat in the manner objects are organized for reference in a designer’s studio. Other precedents for the exhibition are MoMA’s *Useful Objects* (1938–47) and *Good Design* (1950–55) shows, for these, too, aimed to educate the viewer. After its display in Tokyo, *Super Normal* was presented during London Design Week and the Milan furniture fair—events predominantly for the design trade—attesting to how its curators also hoped to influence retail and manufacturing practices. Through the exhibition design, the selection of works, and the venues in which the exhibitions were shown, Morrison and Fukasawa emphasized that *Super Normal* was a show for designers by designers, meant to stimulate change from within the discipline. In short, like *Memphis* and *Droog*, *Super Normal* leveraged market mechanisms to emphasize the artistic and intellectual dimensions of design.

THE AFTERLIFE OF EXHIBITIONS

Since the exhibitions explored here were staged, their influence has grown and continues to do so. Their ideas have spread in a number of ways: by their display at additional venues or their later re-creation; through their textual and photographic documentation in exhibition catalogues, press coverage, and ephemera; thanks to the critical discourse that sprang up around them at the time of their initial staging and after; and thanks to the rising popularity of the architects and designers involved. In a number of cases, the exhibitions were revisited many years later. In 2009, for example, *Environments Counter Environments: Experimental Media in Italy: The New Domestic Landscape*, MoMA, 1972, opened at the Arthur Ross Architecture Gallery at Columbia University (see fig. 41). Curated by Peter Lang, Luca Molinari, and Mark Waisuta, this exhibition, as its title suggests, presented (for the first time since 1972) the films and media projects from *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape*. The show traveled widely, reengaging audiences with key elements and discourses of the original exhibition.

Other exhibitions have revisited the shows less directly. In 2010, the Whitechapel Gallery organized an exhibition from its archive of materials related to *This Is Tomorrow*. The new installation allowed visitors to



43 Installation view of *Metabolism: The City of the Future; Dreams and Visions of Reconstruction in Postwar and Present-Day Japan*, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan, 2011.

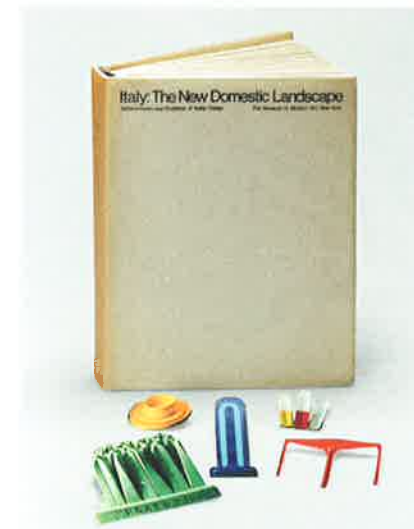
44 Installation view of *MAN transFORMS: The Documents*, ETH Zurich, 2016.

reconstruct the old one, in particular the processes of its making, through ephemera such as correspondence, exhibition posters, and the catalogue, as well as a digital scale model of the exhibition (see fig. 42). Four years later, a retrospective exhibition of the work of Richard Hamilton at Tate Modern also restaged elements from *This Is Tomorrow* as part of a larger examination of Hamilton's career. Similarly, *Project Japan: Metabolism Talks...*, published in 2011, includes oral histories with surviving Metabolists and information about their projects, including Expo '70. An exhibition at the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo that same year also addressed Metabolism and included materials from Expo '70, further reigniting dialogue and debate about this exhibition (see fig. 43). In November 2016, professors Laurent Stalder and Samuel Korn organized *MAN transFORMS: The Documents* at ETH Zurich (see fig. 44), which aimed to open up new readings of the exhibition by tracing its genesis and development through design studies, films, and artifacts. It also included contemporaneous documentation of the exhibition and explored how its participants had since revised the ideas they had presented there, illustrating how *MAN transFORMS* had been reflected on long after it closed. Not literal re-creations of the original shows, these projects nonetheless encouraged reexamination of those shows and their ideas, reaffirming their significance in the history of architecture and design.

After a show closes, our primary understanding of it comes from exhibition catalogues, installation photographs, curatorial statements, plans, drawings, checklists, correspondence, posters, invitation cards, and other ephemera, in addition to media coverage, oral histories, and the works that were shown. It is these materials that enable us to understand the exhibitions "as seen" at their time—and since. These documents are, however, more than a mere residue; conceived by designers, architects, curators, and other practitioners in the field, many can be considered part of the exhibitions themselves. Whatever their form and wherever they are seen, they keep alive the conversations at the heart of these exhibitions and extend their influence to new generations.

One of the most important aspects in this regard is the catalogue, as it is the primary source for the concepts that drove the show. Some have come to be regarded as of such importance that they are now collector's items. At five shillings, the catalogue for *This Is Tomorrow* wasn't inexpensive. However, Crosby, in a letter to Ann Forsdyke, the assistant to Bryan Robertson, the Whitechapel Art Gallery's director, asserted that it played an essential role and defended its price: "You mention that the catalogue is expensive—not really in relation to Whitechapel High St. prices."⁷⁶ Proving his point, it sold out of its initial run of 1,500 copies, and the 1,000 more that were reprinted also sold out. Designed by Edward Wright, the publication, with its informal structure and square format, has arguably become as well remembered as the exhibition's inventive mixed-media installations. The book has been reprinted multiple times since, including in 2010, for the Whitechapel Gallery restaging, attesting to its continuing interest to new audiences.

Catalogues and other ephemera, especially when read together, can also provide information about changes in the field: shifts in curatorial approach, evolving ideas about graphic and installation design, and developments in design networks. The catalogue for *This Is Tomorrow*, for example, was conceived as a guide to the show, laid out in the same sequence as the exhibition's floor plan, which was also printed in the volume. The show's multivocal approach is made clear in the three introductions to the catalogue, written by critics Lawrence Alloway, Reyner Banham, and David Lewis. It is also emphasized in the four-page spreads allotted to each group of practitioners to illustrate their ideas. Crosby later described the interdisciplinarity of *This Is Tomorrow* as "my first experience at a loose, horizontal organisation of equals" and credited it as the inspiration for the



45 The exhibition catalogue for *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape* (Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1972) with the paper cutouts inserted in the vellum dust jacket displayed in front of the book.

46 The exhibition catalogue for *Mutant Materials in Contemporary Design* (Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1995) showing the resin-and-cardboard cover.

characteristically flat organizational structure of the design firm Pentagram, which he cofounded in 1972.⁷⁷

Although meant to accompany the exhibition, the catalogue for *This Is Tomorrow* was also conceived as an interesting document in its own right, given its binding, size and design, made to live on beyond the life of the show. So too were other catalogues, such as the 430-page tome for *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape*, with its paper cutouts loosely inserted into the book's vellum jacket, which readers can remove and play with (fig. 45). The tactile cover of *Mutant Materials* is also memorable (fig. 46). Designed by Gaetano Pesce (whose work was also featured in the exhibition), the cover consists of a flap made of resin (each is unique) that contrasts starkly with the cardboard it wraps around: a metaphor, perhaps, for the rise in the production of synthetic materials and a nod to the content of the exhibition. Through the very design of their catalogues, curators, graphic designers, and others have created additional outlets for communicating the themes and ideas of the shows.

As well as documenting the works displayed in the exhibition and communicating its concepts, many catalogues actually build on the content of the shows and expand the surrounding critical discourse. The catalogue for *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape* presented the ideas of prominent Italian theorists and critics, such as Manfredo Tafuri, who were then unfamiliar to English-speaking audiences. It remains essential reading today for those wanting to know about Italian design in the 1970s. Similarly, the catalogue for *Massive Change* fostered conversation about the show's concepts, featuring interviews with an impressive cross section of thirty-two experts from varied fields in both the arts and the sciences. Likewise, the catalogue for *Sense of the City* brings together specialists from across sociology, anthropology, and cultural history, as well as urban planning and architecture. Their essays cover topics such as noise, smell, safety, and the fear of nighttime, offering, as Zardini writes, "a history of the changes in the Western city from new points of view that have been hitherto neglected."⁷⁸ These topics are also addressed by the photographs and other images that punctuate the book, drawn from different time periods and genres. The contributions in the catalogues cited above provide additional background and context for the shows they accompany, expanding the range of voices speaking on their concepts and themes and providing a lasting resource for those who saw the exhibitions as well as those who didn't, increasing their sphere of influence.

In addition to the exhibition catalogues, the critical discourse about these shows has enhanced and extended their impact on architecture and design practice, as well as our understanding of the often complex and radical projects they presented. For example, contemporaneous reactions to *This Is Tomorrow* were mixed, but with the benefit of hindsight, subsequent writing has highlighted the significance of the exhibition and the works it featured. Although many reviews of *This Is Tomorrow* were positive, some found the more conceptual work to have "little to offer visually."⁷⁹ The influential architecture critic Reyner Banham, however, called it "the most exciting thing I have seen in an exhibition in years."⁸⁰ More recent research and writing, some utilizing archival materials, have increased appreciation of the effort involved in organizing the show and of its prescient ideas.⁸¹ Now, more than sixty years later, it is regarded as "iconic," and the catalogue is considered "groundbreaking"; the importance of their legacy has become clear, with the avant-garde ideas of the exhibition's participants an accepted part of art and architectural discourse.⁸²

The same can be said of *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape*, which has been much researched and discussed since it opened. At the time, numerous, predominantly positive newspaper and magazine reviews spurred attendance. Today they provide insights into the contemporaneous design



47 Installation view of *Think*, Barbican Centre, London, 2015.

discourse of the time and the seeds of the field's reorientation away from objects' formal merits toward conceptual concerns. As the renowned critic Ada Louise Huxtable noted, the exhibition "record[ed] the death of the simple idea of esthetic virtue as a social tool."⁸³ More recent critical writing has situated the exhibition's confluence of ideas more broadly. Theorist Felicity Scott, for example, has placed it in the context of the architectural discourse and practice of the 1970s, concerned simultaneously with the creation of new, innovative products and critiques of consumerism, as well as the political landscape of the time. In doing so, she aims to "trace a struggle over the legacy of radical thought," thereby emphasizing the show's important role in the larger history of avant-garde ideas in architecture and design—and beyond.

The eleven exhibitions explored in the present publication have also become influential due to the rising profiles of their participants. For instance, the continued popularity of the Eameses' work has warranted ongoing analysis and discussion of the IBM Pavilion, including in subsequent exhibitions of the couple's output. In 2015 a large-scale model of *Think*, the multiscreen film presentation shown in the Ovoid Theater, was installed in a retrospective at the Barbican Centre in London, reawakening new audiences' interest in this project (see fig. 47). Similarly, the work of both Hollein and Sottsass have been studied in great depth and, as both were involved in a number of the exhibitions featured in this volume, this has kept these shows in the spotlight. Hollein, who organized *MAN transFORMS*, for example, was commissioned to develop a project for *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape*. He was also an active member of Memphis. Sottsass was also involved with all three of these exhibitions. Finally, the influence these exhibitions have exerted on both subsequent designers and design collectives, as well as on subsequent exhibitions, maintained their place in contemporary discourse and widened their scope of influence. In sum, exhibitions play an essential role in positioning ideas and making them visible to a broad public, and this has ensured their continued relevance.

This examination of eleven exhibitions mounted over a fifty-year period is not meant to be definitive, but it is my hope that it offers some insight into the historical and contemporary significance of exhibitions. Just as new approaches to architecture and design develop over time, so too does our understanding of what has come before. Studying these earlier exhibitions through their surviving documents and materials reveals the essential role they have played in the history of architecture and design. The exhibitions explored here and in further depth in the following essays represent a cross-section of creative production by architects, designers, and others who have developed and continue to develop new vocabularies through the platform of the exhibition.

Now is an especially critical moment to reflect on the history of architecture and design exhibitions, given the growing number of ways of interacting with the world through digital technologies. As Alice Rawsthorn notes, the increasingly interconnected world created by social media has "fostered a new genre of catalytic curatorial projects whose greatest impact stems from the debates they provoke."⁸⁴ As digital tools allow institutions of all sorts to form new relationships with the public and generate real-time feedback mechanisms, we have the opportunity to rethink viewer-object relationships and create even richer experiences with works of architecture and design, both online and off. The case studies explored in this book will hopefully encourage further exploration and analysis, underscoring how the tools of curators, designers, architects, theorists, and others working in and outside of institutions can be marshaled toward new ends, inspiring dialogue and discovery that resonate long after an exhibition's closing date.