

19. Design for Cultural Heritage. A Visionary Trajectory

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19.1 Introduction

The aim of this essay is to present the theoretical and pragmatic framework developed by Alberto Seassaro for the emergent research area of *Design for cultural heritage*, with a view to its institutional recognition.

The birth and consolidation of the research area of design of cultural heritage (we will return later to the implications of this designation *of*) offer an emblematic example of how all the actions undertaken by Alberto Seassaro in those years served the steadfast construction of the design system, through an inseparable interplay between scientific-cultural thinking and political-institutional objectives.

To achieve this result, every small piece is, from Seassaro's point of view, not merely important but essential to defining the overall design. Much like an extremely detailed puzzle, Seassaro is able to see what still appears fragmented, and each small action, apparently unconnected, not immediately decisive, or even irrelevant, finds its exact place within his mental mosaic of design. In this excursus we will also try to reflect Alberto Seassaro's characteristic mode of reasoning: on the

one hand, leaps and far-reaching projections into the future, yet firmly anchored to concrete actions and operations meticulously aligned in preparation for the objective; on the other, circular movements – that is, digressions and seemingly secondary excursions – through which he inspires and, above all, substantiates his theses, bringing onto the main axis of the argument ever new substantive points (and even neologisms) that better articulate his concepts.

Accordingly, within a predominantly chronological narrative frame, we will seek to reconnect the antecedents from which his thought and practice arise, the analysis of his writings and their effects, and broaden the view to the contextual and peripheral elements that Seassaro lucidly identifies and mobilizes in support of his scientific and political aims. The essay is, in fact, structured in a *chronicle-like* manner: a first part offers a critical rereading of Alberto Seassaro's writings on cultural heritage, and a second examines the institutional episodes set in motion (thanks also to his efforts to mobilize colleagues across the design communities). A series of continual cross-references between the two parts makes evident the complex interdependencies and correlations (temporal and causal) between his theoretical elaborations and the institutional events, made possible as well by the maturation of the design system at Politecnico di Milano that was consolidating in those years.

19.2 Design for Cultural Heritage

The theme of design for cultural heritage emerges within the cultural debate on a *Museo del design* [design museum] for the city of Milan, where design itself is conceived as a cultural asset.

Slightly earlier came the establishment of *Sistema Design Italia* [Italy's Design System] (later developed through the SDI agency with various national branches SDI) [1v](#) and a growing awareness of the district-based nature of Italian design. In Seassaro's strategic vision, the musealization of design implies that the valorization of *made in Italy* design also becomes an opportunity for the cultural legitimation of its disciplinary status, which at the time was far from assured. Within the impasse of the then-ongoing debate on a design



1. SDI (Sistema Design Italia) . Prima ricerca nazionale sul sistema design italiano. [Event →](#)

museum in Milan (which did not yet exist), his reflection already looks ahead: on the one hand, he argues that:

The design museum in Milan already exists, and it is constituted by the specifically Milanese concentration of repositories, collections, and assemblages of goods and products that are highly representative of the design phenomenon, as an aggregated cultural asset to be enjoyed and valorized thanks to the simultaneous presence of both quality and quantity of significant opportunities – to the point of speaking of a *distretto del design* [design district] and its related industries: in short, the project of a *Museo in rete per la rete dei musei* [Networked Museum for the Network of Museums]. (Seassaro, 2001, pp. 9-10)

On the other hand, he seizes the opportunity to legitimize and institutionalize this field of design research within the broader culture of design:

The innovation lies in having brought this theme to the dignity of a project, a particular kind of project, that of *design e management dei beni culturali* [design and management of cultural heritage], on which to engage the best academic resources [...] opening to designers the doors of a project-based thematic field of rare fascination, unexplored scope, urgent necessity, and intense economic value. (Seassaro, 2001, p. 10)

Within this convergence, Seassaro's strategic vision becomes particularly evident where he emphasizes the crucial role of the university – and of the then newly established *III Facoltà di Architettura – Design* [Third Faculty of Architecture – Design] at Politecnico di

2. Progetto costitutivo
della III Facoltà di
Architettura.
[Document](#) →



Milano [23](#) as a catalyst of this cultural process, particularly in dismantling the false opposition between the models then under discussion,

[...] which sets in comparison, on the one hand, the historicist and museological requirements (and therefore the *museo del design* [design museum] formula), and, on the other, the political, pro-

ductive, and commercial requirements (and therefore the Design Center formula). [...]. The line expressed by the university is clear. There is no contradiction between these points of view, and one encompasses the other. (Seassaro, 2003, pp. 248-249)

For Seassaro, the Design Museum is not only a way to valorize historical industrial production, but an economic system, which must put what already exists into relation, creating a physical and virtual network of the entire city-region territorial system of elements and even diffuse events.

Significant, in this respect, are both the experiments within the *Corso di laurea in Disegno Industriale* [Undergraduate Program in Industrial Design] (a *Laboratorio di Sintesi Finale* [Final Synthesis Studio] dedicated to the *Museo del Design* [Design Museum] and 40 theses in the 2000-2001 academic year, (Seassaro, 2001, p. 10).), and the references to the *knowledge economy* and *knowledge management*, nourished by the project then under way, Designet, that is, a digital platform for the knowledge of design [3](#).



3. Sistemi conoscitivi per il design: una proposta metodologica. Il caso DesignNet. [Document](#) →

The research project *Il Museo Virtuale del Design* [The Virtual Museum of Design], which would be funded in 2009 by Regione Lombardia (for which Seassaro is responsible together with G. Guidi), inserts itself into this trajectory of far-reaching anticipation of the digital dimension of the valorization of cultural and design heritage.

But the strategic maturity of his thinking emerges above all when he calls for the need for a systemic design action «[...] to address, in terms of 'strategic design', the problem of the valorization of cultural heritage» (Seassaro, 2003, p. 246).

In approaching design as a cultural asset, Seassaro also defines design for cultural heritage as a strategic process of social and political importance, as well as its institutionalization within the university.

In those years, in fact, the University's *Centro per la Conservazione e Valorizzazione dei Beni Culturali* (CCVBC) [Center for the Conservation and Valorization of Cultural Heritage] was established which, under the direction of Prof. Maurizio Boriani, recognizes that

The issues of protection, conservation, and valorization involve a wide spectrum of disciplines and techniques, some specific, oth-

ers borrowed from other research sectors: indeed, the problems of knowledge (historical and material), diagnostics, monitoring of phenomena, and conservation techniques are involved, but also the more general themes of territorial and landscape planning, the economic programming of interventions, the dissemination and popularization of knowledge, and valorization. It can rightly be maintained that that of Cultural Heritage is a polytechnic subject par excellence and that therefore our university possesses the knowledge, the instrumentation, and the interdisciplinary relations required [4](#). (Boriani in *Rivista Politecnico*, 2004, p. 4)

4. *Rivista Politecnico*,
2004.
[Document →](#)



And Seassaro tirelessly undertakes to represent design as a privileged interlocutor within the scientific debate at Politecnico di Milano, including in the domain of the valorization of cultural heritage,

[...] employing all its possible disciplinary articulations, from communication design to event design to service design, which go to integrate the already consolidated project practices in the museographic field of interior design, exhibition design, graphic design, web design. [...] (Seassaro, 2003, pp. 246)

He defines, in an organic way for the first time in 2003, *design per la valorizzazione dei beni culturali* [design for the valorization of cultural heritage], or rather the contracted and more meaningful form of *design dei beni culturali* [design for cultural heritage] (his original definition), through all the disciplinary and even professional articulations it encompasses, insisting on the overall strategy that orients and governs them.

Designing a *bene culturale* [cultural asset] means carrying out a long series of operations – first creative and then technical – that render the asset first recognizable and then usable as a cultural asset. The classic example is that of a hidden asset – which at the beginning of the process may still be only 'matter' or 'material' – brought to light through phases of study, analysis, and historiographic and aesthetic critique, until it becomes identifiable as

an asset of historical-artistic-cultural value. And upon which, through a series of operations, one intervenes by design in order to bring out its characteristics, so that it may become an asset recognizable not only by scholars but by all potential users. (Seassaro, 2003, p. 242)

And again: «Designing cultural value is a precise design act. It is the process we call 'design for cultural heritage'» (Seassaro, 2003, p. 242).

As Seassaro is keen to specify:

What is relatively new is that the condition for the enjoyment of a cultural asset presupposes – necessitates – the immediate perception on the part of the user (the user, the citizen) of being him or herself an active subject within a system of high cultural value. (Seassaro, 2003, pp. 240-241)

In this technical-creative process, the fundamental moment is enjoyment, and it also requires specific design competences, such as communication design, event design, and finally service design, «defining all the ways and procedures – but also the technologies – to establish the practicability of the relationship between the asset and its user» (Seassaro, 2003, p. 242).

This line of thought arises, on the one hand, in the context of a «growing inflection of the very concept of cultural asset, and thus a progressive multiplication of what are recognized as, so to speak, *museabili* [museum-eligible] assets» (Seassaro, 2003, p. 240) (a neologism), and, on the other hand, from the transformation of design which, according to Seassaro, as the science and technique of the project, encompasses an «infinite range of objects of design, conquering the territories of immateriality».

In 2001 the IN.DA.CO. Department – *Industrial Design, Arti, Comunicazione e Moda* [Industrial Design, Arts, Communication and Fashion] – was also established at Politecnico di Milano, the first department dedicated to design and its thematic articulations (today the Department of Design). In that context, the need to position the culture of design for cultural heritage within the Polytechnic matrix emerges as even more urgent. Seassaro notes the need, alongside the profiles of cul-

tural heritage managers and specialist consultants (of engineering and technological matrix), «of renewed and innovative competences capable of managing the communicative and fruition process, to which the academic experience of research and training for design can provide a response» (Seassaro, 2004, p. 12), and he concretely translates this need into the creation, within the newly established department, of thematic research groups (the *UdRD Unità di Ricerca e Didattica* [Research and Teaching Units]) and, within the Faculty, of educational curricula, for which a more extensive description will be given in the second part of the essay.

It is within this framework that my scientific interest as a designer and researcher of the processes of transformation and production of cultural assets found, in the INDACO Department at Politecnico di Milano, a group of colleague faculty members, researchers, doctoral candidates, and research fellows with whom I founded the *Unità di ricerca del Design per la valorizzazione dei beni culturali* [Research Unit of Design for the Valorization of Cultural Heritage], and which within the Faculty that I have the honor to chair has developed two lines of educational orientation expressed in the direction of *Design degli ambienti per i beni culturali* [Design of environments for cultural heritage] and *Design della comunicazione dei beni culturali* [Design of the communication of cultural heritage] [5](#) [1](#). (Seassaro, 2004, pp. 14-15)

5. Brochure dell'unità di ricerca e didattica DeCH.
[Document](#) →



Note 1.
[Link](#) →



6. Seassaro A. *Per un contributo politecnico alla valorizzazione dei beni culturali*.
[Document](#) →



In the in-depth examination of the processes of valorization of *beni culturali* [cultural heritage], it also becomes strategic to map the competences of design for *beni culturali* within the Department (as will be seen below), and to illustrate the work of many colleagues who have addressed, in a strategic and collective manner, the project concerning *beni culturali* within the Department [6](#), but above all the need for the infrastructuring of the Department so that «disciplinary knowledge may interfere interdisciplinarily and become real supports for the industrial advancement of the country, including with respect to the production of value through cultural heritage» (Seassaro, 2004, pp. 14-15), as evidence that Seassaro's endeavor is, from the outset, grounded in a for-

ward-looking vision of strong anticipation of a mature culture of design for what he defines as «the cultural heritage industry» (Seassaro, 2004, pp. 13).

In the subsequent years, the research area progressively consolidated, becoming the subject of national research projects capable of accounting both for the *fenomenologia multiverso di design dei beni culturali* [multiverse phenomenology of design for cultural heritage] [7](#) (Parente, Lupo, 2009) and for the close interrelations with the virtual and interactive dimensions made possible by new digital technologies [8](#) (Irace, 2013); as well as various applied research projects (including the aforementioned *Museo Virtuale del Design* [Virtual Museum of Design]) and doctoral theses [9](#).

All these experiences contributed to a methodological redefinition, and to international promotion through conferences [10](#), the approach to design (and *meta-design*) for cultural heritage as a practice-based research:

Through a series of theoretical and applied experimentations, a scientific platform of *design per i beni culturali* [design for cultural heritage] has thus been built. [...] In these processes, the action of valorization by design is recognizable also in the *fase metaprogettuale* [meta-design phase], that is, preliminary to the project, at the moment when it identifies and characterizes a given asset as susceptible to subsequent practices of valorization [...]. Obviously, alongside this cross-cutting capacity to read the valorization process, which represents its overall direction, design substantiates its intervention through its operational competences and specializations, that is, that set of techniques, languages, and design tools that transform strategic choices into concrete actions [...]. It is necessary to have a direct and concrete experience of the matter of cultural heritage, which occurs only at the moment one designs: that is, one must operate as designers but with a strategic vision capable of conceiving aggregated competences in the form of replicable models and processes. (Lupo, 2009, pp. 10-11)



7. d.Cult: il design per la valorizzazione dei beni culturali. Strategie, strumenti e metodologie di progetto.

[Document →](#)



8. D&CH: Il design del patrimonio culturale fra storia memoria e conoscenza. L'immateriale, il virtuale, l'interattivo come materia di progetto nel tempo della crisi.

[Document →](#)



9. La valorizzazione dei beni culturali come processo di design: Casi, metodologie, strumenti.

[Document →](#)



10. Proceedings della Conferenza Cumulus 38°S 2009. Hemispheric Shifts Across Learning, Teaching and Research.

[Document →](#)

The institutional events described below further confirm the stages of consolidation of this scientific and cultural trajectory.

19.3 The Institutional Context

The relationship between design and cultural heritage began around 25 years ago, even before the establishment of the *Unità di Ricerca e Didattica* [Research and Teaching Unit] named *Design dei Beni Culturali* [design for cultural heritage], strongly advocated by Alberto Seassaro, coordinated first by Flaviano Celaschi, then by Seassaro himself, and finally by Fulvio Irace. In parallel with the reflection on the musealization of design that was developing in those same years, this working group sought to find tools and processes useful for the structured study of cultural heritage in its various forms and articulations, as well as to equip itself with new paradigms for understanding the dynamics of value construction within complex cultural systems (Celaschi, 2000). This activity continues to the present day in a renewed

team named *DeCH_Design for Cultural Heritage* [23](#).

It was precisely in the early 2000s that Alberto Seassaro – promoter of many intellectual and institutional innovations that fostered the growth of design as a university discipline in Italy – had the foresight to give space and identity to a partnership as fruitful and interesting as – at the time – unusual: as can be seen from his writings cited above, we are speaking of the union between design – understood as a discipline oriented toward innovation – and *cultural heritage* as a thematic field increasingly in need of new modes of valorization, communication, and fruition.

The trajectory began with the intuition to map the disciplines of design, of history and criticism, of representation, and of management relating to cultural heritage present, initially, in the IN.DA.CO. Department and then across the various departments of the University, with the aim of creating a true *Albo delle competenze politecniche* [Registry of polytechnic competences] (BBCC 2003–2004 [33](#)) to demonstrate the richness and articulation of this thematic field, as well as

Note 2.

[Link](#)→



Note 3.

Processi e metodi design based per la sistematizzazione, divulgazione e valorizzazione del patrimonio di esperienze, competenze, tecnologie, della cultura politecnica in materia di beni culturali: il progetto e lo sviluppo di eventi e prodotti informativi, formativi, di addestramento degli operatori

[Design-based processes and methods for the systematization, dissemination, and valorization of the wealth of experiences, competences, and technologies of the polytechnic culture in the field of cultural heritage: the design and development of events and informational, educational, and operator-training products] 2003–2004. Research project curated by R. Trocchianesi (scientific supervisor A. Seassaro).

the potential of what the university could do – in terms of teaching, research, and design – for institutions, bodies, and actors across the entire system of the cultural industry.

Thanks above all to Seassaro's strategic approach, significant actions led to the positioning of this branch of design first within the Politecnico system (also considering the *CCVBC – University Center for the Conservation and Valorization of Cultural Heritage* mentioned earlier) and then within the national and international design system.

These actions concern both the project themes developed in the laboratories – especially in the *Laboratori di Sintesi finale* [Final Synthesis Studios], where the choice to address issues with wide social and, above all, cultural impact remains evident – and the establishment of curricular tracks he strongly promoted, such as *Comunicazione per la valorizzazione dei beni culturali* [Communication for the Valorization of Cultural Heritage] within the *Corso di Laurea di Design della Comunicazione* [Bachelor's Degree in Communication Design] (active from academic year 2003-2004 to 2006-2007) and *Allestimento e museografia per i beni culturali* [Exhibition and Museography for Cultural Heritage] within the *Corso di Laurea di Design degli Interni* [Bachelor's Degree in Interior Design] (active from academic year 2004-2005 to 2006-2007), in which attention to the valorization, through design, of material and intellectual cultural heritage became concrete. In particular, within the *Communication for the Valorization of Cultural Heritage* track there were design studios and theory courses aimed at addressing the specificities of the culture of graphic and visual communication design in physical and digital cultural contexts, museographic-exhibitory contexts, and territorial contexts.

Within the curricular pathway, among the specialized track courses, a course in *Sistema dei beni culturali e museologia* [System of Cultural Heritage and Museology] was introduced to underscore, on the one hand, the importance of a systemic approach to heritage and, on the other, the synergy toward interdisciplinarity with the fields of art, curatorship, and scientific-museum organization.

In addition to integrated systems of territorial and museum brand identity, the production of audiovisual and editorial artifacts for culture, the narrative approach, and new languages, space was given to a line of work focused on representing complexity through data visu-

alization and infographics, tackling design challenges arising from the visual representation of complex cultural phenomena. Digital archives and virtual museums constituted privileged contexts in which to explore new modes of fruition, narration, and communication of heritage, starting from the use of new technologies. The already mentioned *Designet* project fits precisely within this line of research.

Even more specific was the *Exhibition and Museography for Cultural Heritage* track, where critical-theoretical courses stood out, such as *Arte e Architettura* [Art and Architecture], which reflected on disciplinary boundaries and areas of interpolation between the artistic approach and design culture, and *Museografia* [Museography], where the museum was analyzed and addressed as a full-fledged cultural system from the architectural and spatial point of view, but also as an inhabited place for new modes of fruition, as a product of cultural marketing, as a sensitive organism ready to open up to innovative projects. Among the design courses, the *Laboratorio di allestimento* [Exhibition Design Studio] and the *Workshop di allestimento* [Exhibition Design Workshop] were established, both aimed at deepening an interior-application domain focused on wide-spectrum cultural contexts: museums, trade fairs, indoor and outdoor events.

It should be noted that exhibition design aims to give form to a three-dimensional narrative where – at an integrated level – the design dimension of interiors (spatial design and layout), of product (exhibition artifacts), and of communication (museum brand identity and wayfinding) are addressed. The lighting component also becomes central; for this reason a course in *Cultura e progetto della luce* [Culture and Design of Light] was introduced, for which Seassaro himself was the instructor and experimenter of didactic-design models focused on what was one of his main trajectories of innovation and inventive research.

In both tracks, a cycle of *Open lectures* was planned, special contributions by authoritative voices, mostly from outside academia, coming from the professional and corporate worlds.

In continuity with the curricular education and in collaboration with the Faculty of Architecture, 20 years ago a first-level master's program (still active) was also established in *Exhibition design – Architettura dell'esporre* [Exhibition Design – Architecture of Display] [113](#), delivered

at Politecnico di Milano (POLI.design) and IDEA (Italian Association of Exhibition Designers), where the architectural approach and the design approach intersected in relation to exhibition projects predominantly cultural and museographic in nature.



11. Master in *IDEA*:
Exhibition Design,
Architettura dell'Esporre.
[Document →](#)

In those same years – in 2004 – an interdepartmental doctoral program was established (INDACO Department and BEST Department) that lasted until 2011, when it was decided to merge or otherwise reduce the number of doctoral programs. The program was titled *Design e tecnologie per la valorizzazione del patrimonio culturale* [Design and Technologies for the Valorization of Cultural Heritage], and thanks to the fruitful interdisciplinary collaboration and relational intelligence of three major polytechnic figures – Fabrizio Schiaffonati, Cesare Stevan, and Alberto Seassarò – the establishment of a doctoral program anchored at the Mantua campus (proposed and coordinated by Fabrizio Schiaffonati himself) became an opportunity to activate a geographical and cultural context in which the territory itself served as an experimental environment for developing projects of high cultural complexity.

In those years many doctoral researches applied to the territory helped consolidate the identity of the Mantua campus as the polytechnic site devoted to cultural heritage. Fruitful actions and collaborations were set up with local communities, companies, and institutions to explore and *implement* projects for the activation, valorization, and communication of the territory. The doctoral program played a central role in building an ecosystem of design for cultural heritage nourished by a circularity of actions that later proved virtuous and advantageous for the very territory involved. In this case, the triangulation among the disciplines of architecture, the technologies applied to systems of territorial governance, and a *design-driven* project culture oriented toward the innovation of cultural products and processes proved to be a winning synergy in the development of a branch of design that subsequently consolidated and expanded over time.

These are only some of the signs of the institution's strong sensitivity to the cultural dimension of design for cultural heritage.

Thanks also to the foresight and determination of such a visionary figure, there took shape – in those years – a multidisciplinary place of research, teaching, and design: a place devoted to observation, experimentation, and project work that equipped itself with new para-

digms for understanding the dynamics of value construction around tangible and intangible cultural heritage, from different viewpoints and toward new perspectives. As noted above, we could perhaps define it precisely as a *design for cultural heritage ecosystem*, that is, a system which still today is self-sustaining through the multiverse structures and opportunities of polytechnic research, teaching, and design, yet is also capable of absorbing, transforming, and channeling outward renewed forms of value.

Crucial were the research projects he envisioned and coordinated, both for the variety of scales of intervention (see the aforementioned *Museo Virtuale del Design* coordinated with G. Guidi, and *E.CHI Progetto di valorizzazione del patrimonio intangibile nel territorio alpino italo-svizzero* [E.CHI project for the valorization of intangible heritage in the Italian-Swiss Alpine area] coordinated with R. Trocchianesi) and for their strategic-systemic approach (see the aforementioned *PRIN* projects). It is undeniable to recognize that what took shape in that period was a kind of systematic survey of competences (humanistic and technical) and of the design potential related to cultural heritage, which today finds its place within the collective project to establish a national and international network for the application of design of cultural heritage.

In that initial phase, the research focus found synthesis in the idea that the contribution a *design driven* approach could offer to the development of design of cultural heritage was the urgency of repositioning the value of interdisciplinarity at the center of design culture.

19.4 Conclusions. Trajectories, Outcomes, and New Perspectives

The legacy that Seassaro has left for the research area of design for cultural heritage is substantial: it is not only scientific or institutional, but one of continuous, responsible research and innovation.

Much has happened: European research has set the horizon of reference; project opportunities and experiences have multiplied; the competences within the Department have expanded and become transversal, aligned with the strategic line of *Design per i sistemi della*

creatività e della cultura [Design for the Systems of Creativity and Culture], to valorize cultural production and fruition in a sustainable and inclusive way [12](#). Even today, as Seassaro himself indicates:



12. Il progetto Design per il cambiamento sistemico. [Event](#)→

the strategic interest inherent in design of cultural heritage goes beyond its specific sectoral and disciplinary domain, distinguishing itself by a high level of interdisciplinarity that makes it transversal and complementary to that large part of contemporary culture that looks at design. (Seassaro, 2013, p. 40)

His position advocates a conscious design ethics that is nonetheless able to seize the opportunities of a model of valorization and knowledge production permeating the aesthetics and imaginaries of everyday life, within a *Heritage continuum* (Lupo, 2021) that is fluid and stratified between the real and the fictional, which seems to foreshadow (and also caution against) the most recent technological developments (metaverses, AI), yet still offers a horizon of design hope:

Celebration takes the place of 'vigilant memory', and the monument becomes the instrument that ossifies it into a symbol, turning it from living matter into dead matter, frozen in a single aspect, that of the rhetorical gesture. The project, therefore, if it does not save us, consoles us. And if it does not offer us eternal life, it stimulates us but also, technologically, enables us, through achronological and immaterial hyperreality, to have virtually everything but 'make-believe'. To aggregate all cultural assets into an endless panorama where, simultaneously, everything from every time, existing or imagined, can be grasped in perceptual fiction as in narrative fiction. Because everything is exhibitible, everything is displayable and communicable, in a total mythological spectacle. (Seassaro, 2013, p. 42)

This branch of design has become a choral endeavor: there are, in fact, several witnesses who have helped bring out the importance of cultural heritage as a design topic and – symmetrically – have firmly positioned design as an approach for cultural heritage itself. Twenty-five

years on, it is an increasingly consolidated discipline at national and international levels, sustained by partnerships with other universities, institutional actors, and corporate interlocutors, aimed at advancing

Note 4.

The reflection on these three research directions was *sparked* by a passage in the essay by Celaschi, Penati, and Trocchianesi (2016).

the path toward innovation and responding ever more knowingly to dedicated funding channels. A trajectory that marks the evolution of polytechnic design. A trajectory that unfolds along three main directions ⁴ still open today:

- the research for *new open questions for design* – a true common need of the scientific community – to explore and identify objectives toward which to direct study in the cultural sphere (also and above all in the face of technological, social, and economic transformations);
- research that investigates the *meanings* that the design *product* can represent within the complex, *multiscale* system of cultural heritage;
- research that investigates the *value* that the design *product* manifests within the processes of cultural production, activation, valorization, communication, and consumption.

Authorship

This contribution is the result of a joint reflection by the authors. Specifically: Eleonora Lupo is the author of *Introduction, Design for Cultural Heritage*, and co-author of the *Conclusions*; Raffaella Trocchianesi is the author of *The Institutional Context* and co-author of the *Conclusions*.

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