

**Dr. Alice Twemlow**

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## **OVERVIEW**

Dr. Alice Twemlow is Professor of the Design Lectoraat at Royal Academy of Art, The Hague (KABK) and Associate Professor at Leiden University.

Previously, she was head of the Master's Department in Design Curating & Writing at Design Academy Eindhoven and was the founding chair of the MFA in Design Criticism and the MA in Design Research, Writing & Criticism at the School of Visual Arts in New York.

Twemlow has an MA and a Ph.D in History of Design from the program run jointly by the Victoria & Albert Museum and the Royal College of Art in London, and her book, *Sifting the Trash: A History of Design Criticism*, was published by MIT Press in May 2017.

Twemlow is an active member of the Environmental Humanities Centre at VU University Amsterdam, and is conducting research into the material manifestations and the meanings of product design when it becomes trash, via the social behaviours, infrastructures, economies, governance, language, and systems of practice that shape and gather around its disposal.

Twemlow has an international presence as a writer, speaker, educator, juror, examiner, critic, and conference director and moderator on all aspects of design culture.

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## **DISCIPLINARY EXPERTISE and RESEARCH INTERESTS**

- Design history, design criticism, history of criticism, design theory, design studies, design research, writing and publishing, alternative media, new media, environmental humanities, English literature, cultural studies, design education, media studies, museum studies, amateur criticism, research-as-practice, graphic design, typography, intersections between literature and design
- Waste, trash, sustainability, circular economies, ecology, design and time, deep futures

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## Design Lectoraat, KABK: Design and the Deep Future

“Between modernising and ecologising we have to choose,” says Bruno Latour in an ultimatum that speaks directly to the central dilemma of twenty-first century design.

In 2017 a Working Group of stratigraphic scientists submitted a recommendation to the International Geological Congress that we are in a new geological epoch — The Anthropocene. The detritus of our modernising design solutions has left a permanent record in the Earth’s strata including plastic, aluminium and concrete particles, artificial radionuclides, changes to carbon and nitrogen isotope patterns, fly ash particles, and a variety of fossilisable biological remains. Each year we, as a global population, produce 1.3 billion tons of municipal solid waste. When design is considered from this perspective, as the trash it will become, then, as design theorist Ben Highmore has observed, “it is hard not to see global warming and climate change as a consequence of a variety of design processes, design values and design products.”

Too often our engagement with design (as designers, critics and consumers) tends to focus on only one moment in a designed object’s lifecycle — the moment when it is brand new and suspended in a perpetual present — without attending to what happens to it after its period of usefulness is over, and it is thrown away. But there really is no “away.” When we discard all those things that just don’t “spark joy” anymore, they still exist as matter in space, just someone else’s space. And they still exist in time.

Geobiologists such as Reinhold Leinfelder stress the importance of discussing different conceptions of time, in addition to human generational time, such as cosmic, evolutionary, and geological time. We need to learn to see the box-fresh and shiny objects of our age, not only as the products of design ingenuity, manufacturing labour and consumer desire but also, in terms of their afterlives, in English literature professor Brian Thill’s conception, as the “rusting, splintered, discarded” husks they will become, and not only embedded in their present time and space, but “carom(ing) off the edges of the present and into the past and future.”

Branches of archaeology, social studies, and the humanities such as garbology, discard studies, eco-criticism, geophilosophy, and sustainability studies all provide models for research into the environmental consequences of a disposable product design culture. Ecological theorist Timothy Morton proposes the term “hyperobject” to help us think of things like Styrofoam or plastic bags in terms of their massive distribution in time, relative to humans.

In the work of some critical designers today, one can discern a renewed engagement with trash as the acknowledged destination of product design, and with time as a presiding factor. Among them are such strategies as: adaptive re-use and repair of products; the design of “emotionally durable” products; advocacy for the custodial use of things and places, rather than ownership; tool sharing libraries; the design of processes, situations and systems rather than material objects; the use of “just-in-time,” small batch production methods; using digital and sensing technology to visualize and monitor the impact of the Anthropocene, such the MIT Media Lab project which tracks the global migration of trash; and things that are pre-programmed to dematerialize, deactivate, disassemble, and decompose at rates that suit their use and purpose.

Considering design through the lens of deep geological time, and from the perspective of the future waste it will become, casts unflattering light on our predicament, but also might illuminate some possible routes for recovery.

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## **ACADEMIC POSITIONS**

- Design Lector, KABK, September 2017-
  - Associate Professor, Leiden University, September 2017-
  - Founding Chair, MFA Design Criticism and MA Design Research, School of Visual Arts, New York, 2008-2015 (continuing as advisor and guest critic)
  - Senior Research Fellow, MADA, Monash University, Melbourne, 2017-
  - Visiting Professor, University of the Arts, London, 2015-
  - External Examiner, National College of Art and Design, Dublin, 2018-
  
  - Head, Master Department, Design Curating & Writing, Design Academy Eindhoven, 2016-2018
  - Chair, MA, Design Research, Writing, and Criticism, School of Visual Arts, New York, 2012-2015
  - Chair, MFA, Design Criticism, School of Visual Arts, New York, 2008-2012
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## **ACADEMIC EDUCATION**

- Ph.D (RCA) History of Design, Victoria & Albert Museum/Royal College of Art, London, 2007-2014. Dissertation: "Purposes, Poetics, and Publics: The Shifting Dynamics of Design Criticism in the US and UK, 1955-2007"
  - M.A. (RCA) History of Design, Victoria & Albert Museum/Royal College of Art, London, 1994-1996
  - B.A. (Hons) English Literature, Bristol University, 1991-1994
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## **GRANTS, AWARDS, AND OTHER EXTERNAL FUNDING**

- Graham Foundation Grant Recipient, 2015
  - Design History Society Writing Award Winner, 2018
  - Nominated for "Design Mind," National Design Awards, 2009
  - Recipient, Surface Magazine Avant Guardian Award, 2008
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## **TEACHING and SUPERVISION EXPERIENCE**

- Supervising some Ph.DArts candidates, 2017-
- Guest lecturer, Non-Linear Design MFA, Industrial Design MFA, KABK

20+ years of teaching in design, design studies, design history, research, critical thinking in UK, US and The Netherlands. Have supervised more than 300 MA dissertations

- Senior lecturer, Design Cultures, VU University, Amsterdam
- Head, Master Department, Design Curating & Writing, Design Academy Eindhoven, 2016-2018
- Chair, MA, Design Research, Writing, and Criticism, School of Visual Arts, New York, 2012-2015
- Chair, MFA, Design Criticism, School of Visual Arts, New York, 2008-2012
- Critic-in-Residence, Virginia Commonwealth University Qatar
- Senior lecturer, MFA Graphic Design, Yale University School of Art, New Haven,
- Senior lecturer, MFA Graphic Design, RISD, Providence
- Senior Lecturer MFA Graphic Design, University of the Arts, Philadelphia
- Senior lecturer, MFA Graphic Design, California Institute of the Arts, Los Angeles
- Senior lecturer, MFA Graphic Design, Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles
- Senior lecturer, MFA Design, School of Visual Arts, NYC
- Senior lecturer, MFA Graphic Design, MICA, Baltimore

- Senior lecturer, BA Product Design, Parsons New School, NYC
  - Lecturer, MA Communication Art and Design, Royal College of Art, London
  - Lecturer, BA Graphic Design, London College of Printing
  - Lecturer, BA Graphic Design, Portsmouth University
  - Lecturer, BA Graphic Design, Luton University
  - Lecturer, BA Graphic Design, Camberwell College of Art, UK
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## MANAGEMENT EXPERIENCE

- Head, Master Department, Design Curating & Writing, Design Academy Eindhoven, 2016-2018
  - Chair, MA, Design Research, Writing, and Criticism, School of Visual Arts, New York, 2012-2015
  - Chair, MFA, Design Criticism, School of Visual Arts, New York, 2008-2012
  - Director of several international conferences, some with up to 3,000 attendees and large organisational teams
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## ACADEMIC PUBLISHING AND CONFERENCE OUTPUT

- *Sifting the Trash: A History of Design Criticism*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, Spring 2017) (BOOK)
  - "I Can't Talk to You If You Say That: An Ideological Collision at The International Design Conference at Aspen, 1970," *Design & Culture*, v. 1, issue 1, Berg, 2009
  - "The Evolution of a New Televisual Language: The Sets, Title Sequences and Consumers of Ready Steady Go! 1963–1966," *Popular Design and Entertainment*, Christopher Frayling and Emily King (eds.), (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009)
  - 25 entries for the *Bloomsbury Encyclopedia of Design*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2015)
  - "The Post-it Note" and "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band album cover," *Iconic Designs*, ed. Grace Lees-Maffei, (London: Berg/Bloomsbury, 2014)
  - "Trawling the Trash: Design's Critical Engagements with Waste," Workshop: Waste between the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup> century: the price of modernity or the sign of a misdirected development?, Workshop, Center for the History of Global Development, Shanghai University, October, 2018
  - "Design for Self-destruction, De-activation, and Accelerated Decomposition," Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis, University of Amsterdam, 2017
  - "Sifting the Trash," "How we live, and How we might live: Design and the Spirit of Critical Utopianism," Design History Society Conference, San Francisco, 2015
  - "I can't talk to you if you say that: An ideological collision at the International Design Conference at Aspen, 1970," Design Activism and Social Change, Design History Society Conference, Barcelona, 2011
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## OTHER PUBLISHING (COMMISSIONED)

- What is Graphic Design For?, (Brighton: Rotovision, 2006) (BOOK)
- StyleCity: New York (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003 & 2005) (BOOK)

Frequent contributor to the following publications: *AIGA Journal of Design*, *Architecture*, *Architect's Newspaper*, *Arena*, *Art + Auction*, *Baseline*, *Bloomberg View*, *Communication Arts*, *Design & Culture*, *Design Issues*, *Design Observer*, *Dirty Furniture*, *Eye*, *Frieze*, *Grafik*, *Graphis*, *I.D. Magazine*, *Icon*, *Journal of Design History*, *Metropolis*, *Modern Painters*, *New York Magazine*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *Paper*, *Print*, *Step Inside Design*, *Typographic*, and *Varoom*

- "Don't Think, Discard!" *Dirty Furniture Journal*, Summer 2018
- "Smiley Faces: The Graphic Language of Electronic Dance Music Promotion," *Night Fever: Designing Club Culture*, (Weil-am Rhein, Germany: Vitra Design Museum, 2018)
- "Victor Papanek's Design Criticism for the Real World," *Victor Papanek: The Politics of Design*, (Weil-am Rhein, Germany: Vitra Design Museum, 2018)
- "Remix or Mash-up?: Stedelijk Base installation," *Disegno Journal*, Spring 2018
- "Making Her Mark: Elaine Lustig Cohen," *Frieze* magazine, December 2017
- Review of Wim Crouwel monograph, *Eye* magazine, Spring 2017
- "Graphic Design Research Today," *Graphisme en France*, Paris: CNAP, 2016)
- "Panda Cubs, Dude Wipes, and Glitter Pills: The Mixed Visual Messages of Contemporary Toilet Products," *Dirty Furniture Journal*, 2016
- Review of Lance Wyman monograph, *Journal of Design History*, Winter 2016
- "Reflections on the Lolita Book Cover Project," *Lolita, The Story of a Cover Girl*, ed. John Bertram, (New York: Print Books, 2013)
- "Guaranteed Communications Failure: Consensus Meets Conflict at the International Design Conference at Aspen, 1970," *The Aspen Complex*, ed. Martin Beck, (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012)
- "On Demand: The Rise of Micro Design Publishing," *Graphic Design Worlds/Words*, (Milan: Triennale Design Museum, 2011)
- "Innovation in Contemporary Graphic Design," *Sixty Innovators Shaping our Creative Future*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 2009)
- Introduction, *Barnbrook Bible*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007)
- "Bark to Bytes: Trees as Interface," *ELSE/WHERE*, Janet Abrams, Peter Hall (eds.), (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Design Institute, 2006)
- "The Decriminalization of Ornament" and "The List as a Visual Device and Metaphor in Graphic Design" republished, *Looking Closer 5* (New York: Allworth Press, 2007)
- Introduction, *Why Not Associates? 2*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004)

## CONFERENCE PAPERS AND LECTURES (INVITED)

- "Critical Visual Language: The Role of Expanded Writing Formats in Design Criticism and Critical Design," *Critical by Design*, Academy of Art and Design FHNW, Basel, May 2018
- "Design Criticism and the Anthropocene," *The Interdisciplinary Impact of Creative Practice Research Symposium*, Monash University, Melbourne, 2017
- "Modernism, Ecology, Design Criticism, and the Anthropocene," *Wim Crouwel Institute and Special Collections*, University of Amsterdam, 2017
- "Writing Design /Design Writing," *University of the Arts*, London, 2017
- "Making Waste: Unearthing the Metaphors, Values, and Temporalities of Product Design and its Criticism," *Environmental Humanities Centre*, VU University, Amsterdam, 2017

- “The Exploded Design Canon: Open Source Design Criticism in the 21st century,” Dutch Design History Symposium, 2016
- “Exploding Footnotes: Design Research Made Visible,” University of the Arts, London, 2016
- Keynote Speaker, Masters Design Education, OBK Summit, Breda, Netherlands, 2015
- “Graphic Design Research,” Design Research Conference, Falmouth University, 2015
- “Future of Design Education,” State University of North Dakota, 2015
- “All Possible Futures: Critical Graphic Design,” California Institute of the Arts, 2014
- “Writers, Politics, Power, Class and Cash,” “Graphic Design, Giving Form to History,” conference, Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2014
- Design Criticism Symposium, Columbia University, 2014
- Panellist, “The Aspen Complex,” Artists Space, NYC, 2012
- Interview with Khoi Vinh, WebVisions Conference, NYC, 2012
- Panellist, AIGA NY/Cooper Hewitt Design Museum, NYC, 2012
- Panellist, America Society of Journalists and Authors Conference, 2012
- Speaker, “Writing Criticism Now,” Syracuse University School of Architecture, 2012
- Panellist, Design Thinking panel, for film about Design Thinking, 2012
- Speaker, 2011 Design Thinking Lecture, AIGA Chicago, 2011
- Panellist, *Print* magazine discussion on collaboration, 2011
- Speaker, Museum of Modern Art QT Series, NYC, 2010
- Speaker, ICOGRADA Conference, Beijing, 2009
- Breakout session speaker, AIGA National Design Conference, Denver, 2007

#### **CONFERENCE MODERATION AND DIRECTION (COMMISSIONED)**

- Curator and Host, SVA MFA Design Criticism lecture series, NYC, 2008-2015
- Curator and Host, SVA MFA Design Criticism conferences, NYC, 2008-2015;
- Moderator, Core 77 “State of Design” panel, 2013
- Speaker and moderator, “Blunt: Graphic Design Criticism Now,” AIGA, 2013
- Moderator, “Learning from Experience,” Designers & Books Fair, NYC, 2012
- Moderator, “Outward Bound: Publishing as Cultural Platform,” Architecture Publishing Summit, Van Alen Institute, NYC, 2012
- Session curator and moderator, AIGA National Design Conference, 2011
- Moderator, “Abstract: The Future of Design in Media” conference, 2011
- Moderator and Keynote, “Synapse: Tasmeeem Doha Conference,” Virginia Commonwealth University, Qatar, 2011
- Moderator, “State of Design Criticism,” College Art Association Conference, New York, 2011
- Moderator, AIGA Educators Conference, North Carolina State University, 2010
- Panel Moderator, Design History Society Conference, University of Hertfordshire, 2009
- Moderator, “AIGA NY Fresh Dialogue,” 2009; and AIGA NY Conversation between Wim Crowel and Massimo Vignelli, 2007
- Co-chair and Host, “Obsession” + “Customization” AIGA NY Small Talks, 2006-2007
- Moderator, “Schools of Thoughts 3,” AIGA educators conference, Los Angeles, 2007
- Guest Program Director, “Being Here: Locality and Craft in Graphic Design,” 2004
- Program Director, “Voice: AIGA National Design Conference 2002,” Washington, D.C., (with 120 speakers and 100+ creative/production team)
- Co-Program Director, (with Steven Heller) “Looking Closer: AIGA Conference on Design History & Criticism,” 2001

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## **ACADEMIC SERVICE**

Have written more than 20 tenure support letters, performed as peer reviewer and editor for numerous papers and publications, and acted as moderator and panellist at several academic conferences.

- External review team member, Interior Design, ArtEZ, 2018
- External reviewer, National College of Art and Design, Dublin, 2018
- External review team member, American University of Sharjah, 2016
- Invited participant, High Ground Conversation, Colorado, since 2014
- Invited member, Alliance Graphique Internationale, since 2013
- Juror, Cased AIGA Design Competition, 2015
- Juror Fast Company Innovation by Design Awards, 2015
- Juror, Biennial of Slovene Visual Communications, 2013
- Juror, Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian National Design Awards, 2012
- Board member, Education Committee, Museum of Arts & Design, 2013–2015