

Inspiration for Creatives from *Wolf-Gordon*

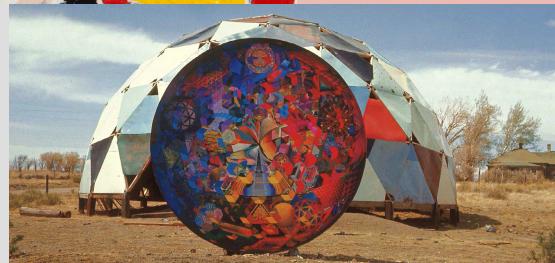
Issue 10, 2024 ———
Curated by Paul Makovsky



Interview
Interview with
the Curator
The Life, Work,
and Legacy of
Sonia Delaunay

Feature

Dropping In or Dropping Out Utopian Communes of the 1960s and 1970s





Feature

Shaker Museum
A Contemporary
Homage to a
Utopian Community

S Feature

Interview with the Curator The life, work, and legacy of Sonia Delaunay

6___ Feature

Dropping In or Dropping Out Utopian Communes of the 1960s and 1970s O____ Interview

Shaker Museum
A Contemporary
Homage to
a Utopian
Community







Collection Spotlight



16
Take a Look



Interview with the Curator: Sonia Delaunay: Living Art

HOWL discusses the life, work, and legacy of Sonia Delaunay with curator Laura Microulis.



Gouache and pencil on Arches woven paper.

Photo courtesy of Galerie Zlotowski, Paris © Pracusa.



Sonia Delaunay at boulevard Malesherbes, (ca. 1925) Photo courtesy of Bibliothèque nationale de France

Sonia Delaunay (1885-1975), a Ukrainian-born French artist and designer, was celebrated for her vibrant use of color and her role in the Orphism movement, which emphasized geometric forms and bold color contrasts. A close collaborator of her husband Robert Delaunay, her work spanned painting, textiles, and fashion, influencing Modern design. A recent exhibition, "Sonia Delaunay: Living Art," at the Bard Graduate Center in New York City explored how she transformed everyday aesthetics through diverse mediums, from playing cards to dresses. Here HOWL interviews Laura Microulis, one of the curators of the exhibition, who weighs in on Delaunay's talents not only as a painter and designer but also as a skilled artisan, strategic thinker, savvy entrepreneur, and passionate collaborator—someone who consciously shaped her own legacy.



Sonia Delaunay for Bielefelder Spielkarten, deck of Simultané playing cards, (1964)

Printed paper.

Private collection

Photo: Bruce M. White @ Pracusa.



Sonia Delaunay *Robe simultanée* (1913)

Patchwork of various textiles.

Private Collection

Photo: Bruce M. White @ Pracusa



— How important was color in Sonia Delaunay's work?

Color was everything for Delaunay—examining the effects of color and light and the phenomenon of Simultanism (color relations inspired by the science of optics) was the basis for all of her work. She once declared "colors are just as sensitive and harmonic as sounds" and, indeed, the compositional focus for her (whether in a painting, collage, or textile) was to set up colors in mutual opposition to make them optically vibrate. She likened it to rhythm and often titled her works as such.

——Delaunay was known for working in multiple mediums—what do you think drove her to transcend traditional artistic boundaries?

She made no hierarchical distinction between the fine and decorative arts. Her oeuvre serves as testament to her conviction in art's centrality to the lived experience—a notion that was consistent with the missions of many avant-garde movements of the early twentieth century. Delaunay was a pioneer in all areas of her career and constantly sought to challenge herself by experimenting with new modes of artistic expression.

— How did Delaunay's exploration of the materiality of her work in textiles, mosaics, and tapestries shape the evolution of those mediums in modern art?

As an extraordinarily versatile artist, designer, and maker, she cared deeply about preserving traditional craft practices (such as woodblock printing and hand knotting carpets) but also was very attentive to innovations across industries. In her textile and fashion work, she experimented with a variety of fibers, including artificial silks and cellulose, as well as different pigments and methods of production. Her most ambitious textile project was the *tissu-patron* which was a fabric preprinted with the cutting lines necessary for constructing a garment —enabling consumers to make the latest fashions themselves at a low cost.

Sonia Delaunay Rythmes couleurs ou Panneau F 1898, (1975, designed 1973)

Wool tapestry

Mobilier national, Paris, BV-270-000.

Photo: Isabelle Bideau © Pracusa.

Delaunay was relatively late to the modern tapestry movement—having designed her first tapestries in the late 1950s for the commercial Aubusson weaver, Atelier Tabard. In the mid 1960s she was commissioned by the French State to design four tapestries to be woven by the Gobelins and Beauvais manufactories. But her most visible tapestry production was executed with the commercial Aubusson atelier, Pinton. From 1970, she designed nearly twenty different tapestry compositions which were widely exhibited in France and the United States.

——Did you make any new discoveries while researching Sonia Delaunay?

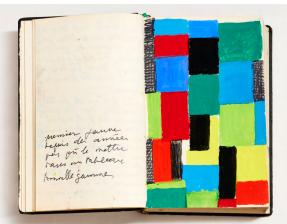
Delaunay left behind an enormous archive documenting her career—most material is accessible at the Kandinsky Library and at the Bibliothèque in Paris. This wealth of primary source material provided the basis for our research—and indeed there were numerous discoveries which were reflected most notably in our exhibition catalog. For example, we chronicle Delaunay's extensive work in interior design, particularly during the 1930s; her life and work during the German occupation of France; and the aesthetically rich artistic achievements of her late career including designs for stained glass, tapestries, and mosaics.

One of the most important new discoveries was one of Sonia Delaunay's personal notebook/journals dating from 1967, which had never before been on public view. She titled it, "Des idées commes ils viennent librement" [Ideas as they flow freely] and it is an intimate record of her professional projects at the time, such as her series of hand-knotted rug designs, stained glass windows, and the exterior paint scheme for a 1967 Matra 530 sportscar, along with articulate thoughts on friendship, philosophy, and living. This notebook represents a profound expression of Delaunay's inner life, conveyed in both words and graphics, showing how her reflections manifested themselves in an intellectual and visual form at the same time.

The exhibition catalogue for Sonia Delaunay: Living Art, edited by Laura Microulis and Waleria Dorogova, is available to purchase from the Bard Graduate Center.

Laura Microulis is research curator at the Bard Graduate Center. Specializing in the material culture of the long nineteenth century, her published work has focused on the recovery of institutional histories, the nature of patronage relationships, and the narrative life cycle of objects and interiors. She holds an MA and PhD from Bard Graduate Center.





Top: Sonia Delaunay *Rythme couleur* (no. 1633), (1970)

Oil on canvas.

Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives and Records Administration, gift from Georges Pompidou, President of the French Republic, to President Richard Nixon, Yorba Linda, CA, HS.1970.112.

© Pracus

Bottom: Sonia Delaunay Personal journal and sketchbook (1967)

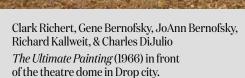
Collection of Patrick Raynaud

Photo: Daniel Michalik. © Pracusa.



Dropping In or Dropping Out In the 1960s and 1970s, new ways of living demanded not

In the 1960s and 1970s, new ways of living demanded new approaches to construction and design.



Acrylic on board. 60 inches
Photo: Richard Kallweit



"What's a commune without a dome..." a caption from Ray Jesse Blatt's archive of Twin Oaks, a commune in Virginia. A manual targeted towards unskilled builders was created by Steve Baer, an inventor and guest of Drop City.

Photo: Ray Jesse Blatt and Twin Oaks Community

The 1960s and 1970s in the United States were marked by a spirit of rebellion, experimentation, and a desire for societal change. Utopian communities, often rural and self-sustaining, sought to reject mainstream society's norms—especially its focus on consumerism, individualism, and hierarchical power structures. These communes varied in their specific goals and structures, but they shared a common belief in creating a new, idealized way of living. New ways of living required new ways of conceptualizing, constructing, and using living spaces.



A closeup of cordword masonry, a natural building method used on The Farm.

Photo: Trajinus, Wikipedia: CC BY-SA 4.0

Harbinger Commune (California)

Harbinger Commune, founded in the 1960s at Harbin Hot Springs, became a sanctuary for those seeking spiritual exploration, holistic healing, and a deeper connection with nature. The hot springs served as both physical and spiritual healing resources, drawing visitors seeking transformation. It played a crucial role in the New Age movement, offering workshops on alternative medicine, metaphysical teachings, and communal living. Harbin's blend of long-term residents and short-term guests created a vibrant, inclusive atmosphere that maintained the countercultural ethos of the 1960s and 70s.

Originally a 19th century hot springs resort, Harbinger was a short lived but useful case study in adaptive reuse. The original facilities, which included a hotel building, multiple pools, and a large building with a gymnasium and ballroom, were repurposed by community members as permanent living spaces, libraries, classrooms, construction workshops, barns, and greenhouses. Harbin operated cooperatively, with residents sharing responsibilities in maintaining the facilities and nurturing the community's well-being. In a 1968 letter to his parents, one resident cheerfully reports that alongside teaching he is busy "carpentering," and says he "built a console, cut out [and] hung an elliptical door, repaired a staircase, tore out walls, [and] painted." Though the commune was short-lived, it demonstrated the power and possibility of adaptive reuse.

The Farm (Tennessee)

The Farm, established in 1971 near Summertown, Tennessee, by Stephen Gaskin and a group of followers, is one of the most well-known and enduring communes. The group originated as a caravan of counterculture adherents who traveled across the U.S. in school buses before settling down on 1,750 acres of land. The Farm was heavily influenced by Gaskin's teachings, which blended elements of Eastern philosophy, ecological awareness, and pacifism. As an early advocate for sustainable living, The Farm's methods influenced both the alternative health movement and environmental activism. In 1983, the Farm became a cooperative, rather than a collective, but the contemporary Farm Community still holds many of the same ideals.

Much of The Farm's architecture, both then and now, is guided by "Natural Building," a building philosophy that emphasizes the importance of using sustainable building techniques and materials that were not only natural and renewable, but also hyper-local. Builders at the Farm utilized effective and energy-efficient building methods like solar gain and superinsulation. They wisely utilized their materials for greatest effect and lowest environmental impact. One example is the frequent construction of "cord wood walls" from natural plaster and logs that are cut as short as a "cord" of firewood. The cords are then stacked and adhered with the plaster for the creation of sturdy walls that utilize wood that might otherwise be wasted; these structures also make use of pockets of air within logs for insulation. Dwellings are built of locally harvested timber, wild clay, and straw from area farms, and many utilize living roofs for better rain and temperature management. These structures stand as testament to the power of sustainable construction.



The Watsu Domes at Harbin Hot Springs
Photo: Luiza Leite, Flickr: CC BY 2.0



The Drop City Complex: three intersecting geometric domes, house a kitchen, dining area, living space, bathroom, 16mm film workshop, and a recreational loft.

Photo: Clark Richert

Drop City (Colorado)

Drop City, founded in 1965 near Trinidad, Colorado, was one of the earliest and most famous communes associated with the countercultural movement. Founded by artists from the avant-garde Drop Art movement, its members created a community that prioritized art and rejected conventional living arrangements. Drop City was more of an artistic endeavor than a purely practical commune. The group organized festivals and happenings, and their work helped bridge the gap between counterculture and avant-garde art movements of the time.

Drop City was perhaps best known for its iconic architecture. The Drop Art movement was inspired in part by the work of Buckminster Fuller, who popularized the Geodesic Dome—a polyhedral structure built on a framework of triangles. Because of the sturdiness of the triangle in architecture, these domes can support their own heavy weight. They quickly became the defining feature of Drop City. Geodesic domes constructed by residents served as dwellings, gathering spaces, food storage and preparation facilities, art spaces, and agricultural infrastructure. Drop City members constructed these brightly colored buildings using salvaged materials, such as car roofs, out of a combination of necessity and a desire to drop out of consumerist culture. The domes quickly became a symbol of the commune and a tourist attraction. Though Drop City was abandoned by the late 1970s, the last of the domes stood strong until the 1990s.



Shaker Museum

A new museum building honors the aesthetic legacy of the Shaker way of life.

A rendering of the new home of the Shaker Museum and amphitheater in Chatham, N.Y., an \$18 million complex designed by Annabelle Selldorf with glass connecting a Victorian-era building (left) and a new addition (right)

Photo courtesy of Selldorf Architects



Shaker Museum with landscaping by Nelson Byrd Woltz Landscape Architects Photo courtesy of Selldorf Architects

Annabelle Selldorf's design for the new Shaker Museum in Chatham, New York, offers a powerful architectural response to the Shaker community's unique vision and history. This design not only embodies the Shakers' aesthetic principles of simplicity, utility, and beauty but also contextualizes them within the Utopian values that characterized the religious sect's philosophy and way of life.

Shakers: A Visionary Utopian Community

The Shakers, officially known as the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, emerged in the 18th century as a utopian religious movement dedicated to communal living, pacifism, and celibacy. Renowned for their deeply spiritual approach to life, the Shakers built self-sustaining communities that aspired to reflect heaven on earth. At the heart of their ethos was a dedication to



Tool cupboard, Church Family, Mount Lebanon, NY

Shaker Museum Cabinet, Utility. https://shakermuseum.us/object/?id=8818. Accessed on November 20, 2024

Photo courtesy of Shaker Museum





Top: A rendering of the interior exhibition space of the Shaker Museum in Chatham, N.Y., designed by Annabelle Selldorf.

Photo courtesy of Selldorf Architects

Bottom: Multicolored knitted rug attributed to Sister Elvira Hulett, Church Family, Hancock, MA ca. 1893

Shaker Museum Rug. https://shakermuseum.us/object/?id=8670. Accessed on November 20, 2024 Photo courtesy of Shaker Museum

perfection in craftsmanship and harmony, values that were mirrored in their meticulously crafted furniture, buildings, and tools. Their minimalist designs, clean lines, and unadorned forms embodied a sense of purity that has since become iconic in American design.

The Shakers were also trailblazers in advocating for gender equality within their communities, where men and women shared leadership roles and responsibilities. Their celibate, communal way of life and the radical egalitarianism of their society marked them as a distinct social and spiritual experiment that deeply influenced the American cultural landscape. Although the Shaker movement dwindled in numbers over time (there are only two living members today), their design legacy endures, celebrated for its blend of function and spirituality.

Honoring the Shaker Legacy Through Architecture

In her design for the Shaker Museum, Selldorf embraces the Shaker ethos while creating a contemporary space that invites new audiences to explore the legacy of this community. The restrained, thoughtful design highlights the integrity and functionality at the core of Shaker aesthetics, without attempting to imitate it. The result is a structure that feels both contemporary and timeless—a fitting tribute to a community that prioritized quality and purpose.

The museum's new design features clean, unembellished lines, an emphasis on natural light, and a restrained material palette that echoes Shaker principles. The building's interior spaces are organized to foster an atmosphere of contemplation and reflection, creating an immersive experience for visitors who want to delve into Shaker life, values, and art.

This approach to design enables the museum to not merely display Shaker artifacts but position them within the context of the community's broader utopian vision. By prioritizing simplicity and accessibility, the museum cultivates a space that feels inviting and intimate, drawing visitors into the Shaker world in a way that respects and honors the community's spirit. The museum houses over 18,000 objects which make up the most comprehensive collection of Shaker material culture and archives ever assembled. In doing so, it becomes a living space for learning and reflection, much as Shaker communities were designed to facilitate spiritual growth and practical skill.

Modified production rocking chair with two drawers under the seat, Mount Lebanon, NY.

Shaker Museum Chair, Rocking. https://shakermuseum.us/ object/?id=7244. Accessed on November 20, 2024 Photo courtesy of Shaker Museum







Architectural and Social Impact

The new Shaker Museum design is not only an homage to the Shaker legacy but also an exploration of how architectural spaces can serve as cultural bridges. By creating a museum space that embraces the Shaker commitment to purposeful design and communal values, contemporary audiences are invited to consider the relevance of these principles today.

The new building reflects the spirit of a community that valued simplicity and purpose in every facet of life, offering a space where visitors can connect with the Shaker ethos in a deeply personal and contemplative way. Through this thoughtfully designed museum, the Shaker legacy lives on—not only as a design aesthetic but as an enduring inspiration for intentional and harmonious living.

"Modern architects tend to like the clarity and simplicity of Shaker furniture and architecture," Annabelle Selldorf said in an interview. "But of course, it's so much more profound than that. It's about equality, sustainability and community, to mention a few of the values. The pairing of the [values and aesthetics of Shaker life] really appealed to me."

The rich history and culture of the Shakers is further explored in the site's landscape design. "Our design for the museum landscape respects the vibrant geometries of the Shaker tradition and its ideals of simplicity, color and functionality," says Thomas Woltz of Nelson Byrd Woltz Landscape Architects, who also pointed out that the design was also influenced by the Shaker legacy of cooperation and innovation. By intertwining the historical and the ecological, the landscape embodies the Shakers' profound respect for the land and their commitment to community, encouraging visitors to engage with nature and each other. "Our guiding goal for the landscape design was to embody the Shaker maxim: "Don't make something unless it is both necessary and useful, but if it is both necessary and useful, don't hesitate to make it beautiful."

Top Left: Eldress Anna White photographed by J.E. West Top Right: Sisters Mary Hazzard and Anna Dodgson Bottom: Sisters Mary Hazard and Emma Jane Neale, and standing is Eldress Augusta Stone in Working Room for Fancy Goods North Family, Mount Lebanon (1888)

Shaker Museum Photograph, Cabinet. https://shakermuseum.us/object/?id=18760. (White)/https://shakermuseum.us/object/?id=16460. (Hazzard and Dodgson)/https://shakermuseum.us/object/?id=17869. (Hazard, Neale, and Stone) Accessed November 20, 2024

Photos courtesy of Shaker Museum

HOWL Issue 10 _____

Space/Pattern/Texture



Devin Wilde
Vessel No. III (2023)
Ceramic with a copper patina glaze
13 x 8 inches
Photo courtesy of Devin Wilde

- @devinwilde

A Style For All Ages

Devin Wilde is a Brooklyn-based ceramicist whose work blends ancient forms with modern design elements. Originally trained as an architect, Wilde's sculptural ceramic creations are known for their geometric precision and dynamic play of light and shadow. His pieces often incorporate architectural influences from Art Deco, postmodern, and classical styles, creating sculptural vessels that evoke both ancient artifacts and contemporary aesthetics. Wilde's meticulous attention to detail, combined with the tactile nature of ceramics, results in works that are both functional and artistically striking.

Space/Pattern/Texture



Jessica Costa
Sobejos (2023)

Hand-tufted tapestry with natural wool threads.
Wooden frame
155 x 125 x 15 centimeters
Photo courtesy of Jessica Costa

- @jessicacosta

Painting with Yarns

The São Paolo-based visual artist Jessica Costa combines hand and machine knitting and tapestry with a distinctive use of colors to create immersive installations that redefine interior spaces. Exploring the technique of manual tufting, the artist demonstrates a deep understanding of textile materiality and establishes a dialogue with the process of sculpting, carving three-dimensional shapes with natural wool as her main tool. The soft and malleable texture of wool allows the artist to "paint with yarns" to create works with a strong tactile appeal, and her ability to shape and manipulate matter reveals itself in precise and strategic cuts, adding depth and dimension to her works. Her pieces overflow from their frames and extrapolate from the physical spaces in which they are installed, establishing an interaction with the surrounding architecture as if they were living organisms. The viewer begins to consider not only the piece itself but also the space around it as an integral part of the aesthetic experience.

Space/Pattern/Texture



@UTROPHA Lionel May
"A view of the skyline of Utropiia
at night."

Photo courtesy of Lionel May and Utropiia.com Photo: © Lionel May

- @Utropiia

AI Utopia

The designer-illustrator Lionel May created "Utropiia," an Al-generated retro-futuristic utopian city, set in an alternate 1920s world of gargantuan art deco skyscrapers and artificially intelligent automata. Visitors are immersed in a futuristic experience through the mind of a fictional architect who envisions a vertical urban utopia of architectural excess and technology via thematic photo tours, including portraits, street scenes, and glimpses of Utropiian Al automata. It's a creative journey through a city from a "future that never was," blending science fiction with artistic expression. Utropiia presents a fascinating combination of history, imagination, and technology.

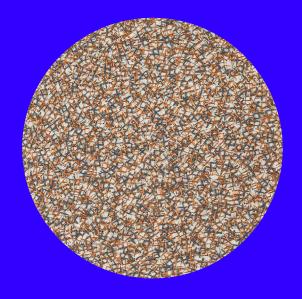
Collection Spotlight



Wallcovering

Rana

Rana's densely packed foliage and curious wildlife are rendered in a semi-realistic hand-drawn style evocative of old treasure maps or nature journals. The design appeals to adventurous spirits looking to bring a bit of the rain forest to their interior project.



- Upholstery

Sampler

Inspired by layered stitchwork seen on a practice sampler sewn by designer Dorothy Cosonas' mother when she was a young woman, Sampler overlays thousands of stitches across the upholstery textile's surface. This first-of-its-kind fabric mimics this stitchwork and explores the notion of "organized chaos." The two lavish layers are a mixture of matte and high-luster yarns, creating striking depth and dimension.



- Wood Veneer

Mahogany Ribbon African, Qtd

Constructed from slices of natural wood, Wolf-Gordon's veneer wallcoverings are available in a wide range of species. Lumber is procured from managed forests across the globe, while manufacturing is done in the US.



Exhibition

Subversive, Skilled, Sublime: Fiber Art by Women

Smithsonian American Art Museum Washington, DC

Until January 5, 2025

The artists in Subversive, Skilled, Sublime: Fiber Art by Women mastered and subverted the everyday materials of cotton, felt, and wool to create deeply personal artworks. This exhibition presents an alternative history of twentiethcentury American art by showcasing the work of artists such as Emma Amos, Sheila Hicks, and Faith Ringgold, who, stitch by stitch, utilized fiber materials to express their personal stories and create resonant and intricate artworks. An audio program highlights ten compelling backstories that are woven into the exhibition.

Shelia Hicks The Principal Wife Goes On (1969)

Linen, silk, wool and synthetic fibers

Photo: Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of S.C. Johnson & Son, Inc., 1977.118.2A-F4



Exhibition

Material Acts: Experimentation in Architecture and Design

Craft Contemporary Los Angeles, CA

Until January 5, 2025

This exhibition, curated by Kate Yeh Chiu and Jia Yi Gu, explores how contemporary design practices use and transform natural materials in response to global changes in climate, ecology, and technology. Organized around five themes-Animating, Disassembling, Feeding, Re-fusing, and Stitching—the show highlights innovative approaches like degrowth and disassembly and encourages sustainable design. By treating materials as active processes, rather than fixed objects, the exhibition reconsiders the relationship between nature, technology, and design.

Dylan Wood with Institute for Computational Design and Construction, Hygromorphic (2023)

Photo courtesy of ITECH/ICD/ITKE University of Stuttgart.



Exhibition

We Live in Painting: The Nature of Color in Mesoamerican Art

Los Angeles County Museum of Art Los Angeles, CA

Until September 1, 2025

This exhibition highlights the vital role of color in Mesoamerican art and cosmology, where artists held a cosmic responsibility and used pigments to shape the world, embedding cosmic meaning into buildings, textiles, and more. The show examines both the technical mastery behind these pigments and the Indigenous understanding of art, showing how color ordered time, space, and the cosmos. It also contrasts Mesoamerican color traditions with the Western "coloraverse" perspective shaped by colonialism and industrialization. Through technical and material analyses as well as explications of Indigenous conceptions of art, it uncovers the deep significance of color in Mesoamerican culture.

Alfonso Nava Larios Cosmic Tree (Guamuchil) (2023)

Photo © Museum Associates/LACMA, by Javier Hinojosa

Take a Look



Exhibition

Making Home: Cooper Hewitt Triennial

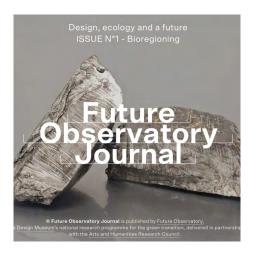
Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum

New York, NY

Until August 10, 2025

Featuring 25 newly commissioned installations, the exhibition explores design's role in shaping the concept of home across the United States, U.S. territories, and North American tribal nations. Organized in collaboration with the National Museum of African American History and Culture, the exhibit is divided into three themes: "Going Home," "Seeking Home," and "Building Home," addressing domestic spaces, cultural heritage, and alternative housing models. Participants include diverse designers, architects, and artists from across the nation, such as illustrator Mona Chalabi, upholsterer Nicole Crowder, and Lenape Center Executive Director Joe Baker.

William Scott
Untitled (2024)
Acrylic on canvas
Photo courtesy of Creative Growth



- Journal

Future Observatory Journal, Issue One: "Bioregionalism"

Design Museum

London, UK

Published April 2024

Launched by the Design Museum in London, this online resource aims to reshape sustainable design discourse. The biannually published journal offers fresh, actionable ideas for the green transition, countering the stagnation in current sustainability efforts. It seeks to challenge superficial greenwashing and expand design's role in addressing deeper environmental issues. The inaugural issue focuses on bioregioning, emphasizing ecological boundaries over political ones to foster local knowledge and sustainable practices, and to create a "vision for an alternative future."

Future Observatory Journal Cover
Photo courtesy of Design Museum © Li Metal



Inspiration for Creatives from *Wolf-Gordon*

Next Issue: Spring 2025. See you then!

Feedback and suggestions for future content should be addressed to howl@wolfgordon.com.



Wallcovering
Wall Protection
Upholstery
Paint
Wink.
Digital
Wood
Acoustical

Contact Lookbooks News Sustainability Resources



wolfgordon.com