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**ART AND DESIGN  
IN THE  
WORKPLACE**



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**EDITORIAL**  
**#27**

# Art and Design for Well-Being in the Workplaces

**Annalisa Dominoni**

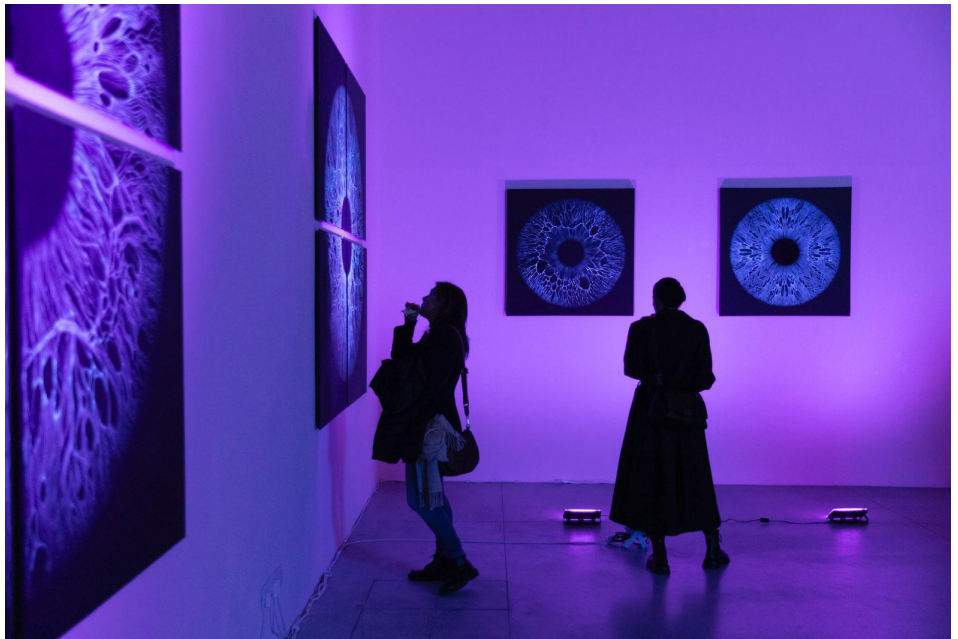
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005

**Art and Design in the Workplace** examines the transformative potential of art and design in generating “cultural welfare” by extending creative practices beyond traditional heritage sites, museums, and galleries into “non-canonical” spaces. These include collective workplaces, corporate offices, professional environments, transit hubs like metro stations, and care venues like hospitals. The overarching aim is to enhance the quality of life by creating more comfortable and aesthetically enriching environments and products. This thematic exploration delves into the intrinsic relationship between art, design, health, and healing, informed by action-research cases aligned with the European Commission’s “New Agenda for Culture 2030”. This policy initiative positions the intersection of well-being, culture, and health as a core pillar of European cultural policy. Furthermore, the 2019 WHO Europe Region Report, “What is the Evidence on the Role of the Arts in Improving Health and Well-Being? A Scoping Review”, establishes a direct correlation between cultural and creative engagement and improved health and mental well-being, highlighting associated gains in soft skills. The design process addressing these issues incorporates a multidisciplinary approach rooted in the New European Bauhaus (NEB) principles, an initiative by the European Commission that aims to create sustainable, inclusive, and aesthetically pleasing living spaces. Integrating art and design into unconventional spaces serves a dual purpose: fostering employee well-being and encour-

aging generative approaches to collaboration. For example, introducing art into workplaces and other non-traditional venues nurtures partnerships, co-design initiatives, and new opportunities for interaction among cultural institutions, stakeholders, and contributors. These interactions transcend conventional visitor roles, fostering inclusivity and participatory citizenship.

The cultural heritage's role in contemporary society is moving from a preservation-focused model to an innovative, community-centred approach that integrates heritage into daily life. "DHesign (Design + Heritage) for the Workplace. Italian Design and Heritage Between Identity and New Narratives" underlines the crucial therapeutic potential played by art and design to enhance health and well-being. Additionally, it examines cultural institutions' role in "cultural welfare" redefining cultural sites, including museums, as "innovation laboratories" that promote civic engagement and community identity. Italy's unique cultural landscape, rich in historic and artistic assets intertwined with local communities, exemplifies this transformation through a "diffused museum" where cultural experiences extend beyond traditional museums to workplaces and public areas, encouraging public interaction and participation, emphasizing accessibility, inclusivity, and sustainability. The aim is to envision a future where cultural heritage in Italy can be valorised, designing a stronger identity through new narratives able to be a catalyst for social innovation, economic resilience and the well-being of future generations.

By examining case studies and recent trends, "Beyond Aesthetics: the Strategic Role of Art and Design in Renewing Italian

Corporate Spaces” by Marzia Tomasin, offers insights into this evolving phenomenon, showing how the concept of cultural welfare emerges as a key theme. Art and design in the workplace have evolved from mere aesthetics to strategic assets. Examples like Pirelli’s *Art at Work* project and Lavazza’s corporate museum illustrate how this integration can significantly improve employee satisfaction and productivity. Looking ahead, the study explores prospects and challenges, arguing that this integration represents a transformative paradigm with the potential to alter physical environments, organizational dynamics, and social impact. Bridging theory and practice, the study contributes to literature on cultural welfare and organizational aesthetics, offering strategies for companies to enhance work environments and corporate culture while aligning with global workplace design and responsibility trends.

Paolo Franzo’s “Weaving Prosperity: Opening Textile Factories to Art and People” explores whether it is possible to imagine a future for fashion manufacturing in Italy, particularly in the textile sector, which promotes new models of relations between workplaces, people and products, thanks to art and processes of care, in a perspective of renewed prosperity. The investigation is based on three case studies – Bonotto, promoter of the “slow factory” that has brought artists and artworks inside the factory, Lanificio Paoletti, committed to the protection of the Alpago sheep and the enhancement of the territory through events such as The wool road, and Lottozero, a creative hub for textile research and experimentation. The analysis reveals a reorganization of Italian manufacturing, in which factories become places of living, learning, and growth, capable of “weaving prosperity” based on virtuous



relationships between people, working spaces, and resources, in line with a sustainable and desirable future.

The relationship between the works and the space, understood as a context, not just a physical one, is consciously described in the article “Curating. Creating a Space of Sharing” by Gabi Scardi, looking at the field of professional practice and welfare. The *Nctm e l'arte* project by ADVANT Nctm Studio Legale discusses how culture, and more particularly contemporary art, can significantly enrich life within professional spaces, becoming a shared repository of common meanings, an opportunity for exchange, a common good, capable of affecting the quality of life and work, as well as serving as a strategic lever, as a vehicle for an image of momentum and openness. It was about understanding the people visiting the firm and their interactions. Great attention was paid to how art was integrated into the firm’s interior and thus to the quality of the experience of those working there or visiting it, establishing a meaningful dialogue with the outside world to make the professional community space an open, porous and stimulating workplace.

Through design that increasingly integrates artistic practices, uncommon art places are generated, where everyday journeys are converted into experiences of introspection and cultural connection. It is, therefore, necessary to re-imagine urban transit spaces as vital components of the cultural and health ecosystem. “Work Transit Hubs: Art as a Tool for a Cultural Welfare in Metro Stations” written by Silvana Donatiello, Mariarita Gagliardi and Edoardo Amoroso, explores the transformative power of metropolitan art stations in Europe,

presenting them as hubs of well-being within the contemporary urban scenario. These transit hubs, characterized by high foot traffic, offer unique opportunities to integrate art into daily life. Such interventions enrich the aesthetic and sensory experience of the users involved and contribute significantly to their well-being and mental health. This analysis is part of the broader context of cultural welfare, which integrates social and cultural well-being, recognizing the importance of access to culture and the arts as fundamental to the quality of life of individuals and communities.

Thanks to the transformative power of art, metro stations can evolve into sanctuaries of serenity and reflection, contributing to the overall well-being of city inhabitants and redefining the role of public spaces in contemporary urban life.

By focusing on contemporary artists and their work within hospital settings, Virginia Marano's "Beyond the 'White Cube': Intersecting Art and Design in Hospital Spaces" presents insights into the dynamic relationship between art, health, and healing, revealing new possibilities at the intersection of art, design, and medical spaces. These artists critically engage with the medicalization of their bodies, challenging conventional health narratives and questioning institutionalized understandings of care and illness. Collectively, their practices disrupt the hospital's historical dominance as a site of power over the body, transforming it into a space where the complexities of human experience – pain, illness, care, and resilience – are embodied and expressed. The hospital becomes a place of active resistance and self-representation, where vulnerability is strength, and the body becomes a site of agency, knowledge, and creativity.

It reveals potential for radical reimagination within regulated hospital environments – redefining care, emerging new forms of knowledge, and creating spaces that honour embodied realities.

Although new care horizons are advancing, the quality of healthcare facility spaces does not keep pace despite evidence that physical spaces influence mental, emotional, and physical health. “The Impact of Environment on Healthcare: Restorative Interiors” by Sara Iebole, Silvia Pericu, Chiara Olivastri and Luca Parodi presents a project that reimagines the care spaces of the Obstetrics Department at Santa Croce Hospital with a domestic approach, implementing restorative design improvements that utilize environmental generativity factors. It is necessary to bring the outdoors inside and create indoor – biophilic – environments that reference nature in obvious and subtle ways. The objective is to humanize the hospital environment, reducing stress, improving health outcomes, supporting pain management, and promoting a general sense of well-being through the use of light, materials, objects, and forms that evoke nature and recreate its essential values, equally emphasizing the sensitivity and perception of the target alongside the functionality of the spaces, addressing heterogeneous elements from chromatic decorations to furniture components.

The importance of designing an environment capable of stimulating all senses to balance the human body and gain well-being reaches its peak with the contribution of Pierluigi Panza “New Aesthetics for House and Workspace: from the War Against Smells to the Search of Perfumes” that, starting from the connection between odour and domestic memory,

offers an analysis on the advancements in an architectural design concerning smell for new houses and new workplaces, they, therefore, proceed in the wake of an aesthetics that dialogues with neuroscience. The relationship between aromas and theories of space is framed at the genetic level and molecular mechanisms involved in the perception, recognition and memory of smells, thus allowing the clarification of the functioning of the olfactory system, which still remained largely unknown. From an operational point of view, this involves both the rediscovery of odorous materials, such as wood and the industrial creation of particular perfumes and the relative study of machines for their diffusion. The adoption of an urban odour plan would mark the introduction of the aesthetics of odours within the urban management regulations and also in the workplace of big industries. The necessary actions of sanitizing environments and controlling forced ventilation can provide an opportunity to introduce respect of perfume patterns in architectural design. Looking ahead, in “Intertwining Art, Storytelling Design, and Neurodesign: Cultivating Empathetic Connections in the Workplace” by Eleonora D’Ascenzi, future research should prioritize the hybridization of disciplines to boost productivity and team cohesion while exploring the co-design of such experiences in partnership with health specialists and human resources managers. This contribution examines the strategic role of “performative storytelling design” as an innovative approach that combines storytelling design, immersive technologies, and performative art to foster empathic connections by encouraging perspective-taking, strengthening team cohesion, and promoting shared corporate values.

The variety of work paths presented, different for how and where art and design are experienced, demonstrates the extraordinary liveliness and contemporaneity of the theme. A further step forward is represented by the opportunities for organicity for these experiences and actions within a real system, also through modelling the proposed formats. The governance of innovative projects, such as those that make art, design, and heritage interact with the workplace, has a key role in sustainable and participatory growth and a civil economy.



V

# BIOGRAPHIES

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He is a PhD student in architecture developed by the Department of the University of Naples Federico II. His research focuses on design-related innovation processes through digital manufacturing, operated under his own brand and within the research team on design for all, nature-based solutions, and the use of new technologies for ecological transition and advanced processes in industrial design. He graduated with a master's degree in Architecture in 2023 from the Department Of Architecture (DiARC) of the University of Naples Federico II and, since 2024, has been a member of the Association for Industrial Design ADI Campania.

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In 2017, she created and directs Space4Inspiration, the first and only MSc course in Space Design, recognised and supported by the European Space Agency (ESA). She is a visiting professor at many universities and has received several prestigious awards, including the Premio ADI Compasso d'Oro.

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### **Virginia Marano**

She is a researcher, curator, and art historian. She is currently a postdoctoral fellow in the Lise Meitner Group "Coded Objects". She holds a PhD in art history from the University of Zurich. Her thesis examined the diasporic dimension in the works of Jewish women sculptors in Post-war New York, previously assimilated to feminism but not yet connected to the question of exile. She was a recipient of several scholarship and research grants from the Swiss government and the University of Zurich. In 2022, she was a SNSF Doc.Mobility fellow in the Art History Department at Hunter College/CUNY. She is the co-founder and coordinator of the research project "Rethinking Art History through Disability" at the University of Zurich. In 2023, she was a fellow researcher at the Fondazione Giorgio Cini in Venice, working on the PNRR-PEBA project for the Removal of Physical, Cognitive, and Sensory Barriers in Cultural Sites, funded by the NextGenerationEU program. In addition to her academic activities, she serves as curatorial assistant at MASI, Museo d'arte della Svizzera italiana, Lugano. Her work focuses on developing new approaches to curating exhibitions that emphasize decentralization and collaborative practices.

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After having obtained two degrees and a research doctorate (all three theses have been published), he started teaching in various Italian universities (continuously at the Politecnico di Milano) and became an art critic of the *Corriere della Sera*. He is a member of the Academy of the Arts of Design in Florence, of the Veneto Institute of Sciences, Letters and Arts, of the Italian Society of Aesthetics and of the Italian Society of History of Art Critics. He obtained scientific qualifications in History of Architecture (full professor), History of Art (associate professor), Aesthetics (associate professor). He is the director of the restoration magazine *Ananke. Culture, history and conservation techniques* (Anvur class A magazine), published hundreds of scientific papers especially on Italian art, architecture and 18th century furniture. He is one of the world's leading scholars on Piranesi. In 2017 his volume Museo Piranesi won the European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage, the highest European prize for Cultural Heritage Achievements. He is the curator of exhibitions and member of a ministerial commission. He has published five novels and in 2008 he won the Campiello selection prize.

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Art critic, curator, and writer. She investigates art and the public sphere, and contemporary collaborative methodologies, questioning new tendencies and practices. She collaborated internationally with museums and institutions, curating solo shows, group shows and public projects. She is co-director of the review Animot; NAHR President; a member of EoC - Ecologie of Care and of CCW - Cultural Welfare Center. Since 2011 she has been the artistic director of *nctm e l'arte*, a project by ADVANT Nctm Studio Legale. She is director of the course in Socially Engaged Art, at Accademia Unidee, Biella, and teaches Phenomenology of Contemporary Arts at Accademia di Belle Arti di Verona, and modules on Contemporary Art and Public Art at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan.

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She is a cultural manager specialized in the design and development of multidisciplinary projects for businesses and organizations. She bases her work on the belief that culture generates value and is a lever for innovation. Since 2016, she has been hosting Periscritto, a podcast dedicated to books and their authors. In 2021, she founded Atelier Cultura, a benefit corporation that integrates culture into the business landscape, guiding companies in creating ecosystems between cultural vision and business strategy. As a journalist and writer, she deals with business and culture: she co-authored *L'Alfabeto della sostenibilità* and in 2024 published *Successi a Nord-Est* (Egea Editore). In 2024, she founded and chairs Agorà, an ETS association that carries out multidisciplinary cultural and civic engagement projects.

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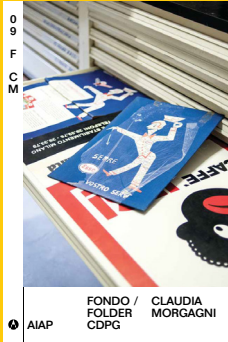
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