



Floris Hovers, Flessenbootjes, Goods

Press release

The Limits to Growth!

Design and no-growth

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In 1972, the report prepared by the MIT professor Dennis Meadows at the request of the Club of Rome sounded the alarm: "The Limits to growth!". Since the late '60s, researchers from around the world have been pointing out the risks of excessive consumption resulting from an all-out race for growth. Yet the warnings of protesters in the '60s and '70s were not followed up by the necessary measures. Today however, society is realising how the dogma of growth leads to a dead end. Numerous citizen initiatives attest to an interest in more sustainable ways of living.

The exhibition questions the role that design can play in this social movement. Can we reinvent design? Can we use design to limit or reduce waste? Which projects invite us to reduce consumption of raw materials and fossil fuels? Is there such a thing as not-for-profit design? Born into a generation whose values are changing, young designers are no longer motivated by mass production of consumer goods. They are passionate about finding the most respectful processes, working methods and tools in terms of the environment and resources, and which promote a fairer distribution of profits.

"The Limits to Growth!" begins by presenting several critical works by artists who point out, often humorously, the failings of the dominant system to which they nevertheless belong. Six lines of reflection then propose alternatives for more sustainable design: deliberate simplicity, recycling, local production, low-tech, fighting against programmed obsolescence and the arrival of new economic models. Whilst no approach is perfect or satisfactory, each one has the merit of raising awareness and showing that it is possible to think about design in another way.

LIST OF DESIGNERS

- Audrey Bigot
- François Azambourg
- Thomas Billas
- CTRZK
- Cléa Di Fabio
- Floris Hovers
- L'Increvable
- Hugo Meert
- Christien Meinderstma
- Jennifer Morone
- Henrique Nascimento
- Norm Architects
- OpenStructures in collaboration with Diane Steverlynck & Maud Vande Veire, Jian Da Huang and Jasmijn Muskens
- Rikkert Paauw
- Mathilde Pellé
- Olivier Peyricot
- Julien Phedyaeff
- Amaury Poudray
- OpenStructures
- Studio GGSV
- Studio Gorm
- Studio Swine
- Studio Simple
- Gabriel Tan
- Thomas Thwaites
- Laurent Tixador
- Lenka Vackova
- Weilun Tseng

TIMELINE

1968: Creation of the Club of Rome, an international think-tank consisting of economists, industrialists, senior civil servants and scientists, who are concerned by the complex problems affecting our world.

1970: Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007) published *The Consumer Society*, a book in which he analysed the phenomenon of consumption. In his view, growth forms part of a system of differentiation in a society based on privilege. It enables the perpetuation of an unequal social order. Consumption is a language, a system of signs.

1971: Publication of *The Limits to Growth*, the report commissioned by the Club of Rome from Dennis Meadows. By means of an innovative computerised method, the report projects over two centuries the evolution of five interrelated factors: population, industrial production, natural resources, agricultural production and pollution. It predicted that if material and demographic growth were maintained, it would inevitably lead to a drastic collapse [a decline in population and production], owing to a lack of natural resources and food and an increase in pollution. The report stresses the fact that economic growth can not continue indefinitely on a planet whose resources (notably energy) are finite.

1971: In his book *The Entropy Law and the Economic Process*, the Romanian mathematician Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen (1906-1994) defended the notion that the economy follows the second principle of thermodynamics, according to which the energy of a closed system tends inevitably towards thermal degradation (entropy). He extrapolates that useable material inevitably degrades also, just like energy. Resources are destroyed more rapidly than they are regenerated. In the author's view, the physical production underlying the economic system can not grow indefinitely in a world with limited energy and raw materials.

1971: The Austro-American designer Victor Papanek (1923-1998) published *Design for a Real World*, in which he condemns the excessive production of useless objects and the chasm between real needs and completely artificial ones, created by the dictates of the market. As a teacher, he pioneered the development of the notions of eco-design [recycling, lifecycle and the circular economy]. He challenged the monopoly of ideas by encouraging the sharing of knowledge and drew attention to the inadequacy of global solutions to local problems.

1972: The word "décroissance" [degrowth] was coined by André Gorz (using the pseudonym Michel Bousquet) in an article published in the *Nouvel Observateur* n° 397 of 19th June.

1986: Serge Latouche published *Faut-il refuser le développement ?* Development is a western myth, which we have imposed on countries in the Global South. The consideration of the Third World as a group of “underdeveloped” countries has resulted in the destruction of any alternative to the industrial, capitalist, economic model.

2004: Creation of *La décroissance*, a newsletter by the not-for-profit association Casseurs de pub. Vincent Cheynet (°1966) is its editor-in-chief.

2005: Publication of *Décroissance ou barbarie* by Paul Ariès. In it he maintains that the growth economy leads inevitably to a collapse. Without laying the blame on the consumer, he presents degrowth as the only political project that offers a viable alternative to the scenario of collapse.

2005: Publication of the conclusions of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. This working group of 1,360 experts brought together at the initiative of the United Nations, established that human activity reduces the Earth’s natural capital. Alongside this, their analysis demonstrated that with appropriate actions, it was possible to reverse the degradation of numerous functions in the ecosystem. They have not been implemented.

2006: Publication of *Le Pari de la Décroissance* by Serge Latouche. The author proposes taking a bet on—or taking up the challenge of—a degrowth society, i.e. a new environment which implies a radical change in values, economic and political structures, ways of life and a reconsideration of the place of countries in the Global South. At the risk of a brutal collapse.

2011: On 15th May, 20,000 demonstrators gathered in Madrid’s Puerta del Sol. In a context of economic chaos, the Indignant activists protested against austerity but also corruption. Their aim was to reform the economic system and create a genuine democracy. Their movement gained support in many other Spanish cities and even extended beyond the country’s borders. They camped in the square and occupied it for a month.

2011: On 17th September, the Occupy Wall Street movement was formed. Representing a range of broad demands, the protesters condemned inequalities, the fiscal burden, war, climate change and the ultra-liberal system. The demonstrators gathered in a park in the New York’s Wall Street financial district and informing other American cities about their action via social media networks.

2012: Update of the Meadows report [*The Limits to Growth*] for the Club of Rome by the Smithsonian Institution. With an identical methodology to the one used in 1971 and the latest analysis tools, the study confirmed the conclusions from 1972. It predicted a collapse of the

global economic system in 60 years, as a foreseeable consequence of the reduction of resources and deterioration of the environment.

2015: Publication of the encyclical *Laudato si*. In it, Pope Francis addresses “care for our common home”: “...*the time has come to accept decreased growth in some parts of the world, in order to provide resources for other places to experience healthy growth.*”

2015: Release of the film *Demain* by Mélanie Laurent and Cyril Dion, which won the Caesar for the best documentary in the following year. It presents alternative citizen initiatives faced with the challenges of the 21st century in terms of agriculture, the economy, governance, energy, etc.

2016: On 31st March, following the demonstration against the French labour law, activists supported by various associations, launched the *Nuit debout* movement. Advocating direct, participative democracy, they subscribed to a profoundly anti-capitalist ideology. Although as with the Indignant activists and Occupy Wall Street, the strategy of occupying public squares was dismantled, the values and mobilisation of thinkers remains as relevant as ever.

RESIDENCES

As part of the exhibition, two artists' residences will be organised by the CID during the week prior to the exhibition and the first week following its opening.

Mathilde Pellé, [°1987] lives and works in the countryside around Tours.

After graduating in 2012 from ENSAD, the national school for decorative arts, Mathilde Pellé set up her freelance design activity in 2013. Developing projects (objects, places, experiences, etc.) is her way of expressing her intuitions through materials, whilst questioning forms and their capacity to provide solutions. She strives to do this meaningfully, respecting an initial idea that might be visual, functional or theoretical. After taking part in a research group at ENSADlab (SAIL – Science & Art of Interactions between Light, materials and colour) focusing on understanding perceptive phenomena that connect humans to their environment, she embarked on a research project into subtraction. Through this, she seeks to define a specific language and methods required to undertake subtraction—which she applies to materials, functions and requirements.

In Grand-Hornu, she will take over the atrium to develop her work: *Subtraction, a shortage*.

“The designer Mathilde Pellé lives here comfortably, but a shortage of material is placing the society in which she lives in peril. Every day, she has to supply the state with 9 kilos of various materials taken from her home. She thus began her task of removing material from her domestic environment in response to this obligation. She removed ornaments, scratched away the superfluous and filed everything down to the essential, whilst striving to preserve the objects surrounding her and maintain their functions.

This new experimental project is a contemporary fable that describes a near future in which the currently acceptable notions of comfort and consumption have been completely shaken up by a reduction in material resources.”

Mathilde Pellé

Soustraire, La preuve par 1/3, 2017



Laurent Tixador [°1965] lives and works around Nantes.

Economic survival constraints, nostalgia and instinct gave rise to a practice similar to remembering journeys. In his far-reaching performances, Laurent Tixador brings things back for us that are the very material of his daily existence. They might be experiments he has conducted or objects he has made out of necessity. All of these actions result from a loss of bearings and are therefore never repeated, such that they continue to be destabilising. Each time, he has to make his daily life evolve from scratch, in a new situation where everything is so different that he has to be constantly attentive to the way things are organised to gradually reestablish a kind of comfort. Habits change and with it ergonomics and finally also behaviour. By maintaining human experience as his central concern, Tixador makes fun of the notions of exoticism and exploits, originality and radicality, which have long prevailed in western art. He embodies what Lewis Carroll called a "non-adventurer". His undefinable work consists of utilitarian objects, deprived of a status of a work of art, suggesting an alternative in the field of daily life and recasting the viewer as an experimenter, whilst telling him about his various activities and ecological issues.

The grounds of Grand-Hornu inspired Laurent Tixador to create a pizzeria. Temporary architecture has reproduced the form of an Italian restaurant. It was built in the middle of a lawn from salvaged materials that were only cut or drilled if it was absolutely necessary, so that they could potentially be recycled again. Its design does away with any superfluous element as it is equipped with minimal kitchen equipment. The food preparation chains have also been shortened. Thus the spaghetti are plunged directly into boiling water after having been formed, with no intermediary handling. The pizzas are prepared with wild vegetables growing nearby and cooked in a wood oven built on site. The tables are dug in the ground.

Built and organised in a participative manner with a team of locally-recruited volunteers, this restaurant is trying to establish itself in the adversity of a space where nothing existed to facilitate its creation. There is neither a water nor electricity supply and it is entirely at the mercy of the elements. This explains why, when building the restaurant, the choice was made to act responsibly and be minimally ethical, taking account of the current situation in which wastefulness is commonplace. In short, it is an act of piracy which asserts its entitlement to make the most of a frugal economy.

ONLINE CATALOGUE

For the “Halte à la croissance!” [“Stop Growth!”] exhibition, the CID is publishing an online, evolutive catalogue, which can be downloaded for free. Whilst remaining aware that online browsing isn't carbon neutral, the CID has decided not to produce a physical publication, preferring instead to share the authors' texts with the greatest possible audience and reduce paper production to a minimum.

Every week, we shall be adding the profile of one of the invited designers/artists.

Available now on www.cid-grand-hornu.be



SCENOGRAPHY: BENOÎT DENEUFBOURG

The exhibition scenography was designed by Benoît Deneufbourg following strict instructions: the reuse of as many materials as possible for the construction of the various elements. Thus the panels from the “Aldo Bakker.Pause” (2016) exhibition and the chevrons of the wall structure from the “From Belgium with light” (2017) exhibition have been salvaged and reassembled in accordance with a simple, reversible logic. The easily dismantled structures will be ready for use again at the end of the exhibition. So as not to fall into the cliché of the “reclaimed” aesthetic, the surfaces of the bases are brightly coloured, sounding a joyful note among the often severe statements about the state of the world and frugal design. Degrowth does not mean a step backwards or drastic privation. On the contrary, it has to lead to a fairer and more enjoyable relationship to things. Each colour group corresponds to a theme in the exhibition: critique, deliberate simplicity, low tech, local production, recycling, combatting planned obsolescence and new economic models.

VISUAL IDENTITY: EKTA

By fully grasping what is meant by an exhibition about degrowth, the Ekta studio obliged itself to produce invitations and posters on scraps of paper left over during printing tests. This idea inspired the principle of a veil screen-printed onto the used scraps, presenting miscellaneous markings of other print runs, which appear in halftone. These veils for the most part consist of texts from printed documents.

NEW ECONOMIC MODELS

In many of its recent demands, civil society is calling for alternative economic models, new relations between workers and work, income, etc. Cooperatives, universal basic income, local currencies and voluntary/unpaid work all have the same determination to share rather than protect. The design world is no exception to these aspirations. Faced with the highly inegalitarian traditional system of producing goods, designers are shaking up practices to advocate a sharing economy. The time is ripe for collective initiatives, sharing, hacking and co-working.

“Third places” host these new collective practices. Fablabs are just one concrete expression of these open workspaces. Aimed at artists, designers and architects, they are equipped with various machines including the latest electronic and digital equipment, with a range of applications such as 3D printing. These workshops were initiated in the late '90s in the Center for Bits and Atoms at MIT (the Massachusetts Institute of Technology) and operate on a collaborative basis. A catalyst for innovation and creativity, “third places” are now being reappropriated to redistribute industrial production resources locally and on a smaller scale.

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code on WWW.CARACASCOM.COM

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Fast or last.



Biceps cultivatus
Kitchen low tech



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ECAL/Damien Ludi, Colin Peillex
Rocking-Knit « Low-Tech Factory »



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**CID - centre for innovation and design
at Grand-Hornu**

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OPENING TIMES

Every day from 10 AM until 6 PM, except
Mondays.

The Grand-Hornu is closed on 24, 25, 31st
December and 1st January.

The office can be reached during
weekdays from 8 AM to 4.30 PM.

ADMISSION FEE

- Combined ticket for the Grand-Hornu site / CID / MAC's: €8
- Discount: €2 or €5
- Group rates (minimum 15 ppl.): €5
- School groups: €2
- Free for children under 6
- Free entry on the first sunday of the month
- Free guided tour from Tuesday to Friday at 15.30, Saturday at 11.00 and 15.30, Sunday at 15.00 and 16.30
- Audio-guides for the historic site: €2 (FR / DUTCH / GERMAN / ENGL / IT / SP)

BOOKING NUMBER

Advance reservation required for guided tours [by appointment] of exhibitions and/or historic site (FR / DUTCH / GERMAN / ENGL).
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