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THE ART OF INFLUENCE

Design does not emerge in isolation — it is shaped, provoked, and expanded by what came before it. The Art of Influence explores how visual ideas are inherited, transformed, and reinterpreted across time and medium. From Monet's atmospheric brushwork to the world-building of contemporary video games, influence becomes both a lineage and a conversation. Each mark, color, and composition carries echoes of other makers, other worlds, and other eras. This chapter reflects on how influence is less about imitation and more about translation — an active process of taking inspiration and reshaping it through one's own creative lens. In doing so, designers and artists alike engage in a constant exchange between memory and innovation, reverence and rebellion, past and future.

Influence moves in cycles—an endless conversation between past and present. The images that follow reinterpret familiar visual language, transforming inherited forms into something distinctly contemporary. Ten Hundred's Dogs Playing Poker revives a kitsch classic through bold color and narrative intensity, merging humor, nostalgia, and the energy of street art. What was once a parody of bourgeois leisure becomes a pop-cultural emblem recharged with graphic vibrancy. Daniel Gonzalez's El Tiradito enters a similar dialogue with history. His skeletal figure, inspired by Van Gogh's Skull of a Skeleton with Burning Cigarette, reflects the evolution of symbolism across centuries—how death, identity, and devotion continue to find new visual forms. These works do not copy; they converse. Through transformation, they keep art's language alive.



Influence is not about borrowing—it's about listening. We inherit gestures, colors, and stories from those who came before, then reimagine them through our own lens. Ten Hundred paints with the same curiosity that drove Van Gogh's trembling lines; Gonzalez channels an emotion that feels ancient yet intimate. Their works remind us that the act of creation is also an act of remembrance. To design is to reawaken old images within new contexts, to let echoes become conversations, and to allow heritage to breathe inside the present moment. In every remix lies a memory, and in every memory, the seed of something never seen before.



top. Dogs playing poker by TenHundred
bottom left. El Tiradito by Daniel Gonzalez
bottom right. Skull of a skeleton with burning cigarette by Van Gogh

The reuse and recycling of older materials in the making of composite objects inserts the original fragments' history, visuality, and tangibility into a new afterlife that recalls and perpetuates its layered past while simultaneously crafting new trajectories and meanings. The refashioning of used, sentimental material thickens meaning, retaining and perpetuating collaged memory within the amalgamated object: a synecdoche of an experience or even an entire life. Very often, these fragments remain intentionally visible, while at other times they are dismantled, recycled, hidden, and embedded in ways that obscure the original form. They are, nonetheless, present.

To reuse, recycle, or repurpose an object often necessitates repairing that object so that its usefulness can continue, and this process requires determinations of an object's multilayered value, involving monetary concerns, its condition, rarity in times of shortage, and its continued functionality as well as the sacred, personal, and sentimental meanings ascribed to the object. What started as one thing, by the nature of pre-modern ethics, scarcity, and attitudes toward an object's adaptability, becomes a reinvigorated or even wholly new thing through the pervasive processes of reuse, repair, recycling, and repurposing. The following examples, beyond those examined in these articles, underscore the ubiquity of this practice, starting with the refashioning of space, both architectural and topographical.

Within the built environment, structures, landscape, and even topography were reimagined continually, including the case of kofun (mounded tombs from the third to seventh centuries CE) being reused in modern-day Tokyo for cemeteries, gardens, and religious buildings, and for their soil and stone, among other reformulations. The practice of reuse at sacred sites might bring to mind the salvaging and dispersal of architectural wood resulting from the ritual reconstructions of Ise Grand Shrine for supernormal reasons grounded in concerns about purity. Indeed, architectural reclamation or spolia was a common practice. Fushimi Castle, built by Toyotomi Hideyoshi (ca. 1536–1598), was destroyed by an earthquake in 1596 and rebuilt to serve as the site of sieges and battles, only to be later dismantled in the early seventeenth century. These displaced architectural fragments were supposedly disseminated to various other castles and temples, carrying with them a storied history into their new settings and lending rhetorical power and prestige.

Paper was another remarkable product in premodern Japan with a great variety of versatile purposes, perfect for reuse and recycling with minimum effort. It was a central component of Japanese homes of the shinden zukuri and shoin zukuri styles; sliding doors (fusuma), latticed doors made of translucent paper (shōji), and folding screen partitions (byōbu) among other decorative and structural elements were key to interior life. Robes could even be made of paper (kamiko) and were worn by ordinary citizens and kami ritualists alike, although their durability was obviously less sustainable than garments made of textiles. Amy Stanley has described how Edo-period robes made from used paper that retained writing and other signs of its previous iteration sparked a popular trend in the capital for scribbling on costumes in the kabuki theater, which in turn spurred a fashion that mimicked used paper effects on robes of expensive silk.

Even a cursory glance through Japanese material and cultural history turns up innumerable examples of reuse, recycling, and repurposing, and the above examples are just a small selection. But what of manuscripts, objects, and things no longer needed nor wanted? For everything that was retained and repurposed into new lives, there were also things that were viewed as fundamentally too broken, without further use or value, and things that were relegated as waste, necessitating decisions on how to dispose of them. Some objects must be ritualistically divorced from their imbued presence before they are reused, recycled, or destroyed. Recycling also imbeds a current of cyclicity, as in the creation of Thai Buddhist amulets made from recycled plastics. But some things are terminal commodities, as is the case with the disposal of many contemporary Japanese butsudan (Buddhist altars in the home). The cyclicity of use and reuse and the concomitant string of afterlives mean that objects have multiple life cycles. When a vessel is damaged, a decision must be made as to its value: whether to treat it as irreparable waste that will be discarded or as worthy of transformation into a reformed thing. The survival of an object, therefore, is intrinsically linked to its ascribed value. The stories uncovered by focusing on reuse and recycling show the changing approximations applied to the object by concentrating on the critical moments of transformation and reintroduction into a new life cycle through adaptation, renewal, repurposing, and, at the end of things, the death of an object.

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