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ВО МЕЃУНАРОДНОТО НАУЧНО СПИСАНИЕ „ПАЛИМПСЕСТ“

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FOR THE INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC JOURNAL “PALIMPSEST”

RETEX AND GUERILLA DESIGN AS PROMOTERS OF SUSTAINABILITY

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Abstract: Furniture design is a complex triangulation, balancing ergonomics, structure, and form. Guerilla furniture design builds upon these fundamental principles, layering in the use of salvaged materials and unconventional building techniques in the pursuit of inexpensive, sustainable solutions. The city is a fertile environment for the design guerilla, offering visual inspiration, cultural resources, and abundant foraging grounds. Like the reuse of existing buildings, guerilla design also uses existing materials for its designs.

It's fascinating to see how guerilla furniture design incorporates salvaged materials and unconventional techniques to create sustainable and affordable solutions. This paper focuses on the results by the project ReTex, European project by the architect Ekaterina Namicheva Todorovska and fashion designer Aleksandra Jovanovska which are reusing existing materials and focusing on energy efficiency while promoting sustainability. Overall, ReTex stands as a testament to the power of design to create positive change and promote sustainability in everyday practices. By reimagining the potential of existing materials and transforming them into something new and innovative, we demonstrate the value of conscious design choices in fostering a more sustainable future.

Keywords: *guerilla design; textile reuse; furniture design; chair redesign; sustainability; salvaged materials.*

Introduction

Guerilla furniture design is a creative and often unconventional approach to designing and making furniture that challenges traditional methods and norms. The term “guerilla” in this context suggests an approach that is resourceful, adaptable, and sometimes even rebellious. Here's a breakdown of the concept:

1. Resourcefulness: Guerilla furniture design often involves readily available or recycled materials, as well as unconventional tools and techniques. Designers may repurpose existing objects or materials in unexpected ways to create functional furniture pieces.
2. Adaptability: Guerilla furniture is designed to be flexible and adaptable to different contexts and needs. It may be easily disassembled, reconfigured, or transported, making it suitable for temporary or transient spaces.
3. Experimentation: Guerilla furniture designers embrace experimentation and innovation, pushing the boundaries of traditional design practices. They may explore unconventional shapes, materials, and construction methods to create unique and eye-catching pieces.
4. Social and Environmental Consciousness: Guerilla furniture design often reflects a commitment to sustainability and social responsibility. By using recycled materials and promoting DIY (do-it-yourself) culture, designers can reduce waste and empower individuals to create their own furniture solutions.
5. Subversion of Norms: Guerilla furniture design challenges conventional notions of furniture aesthetics and functionality. It may incorporate elements of surprise, humor, or activism to provoke thought and encourage interaction with the environment.
6. Accessibility: One of the key aspects of guerrilla furniture design is its accessibility. It allows people with limited resources or technical skills to create functional and aesthetically pleasing furniture using simple materials and techniques.

Examples of guerrilla furniture design could include:

- Furniture made from recycled pallets or shipping crates.
- DIY furniture hacks that repurpose everyday objects into functional pieces.
- Temporary installations or pop-up furniture exhibits in public spaces.
- Interactive furniture pieces that encourage social interaction or community engagement.

Overall, guerilla furniture design embodies a spirit of creativity, resourcefulness, and innovation that challenges conventional design norms and encourages a more inclusive and sustainable approach to furniture making and consumption.



Figure 1. Reuse of denim as a primary material for the reuse of old furniture.

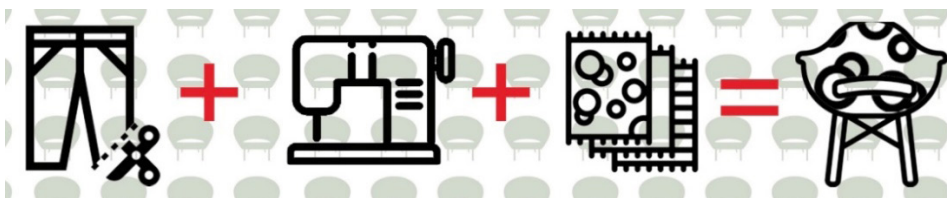


Figure 2. Pictograms for the reuse of materials and furniture, the concept of ReTex

Methodology

This research paper discusses the outcomes of the ReTex project/experiment, a collaborative effort led by architect Ekaterina Namicheva Todorovska and fashion designer Aleksandra Jovanovska. The research and project are centered on reusing existing materials (textiles as denim and old furniture) and prioritizing energy efficiency to advance sustainability objectives. ReTex represents an innovative approach that integrates furniture designs and fashion materials with sustainability principles. By repurposing materials like denim textile and emphasizing energy-efficient design, the project aims to reduce environmental impact and promote more sustainable practices within industries, fashion design and furniture design.

The goal of the experiment was showing young mindsets that through reusing existing materials (in our case denim and used furniture) you can create new designs and make a difference in the guerilla designs. Based on the goal of showing young mindsets the potential of reusing existing materials, here's a methodology used for conducting the experiment:

1. Sampling Design:

- Young individuals from various backgrounds, ages, and socio-economic statuses (purposive sampling is used to select participants who are interested in design, fashion, sustainability, or related fields) are used as target

2. Experimental Intervention:

- Workshops were organized where participants were encouraged to create guerrilla designs using reused denim and furniture.
- Materials were provided, tools, and guidance for participants to experiment with different design techniques and ideas.
- Creativity, collaboration, and innovation in the design process were encouraged.

3. Data Analysis:

- Design outcomes were analyzed to assess creativity, originality, and sustainability of the guerrilla designs created by participants, resulting in group catalog.

4. Interpretation and Conclusion:

- Discussion of implications of the findings for promoting sustainability, creativity, and social change through guerrilla design.
- Conclusions about the effectiveness of the experimental intervention in changing attitudes and behaviors towards reuse.

5. Documentation and Reporting:

- Documentation of the research process.
- Research report or paper outlining the experiment, findings, and conclusions.

By following this methodology, we effectively assessed the impact of reusing materials like denim and used furniture in guerrilla designs on young mindsets, providing valuable insights for promoting sustainability and creativity in design practices.

The guerilla aspects of design

Formal design disciplines, created several centuries ago, developed a fault line between those who design and those who make. Consumerist culture has further reinforced these fault lines, as individuals find themselves radically separated from the processes that sustain them. We have little understanding of where our food comes from, how water finds its way to our faucets, or who made the shiny screens in our pockets. The infrastructure of the world has become confounding, full of misfiring automatic doors, no flushing touchless toilets, baffling thermostats. We increasingly interact with virtual interfaces and faceless people, disconnected from the physical realm. Hand-building furniture (or anything else) is also a political act — a practical protest against corporate hegemony, environmental destruction, and individual apathy. Building as an act of resistance flips the usual paradigm of protest, creating positive products instead of merely tearing down the status quo.

There are four values in the guerilla philosophy:

1. Economy- guerilla designer should maximize resources, minimize waste, and leverage available assets.
2. Honesty- A guerilla designer should obtain material honestly and treat it respectfully, avoiding elaborate ornamentation or obscuring finishes.
3. Utility- A guerilla designer should strive for ergonomic, stable, structurally sound solutions.
4. Beauty- The guerilla designer should develop coherence of form, color, craftsmanship, and conceptual idea.



Figure 3. A guerilla designer should strive for ergonomic, stable, structurally sound solutions, like the obtained old chairs used in ReTex.

Guerilla design and ReTex

Guerilla designers are able to create solutions to the challenges of our time in ways that traditional design firms cannot. They can respond quickly to changing needs and iterate on their designs rapidly, without the constraints of corporate hierarchies or profit margins. They can experiment freely, pushing the boundaries of design and challenging the status quo. Guerilla design is inherently disruptive. It challenges established norms and pushes for a more sustainable, equitable, and creative future. It can be a powerful tool for social change, giving a voice to marginalized communities and empowering individuals to take control of their own destinies. In this rapidly changing world, guerilla design is more important than ever. It offers a way for us to reimagine and reshape the world around us, creating a more just and sustainable future for all.

The city also offers plenty of opportunities for repurposing discarded items into art installations or functional objects. Old bicycles can be turned into chandeliers, broken ceramic pieces can become mosaics, and abandoned doors can be transformed into tables. The guerilla designer learns to see potential in the discarded and overlooked, creating beauty and functionality out of things others may consider trash. Additionally, the city provides a wealth of cultural resources that can inspire and inform design projects. Museums, galleries, music venues, and street art all contribute to a rich tapestry of ideas and styles that the guerilla designer can draw upon. Whether it's the vibrant colors of a graffiti mural or the intricate patterns of a historical tapestry, the city offers a never-ending source of inspiration for the creative mind.

Overall, the urban environment is a playground for the design guerilla, offering endless possibilities for creativity, resourcefulness, and innovation. By embracing the chaos and abundance of the city, the guerilla designer can create unique and impactful work that reflects the energy and diversity of their surroundings.



Figure 4. View of old, damaged chair found in old office space.



Figure 5. Detail of the lower construction of an old chair where colour is applied in order to redesign it.

Through ReTex, we aim to raise awareness about the environmental impact of textile production and the importance of reusing and redesigning materials to reduce waste and pollution. By transforming old denim jeans into new fabric and applying it to old furniture, we extend the life cycle of these items and promote sustainable practices in design and manufacturing. The project not only addresses the issue of waste and pollution in the textile industry, but also highlights the versatility and potential of denim as a material that can be repurposed in creative and innovative ways. By showcasing the potential for upcycling and reusing materials in the design process, we hope to inspire others to think critically about their consumption habits and consider the environmental impact of their choices.

Overall, ReTex stands as a testament to the power of design to create positive change and promote sustainability in everyday practices. By reimagining the potential of existing materials and transforming them into something new and innovative, we demonstrate the value of conscious design choices in fostering a more sustainable future. [7]

Phases of the experiment

The experiment of the workshop ReTex consists of 4 phases:

Phase 1: Supply of old pieces of jeans and chairs

During this phase, participants provided old pieces of denim and chairs that they worked on during the workshop. The chairs were thrown out by an office space. The denim was obtained from second-hand shops, by the participants.

Phase 2: Beginning of the workshop

The workshop begins with participants learning how to process the textile material using manual techniques. They prepared templates for the chairs' upholstery while restoring the construction elements of the chairs.

Phase 3: Applying the textile material to the chairs

Participants applied the textile material to the chairs, following the templates they have prepared.

Phase 4: Exhibition opening

The workshop concludes with an exhibition showcasing the final designs created by the participants. This allows them to showcase their creativity and the skills they have learned during the workshop.



Figure 6. Reuse of denim, new design: chair upholstery.



Figure 7. Denim trousers as a main pollutant in the textile industry was used in the workshop.

Conclusion

Guerilla furniture design often reflects a commitment to sustainability and social responsibility. By using recycled materials as denim and promoting DIY (do-it-yourself) culture, designers can reduce waste and empower individuals to create their own furniture solutions. This was the goal of the experiment, showing how even young designers can contribute to sustainability. [4] The analysis of design outcomes focused on several key criteria:

1. Creativity: The level of creativity exhibited in the workshop was assessed based on the uniqueness and originality of the concepts and ideas presented. Designs that demonstrated innovative thinking,

- unconventional approaches using denim as main material, and fresh perspectives were considered highly creative. [5]
2. Originality: The extent to which the guerrilla designs strayed away from conventional norms and traditional design practices was examined to determine their originality. Designs that showcased a distinct style, voice, and identity were considered original and unique. [5]
 3. Sustainability: The environmental impact and sustainability of the guerrilla designs were evaluated to determine their long-term viability and eco-friendliness. Designs that incorporated recycled materials, renewable resources, and environmentally-friendly practices were considered sustainable. [6]

Based on these criteria, the group catalog was curated to showcase a diverse range of guerrilla designs that were not only creative and original but also sustainable in their approach. The catalog serves as a testament to the participants' ability to think outside the box, push boundaries, and create impactful designs that challenge the status quo. [8]



Figure 8. Design outcomes from Retex

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