

RESEARCH THEME

XLII Cycle – a.y. 2026/2027

Title of the doctoral research	Generative AI for Design Heritage: Practices, Knowledge, and Ethics
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Abstract	The rapid diffusion of Generative AI (across conversational, text-to-image, and agentic systems) is reshaping how design knowledge is produced, transmitted, and legitimised. At the same time, digitised archives of creative and industrial heritage expose embedded methods, tacit values, and cultural memory to new forms of computational interpretation. This PhD explores how generative systems engage with design heritage and what this means for design practice and responsibility. Adopting a Research-through-Design (RtD) approach, the project positions design practice as a primary mode of inquiry. Through iterative experiments developed with heritage institutions and design professionals, the research investigates the epistemological and ethical dimensions of AI-mediated engagement with archival knowledge. Key questions include: Under what conditions can GenAI surface tacit design knowledge without distorting its cultural significance? What responsibilities do designers assume when working with systems trained on heritage collections? How can these practices inform design education and critical AI literacy? The research will produce experimental methodologies, critical reflections, and guidelines for designers, archivists, and educators working at the intersection of GenAI and cultural heritage.
Keywords	Generative AI, Design Archives, Design Knowledge