

# RESEARCH THEME

XXXVIII cycle – a.y. 2022/2023

**Title of the doctoral research** Design Culture vs Polytechnic culture  
(Philology, maps and archives of historical paths and international scenarios compared: the cases of Milan, London and Cambridge (Boston))

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**Abstract** Design culture, and specifically the Italian one, has always been interpreted as a “virtuous intertwining” between a humanistic, analytical and critical vision of functional and aesthetic values within a constantly evolving society, and the “creative” application of innovative forces derived from Science and Technology, fundamental in order to realise those visions: this empirical and extremely articulated approach - “modo” in Italian – seems to have interpreted the most radical principles of the so-called polytechnic culture in an original way. The “polytechnic way of thinking”, perhaps better defined as the experimental and versatile approach of polytechnic culture, can be considered as the most representative character of design.

Therefore, the proposal consists in a doctoral research with the aim of exploring, across international places of polytechnic knowledge, the cross-references, contaminations, values and principles that led to the creation of the different schools of thought of historical and contemporary design culture. It is consequently proposed to select some “cradles” of international polytechnic approaches – such as Imperial College / Royal College of Art in London, MIT in Cambridge (Boston), Polytechnic of Zurich - to compare them, through their archives, with the two national polytechnic institutions of Turin and Milan and in particular with the history, richly entwined with Italian design culture, intrinsic in the experience of Politecnico di Milano.

The aim of the research is to assemble a network of “polytechnic archives” to bring a new awareness about the tools of a polytechnic thinking back at the centre of debate and of design culture, especially relating to intellectual and educational training, as the PhD School represents, verifying the most recent evolutionary processes.

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**Keywords** Polytechnic, Archives, Design culture