

Please cite the Published Version

Cocchiarella, Fabrizio  (2024) Para-design: Investigating the anomalous though the design of location-based experience. In: Haunted Landscapes: Nature, Super-Nature, and Global Environments, 4 July 2023 - 6 July 2023, Falmouth University.

Version: Accepted Version

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Additional Information: Abstract of a lecture given at the conference Haunted Landscapes: Nature, Super-Nature, and Global Environments

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Para-design: Investigating the anomalous through the design of location-based experience.

This design research explores the territory of location based paranormal phenomena and how these experiences relate to personal belief. Through a synthesis of scientific and design-led approaches, research aims to document and explore anomalous phenomena through specific sites and locations.

By adopting a non-reductionist approach, an experimental analysis of experience considers the unmeasurable in an effort to explore areas that perhaps move beyond the limit of current knowledge and research. By avoiding dismissal of belief systems that fall outside of the materialist world view an open-minded approach to the analysis of experience allows a discourse around anomalous phenomena that explores notions of normality. Through making and testing and conceptual mock-ups to model experiences and render forces vivid, design proposals connect the physical world with psychological manifestation.

Interpretations of embodied experiences are ontologically flooded with possibilities, as well as considering the intermediate space where an explanation of 'truth' lies somewhere between perspectives. Whether reported direct experiences are true for all is not the focus, the value of the research is to explore the many possible interpretations of phenomena to explore new understandings and creative territories.

Through creatively exploring the 'world of ideas', research demonstrates potential for a new design ontology that explores experiences outside of normal understanding. The engineering of space through designed environments has the potential to facilitate and mediate material scenarios that explore the territory of paranormal phenomena through an emerging field of research, this deals specifically with the design of experiential situations that relate to engaging with the anomalous through para-design.

Keywords: Para-design, paranormal belief, anomalous, design research, practice-based studies, psychogeography.

Fabrizio Cocchiarella is a designer, researcher and senior lecturer at Manchester School of Art. Current practice utilises psychical research as a lens from which to re-invent design scenarios that explore the phenomenology of experience, re-interpreting 'ways of seeing' our relationship with the physical (and metaphysical) through para-design. An alumnus of the Royal College of Art, Fabrizio is co-founder of UFØ (Unidentified Facility Onsite) and DvRK (Dark vrts Research Kollektive), which connect researchers in a collaborative search to investigate new forms of creative practice.