



OPINION  
**POST-GENDER WORLD**



SPONSOR

SPONSOR

**EYEWEAR ARCHIVE**  
**DESTINATION**  
**OPINION**

4SEE OPINION – DESIGNING FOR A POST GENDER WORLD

*The world around us—all of our spaces, devices, and new technologies—are designed by someone and for someone. If we want to create a better future it is vital that we recognise and understand this process and do everything we can to use design to enhance and improve representation. Visibility-focused design means drawing outside traditional lines and working hard to turn back the white male bias that has existed in our built environment. This is the only way we can begin to imagine a future that actually encourages us to live in a post-racial and post-gender way that puts people first.*

Opinion DAN REID

\$

*“I was confronted with the reality that in this sphere, spaces are forged not made.”*



© ANTOINE DE ALMEIDA 4SEE

4SEE Opinion – Designing for a Post-Gender World  
Eyewear by BLACKFIN Florida Bay

Photography ANTOINE DE ALMEIDA  
Fashion Director / Stylist DEVON KAYLOR  
Hair & Makeup MELISSA RIGHI  
Model VALENTIN GENSCHER-KAYLOR

The understanding that design was exactly where I wanted to be but that I had nowhere to take a seat was and still is exasperating. The field I chose to make a career for myself in is paradoxically both liberating and restrictive. It was in this liberty that I was able to come to terms with the reality, and eventually politics, of my own representation; in its restriction, I was confronted with the reality that in this sphere, spaces are forged not made.

American cultural, societal and legislative norms before the late twentieth century determined access to certain public and private realms because of one's sex. Domestic, intimate spaces were feminine; professional, recreational and post-secondary educational spaces were masculine. The masculine experience of space has become the basis for contemporary architectural creation and construction.

The end of the twentieth century saw an increase in the income necessary to support an average household in the 'western' economies. The need for more capital led to a steady increase in the number of women escaping domestic and entering masculine spaces. Many of the corporate spaces that women entered actually lacked restrooms for them to use during the workday. Public spaces, as an extension of the clear masculine-feminine split, were also affected by the introduction of women into the workplace. Access to the workplace dictated access to 'public' parks, plazas and pathways within the urban landscape, thus, many of these spaces were designed without women, or any other genders for that matter, in mind.

Gender inequity in many spaces was created and sustained by architectural design. It has been wielded as a political tool rather than a political catalyst. Recently, that relationship has changed.

And yet, in thinking about gender, architecture and design, there aren't many examples because, in fact, genderless architecture has only recently entered into the conversation. It is hopeful that the future will in fact be more aware and inclusive but the reality is that we aren't quite there yet, which is why these ideas remain theoretical rather than practical: because the practice doesn't really exist yet. No buildings have been realised just yet with a design intent of being explicitly genderless. We are on the cusp of that transition, however, and that is what I choose to focus on.

DIY and grassroots-organised architectures have started reinventing the relationship between politics, bureaucracy and architecture. The introduction of gender-neutral bathrooms in retail, community, educational spaces and even corporate spaces marks this transition. In the workplace, rectangular meeting tables and conference rooms once marked a clear, heavily gendered hierarchy. The change to circular designs and furniture for those same spaces highlights a small but important shift from binary power dynamics into something available to more.

The Berlin-based initiative CO-WC (which cleverly stands for 'Come Out of the Water Closet') is making it easier and fun to make the transition to gender-neutral bathrooms by creating signage that uses a simple lenticular printing technique called a lentigram (just like those cheesy holographic postcards) to switch from the traditional blue male to pink female depending on your perspective or viewing angle. Installed at the betahaus co-working space in Berlin, for example, these symbolic changes can signify a greater change in attitude towards gender inclusivity and also conversation about design and gender in the workplace.

In London, Agender is a transformative genderless retail space by Faye Toogood. A store-in-store concept at Selfridges, it presents and promotes fashion that goes beyond the gender binary, with approachable and wearable fashion for all and with a concept that has reframed how consumers interact with the shopping experience. One of the goals of the designer was to explicitly shift the means and expectations of self-selected representation. It's clear that within Toogood's framework, architecture is central to equity.

Those in the field are redefining architectural code requirements for solely male and female inhabitants and instead redirecting design abilities into creating spaces which accommodate all, regardless of gender. As people on the fringe reclaim the centre and disrupt the status quo in design, the capacity for imagining and realising a novel design(ed) future will follow.

Contemporary design has created a common ground filled with unfamiliarity and flexibility and innovation and a space for ongoing conflicts for liberation to meet, clash and resolve themselves. It adapts and it will continue to do so as designers, who simultaneously are critical thinkers, problem solvers, scientists, inquirers, masters of representation, etc., adapt as well.

There is liberation in knowing that in my pursuit of the craft I am responsible for the re-centring of socio-spatial politics of today's design. The hope for future architectural practice is one in which gender is no longer definitive and certain but rather defining and qualitative. The simple existence of non-binary ideals in architecture today is creating a radical redefinition of a once gender-centric discipline. A post-gender future is one in which there is not a rigid conclusion of role or wage or task or access because of gender. It will likely be black and genderless and brown and gay and queer and feminine and, most importantly, unbelievably witty, so only remotely similar to those forging the discipline and designing at this very moment.

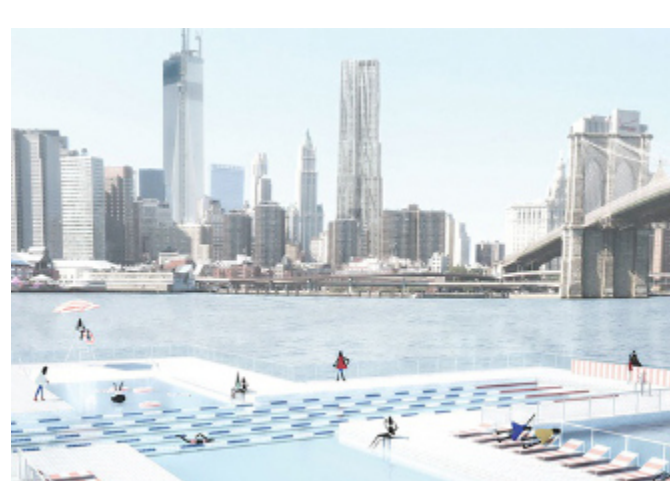
**Author Bio**

Dan Reid is a working architectural designer and aspiring urban planner. Their experiences in the architectural field working in both New York and Boston exposed the necessity to incorporate equity and visibility in the design process. They are passionate about the intersections of the political and constructed, colour theory, dogs, and good coffee.

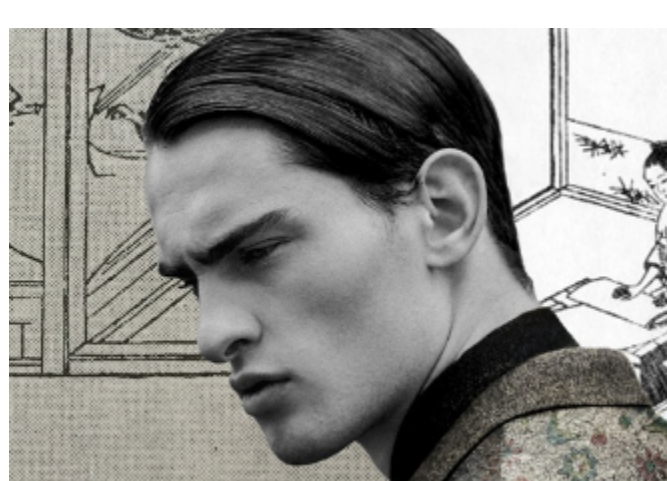
This article originally appeared in the DISCOVERY issue // published in February 2020.

#OPINION #4SEE OPINION #DAN REID #POST-GENDER WORLD

**You May Also Like**



Design Beyond Borders



Authentic Fashion Experience



Eyes on the Future

Subscribe now to our newsletter

Your email address

SUBSCRIBE

CONTACT ADVERTISE IMPRESSUM PRIVACY

% ! # &