



EDITORIAL:

**Crisis and Creativity: Humanity in Social and Cultural
Contexts**

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The role of crises in shaping human civilization has long been a major topic of study in the humanities and has attracted particular interest in an age of growing ecological, sociopolitical, and economic instability. The *INTERFACEing* 2023 conference, hosted by Kobe University under the theme “Changing Paradigms: Humanities in the Age of Crisis,” exemplified such spirit of scholarly inquiry. Held at a time when the world was still adapting to the post-pandemic reality and reflecting on the lessons of global crises, the conference served as a platform for interdisciplinary dialogue among researchers from diverse cultural and academic backgrounds, fostering critical discussions that address both theoretical frameworks and context-specific problems. The two previous issues of *INTERFACE* presented some of the approaches that were exhibited during the conference; the current issue of *INTERFACE* continues this exploration including the first paper, which was not presented in the conference but responded to our general call for papers.

Our discussion opens with Holger Steidele, who in his article indicates that crisis and cultural decline are pivotal themes in Michel Houellebecq’s oeuvre that reveal the profound influence of German philosophy on the writer’s world view. In “Michel Houellebecq und die deutschen Denker – Ein Überblick über Houellebecqs deutsche Werkbezüge unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Oswald Spengler und Arthur Schopenhauer,” Houellebecq’s texts, including his novels and accep-

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tance speech for the Oswald Spengler Award, are analyzed within the context of German philosophical tradition from the late 18th century to the present. Steidele investigates Houellebecq's adaptation of Oswald Spengler and Arthur Schopenhauer's visions, as well as his connections to Marcel Reich-Ranicki, Joseph Ratzinger, Novalis and Friedrich Nietzsche, highlighting the significance of the philosophy of pessimism and the meaning of art.

Charlène Clonts' "Texte, image, exposition: Annette Messenger, transformer les discours et les sociétés," the third article in this issue, offers a compelling example of how artistic practices reflect and engage with the crises of modern society. Clonts provides an in-depth analysis of Annette Messenger's *Les Pensionnaires*, examining the ways in which the French artist playfully destabilizes boundaries, questioning traditional hierarchies, mechanistic scientific paradigms, and the idea of humanity. The article also addresses the role of media, comparing the artwork's original installation to its subsequent representation in the format of a book. Clonts argues that the book format, by integrating visual and textual elements, not only broadens the audience but also extends the work's relevance and impact, illustrating the possibility of art to challenge and reshape social conventions.

The articles collected in this issue offer a wide range of perspectives on various kinds of crises and their interaction with culture. Ranging from a reevaluation of play as a potential framework for environmental communication, to an analysis of Houellebecq's reflections on the existential crisis of the modern world, and an exploration of Messenger's challenge to the foundational traditions of society, these contributions illuminate the various ways in which humanity engages with and responds to crises and critical situations.

