DESIGN ACADEMY EINDHOVEN

INSTITUTIONAL PLAN
2019–2024

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Radical Differentiation and Impact

The global success of design has given the profession a position in which designers have unparalleled influence and responsibilities for the future of the planet and humankind.
As an institute, Design Academy Eindhoven (DAE) has to stretch the horizon of design education to correspond to the realities of a much more diverse community of students, tutors, readers and partners.
To help us realise our ambitions in a fast-changing environment we need to rethink the institutional architecture of the Academy's operations.

Whilst already reflected in the mentality and approach of the academy the fundamental shift that characterises today's position of design should be more strongly reflected within the structure of the curriculum and radical differentiation of the educational and research portfolio of Design Academy Eindhoven. Beyond the narrow perspective on design as an instrument for innovation, which seems to dominate government policies and most corporate programmes, students and alumni of Design Academy Eindhoven are developing a variety of less instrumental approaches. Although DAE has always been a breeding ground for projects in which the status quo of design has been questioned, profound changes are needed for the academy to become a more explicit catalyst of diversification in the field. While we reconsider the altered role and position of design, we also have to acknowledge its changing societal consequences and the way the social and cultural backgrounds of designers are to become part of the equation. The common perception of design as the prerogative of industrialised, dominantly white and affluent societies cannot be upheld any longer. As the academy wishes to sustain its position in the forefront of the discipline, it should embrace a much more differentiated perspective on where design lives, for whom it works and where its relevance lies. When we speak about diversity, we are not only referring to cultural diversity. Next to the need to reach out to a much more diverse community of students, teachers, friends, and partners, the academy also seeks diversity in terms of study trajectories, positions, research areas, forms of representation, work locations et cetera. This document presents the first step in a process to define the conceptual backbone for this transition.

DAE wants to realise a more radical agenda, staying true to the approach and values that have formed the core of our identity.

Pluralism: Towards a cosmopolitan understanding of design

We approach design as hybrid: conceptual, contextual and global. Instead of focusing on a single design discipline or medium, or embracing a singular design philosophy, we choose to underscore DAE's role as a platform for debate within the field. Our core values are those of an inclusive, cosmopolitan society that embraces diversity in every respect.

Social Agenda

What unifies our teaching and research agenda is a shared understanding of design as first and foremost a social and cultural practice. We teach design as a 'political instrument': a means to engage societal developments and problems and as a tool to explore and develop alternatives.

A sensitive antenna for social phenomena allows us to act as an agent of change. The contribution of design to humanity and its social, cultural and natural environment is the most important mainspring for the imagination and development of alternative futures. We train designers to be aware of the full spectrum of implications of their work. This is one of the ways in which DAE distinguishes itself from most technology-driven forms of design education. DAE students might not be the inventors or the early developers of new technologies, but they are certainly the ones

who question the potential and the possible consequences of these technologies. Either in realistic or purely speculative projects their critical approach allows them to present valid alternatives.

The link between an engaged, hybrid, and integrative approach on the one hand and professional autonomy based on expertise as a principle on the other is characteristic of the academy, as a community, as an organisation and as an educational and cultural institute in which individual qualities of all members can prosper.

Design as praxis

Design results in change. It is therefore never without consequences, which underlines the inseparable connection we draw between design, values and politics. We see the manual and analytical skills our students master are equally essential tools in the contemporary designer's tool-chest. We train designers not to operate in isolation but at the nexus of a broad spectrum of specialisms: fluency in a broad spectrum of languages - technical, theoretical and philosophical - is a key attribute of the future designer.

Borrowing from a rich heritage in the applied arts, we retain and reiterate our understanding of design as praxis: a bridge between theoretical knowledge and insight on the one hand, and material creativity on the other. In this sense, DAE intentionally straddles and moves fluidly across the divide that has traditionally separated academia and skill-based design education. Praxis also indicates a way to engage with the world and all its inhabitants, both natural and artificial. It postulates the crucial role of the designer's intention and an understanding of what one wants to achieve, prior to any action. We ask students to reflect on their values and intentions and on the possible consequences of what they are about to make. Our teaching, therefore, is fundamentally contextual. Ethics - especially in the context of current discourses on technology and post-humanism, in which all forms of life, whether natural or artificial, animal or plant-based, demand equal attention - informs our understanding of design at every level, and for this reason we appeal to the student's capacity to analyse ideas, wrestle with them

and question them throughout the process of realisation. Praxis enables designers to combine reflection and action directed at the structures they want to transform.

At a Bachelor level we expect our graduates to define what their position in the design field is: they learn to design themselves as designers. Our Master graduates redefine the field itself: they are tasked with designing design itself.

To achieve the desired impact, we aim to revisit where and when necessary the organisation of the Academy on the following levels:

Core:	education and research;
Network:	DAE community and partners, HR policy;
World:	global context;
Home:	home base;
Trace:	relevance and impact.

Core

Our raison d'être is the funded education and research we offer to our students:
Our Bachelor, our Master and our Readerships.
Within these core activities we need to differentiate in order to become relevant for a larger, more diverse community of students who bring in a multitude of cultures, social backgrounds, levels of knowledge, (professional) practices and values.

Master

We want to emphasise the specific exploratory character of our Master education by changing the existing department structure into labs, led by lab leaders, and by reinforcing the link to research (Readerships/'Lectoraten'). The labs will concentrate on research and experimental practices. There is a need for more horizontal multidisciplinary collaborations – providing all participants a non-hierarchical structure – open to external partners. This Lab-structure introduces methods of working that will have far-reaching consequences for the future definition of what design is or could become: they are aimed at designing design.

We look for differentiation by developing our Masters further and create new labs. The creation of one new department is confirmed (Geodesign); further options we are currently considering include Strategic Design.

Next to these labs, we are considering the creation of a dual Masters: a professional part time master meant for designers with an active professional practice.
The intrinsic quality of our Masters graduates is best defined as an analytical attitude and scepticism towards accepted conventions: the ability and desire to (re)design design. A Master graduate has the capacity to disseminate design research, not only as knowledge (thesis), but also in a tangible form. All our master education leads to a formal, internationally recognised and validated title of Master of Arts in Fine Art and Design.
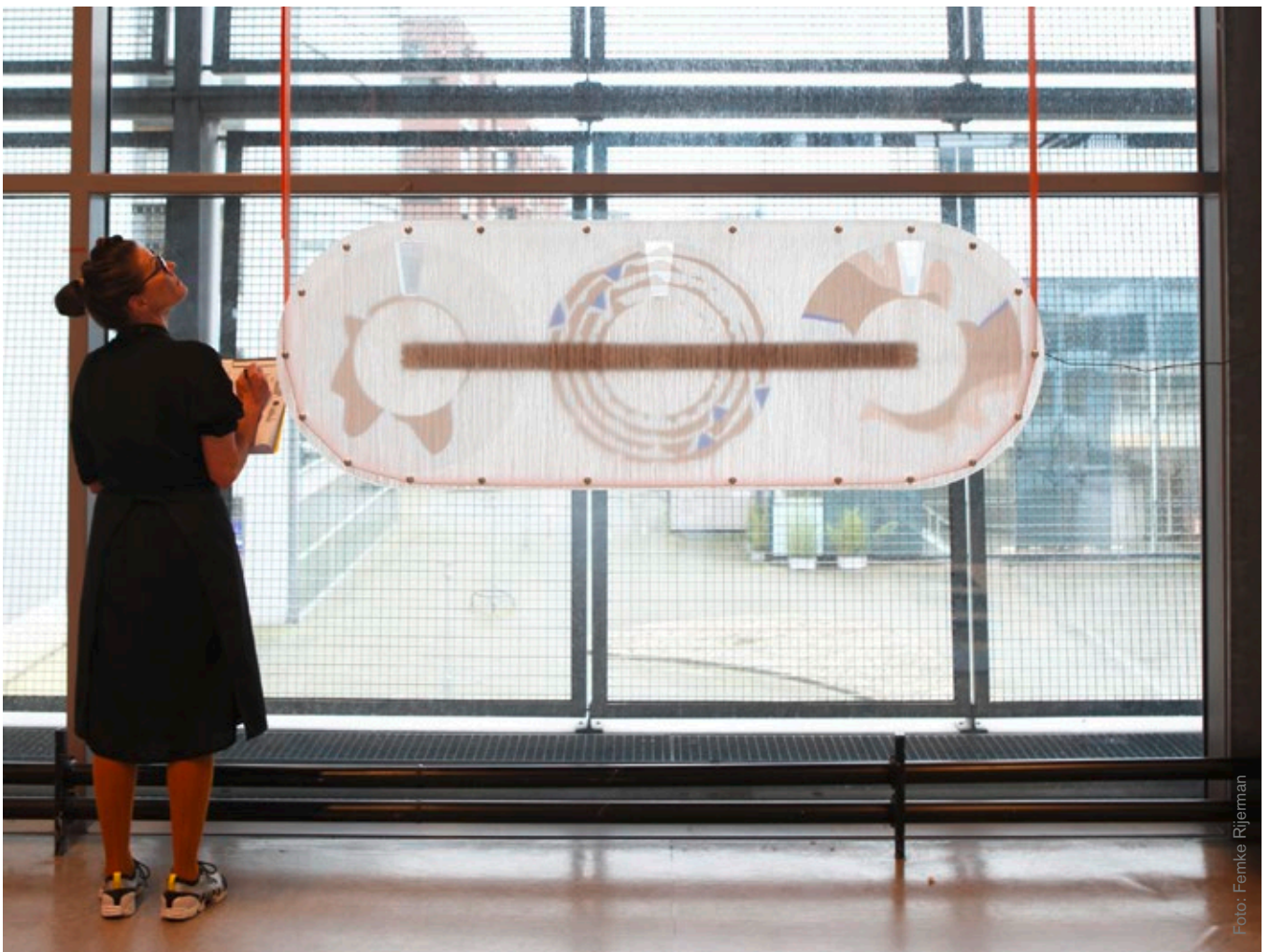

Foto: Femke Rijerman

Bachelor

At the core of our Bachelor programme lays the aim to educate resilient and agile professionals imbued with intellectual and practical curiosity that will encourage them to continue learning throughout their design careers.

The Bachelors program will be organised around Studios. Each Studio will run a yearlong project-based design course addressing a common theme set by the Studio leader.

The nature of the year's project theme, together with its goals, criteria of evaluation and practical/theoretical references, will be set out in a brief, presented by studio leaders to each student at the beginning of each academic year.

Studios offer a combination of theory, skills and design practice. Every semester a student selects a new studio (or chooses to continue within the same studio), thus creating an individual portfolio. Continuity is assured by the competences as backbone of a student's development, who during their Bachelor's education creates a robust individual portfolio from this modular conceptual curriculum, based on their personal talents and fascinations.

This modular studio model grants students the flexibility to create their individual learning paths. To be able to do so, a student will need a strong anchor. We will strengthen the position of the study guides and train them to meet the new demands. In parallel, the already existing Resilience programme will be developed further. And the online monitoring system for students has to be adapted and refined, so that all students can access the current status of their study path, credit points, acquired competences and feedback.

Studio 'leaders', high profile professionals, both from within and outside the field of design, who have the capacity to inspire and function as a role model to our students, lead studios. These 'close companions' are qualified by the rare combination of professional brilliance and pedagogical quality. A studio leader is appointed for max 3 to 4 years with an option for 1 extension. Every semester they define a theme or question for their studio.

Every studio will have key responsible roles and responsibilities to teach and to keep the studio running and to translate the directions, laid down by the studio leader into an effective and inspiring educational framework.

We are introducing an individualised approach to education that demands additional training of teachers, for them to gain the necessary didactical skills and pedagogics. Also, the assessments will have to change for both for students and teachers. To monitor and evaluate the development of a student's competences, an adjusted assessment model is introduced, based on a combination of formative and summative criteria. Because the nature of teaching changes in this system, evaluations of the teachers' performance have to be adjusted accordingly.

These changes in the curriculum enable us to differentiate in the profiles of our graduates. Our Bachelor education leads to graduates who are able to give form to their own role in the professional practice: They learn to design the designer. The programme leads to a formal, internationally recognised and validated title of Bachelor of Arts.

Academic education

Because Dutch law gives us the possibility to also offer academic education, we will investigate the possibilities of a government funded academic Bachelor and/or Master. Offering such a program would not only mean a diversification of our current student intake and teaching team, the different educational programmes would be further diversified as well by means of this permanent input from a more reflective perspective.

Expanding and connecting research

Intensifying the role of theory and research can be achieved by forging a stronger link between the Readerships and the different Master labs. This means that we will develop new Readerships.

The Knowledge Circle – in which in the new setup Readers will collaborate with the group of Bachelor theory teachers – will support the theoretical and reflective components of the Bachelor studios.

Non-funded education: Courses without diploma (non-degree)

We will explore the possibilities of developing a third money stream, which involves Summer school courses, executive training and alumni education.

Home

Although we see the world as our home, the physical building in Eindhoven is the base from which we operate. It is a temporary home-away-from-home for a global community. The academy offers them a versatile, responsive and safe environment in which there is room for concentration and connection.

Having the world as our field of operation implies that we attract an international student community. An increased focus on inclusivity will not only result in an even more culturally diverse body of students; it will also bring in students from social backgrounds that are under-represented in the current student community. The set-up of our teaching staff shows a more balanced mix, with teachers flying in from different parts of the world, representing various cultures and social strata. A strong home base is needed for all of them. Steps have been taken to strengthen this anchor over the last couple of years. Although several initiatives have been put in place more coordinated action is needed to bring the DAE community together.

Our international student body emphasises the need for a real home turf, which can help them tackle issues of loneliness and alienation. Our students are already actively involved in finding solutions for this urgent issue.

As we take 'home' literally then the issue of student housing should also be addressed. An accelerated process of gentrification has made it hard to find affordable living and working spaces in Eindhoven. We attempt to mediate and facilitate this for newly arrived students using our municipal networks. Recent contacts with local authorities and housing corporations have resulted in semi-temporary solutions for some of the most urgent cases. DAE has now joined a working committee in which the main partners agreed to collaborate in finding a more structural approach. Ultimately, an alternative could be found in the creation of a campus. This would not only solve the housing issue among students, it could also answer to our current problem of becoming too big for our

pants: The 'Witte Dame' (white lady) building does not offer enough space for our current education, which could seriously jeopardise our ambitions to grow, diversify and expand our operations.

Network

The academy can be defined as a network organisation that continuously transforms and renews its formation. This is done by reaching out to experts in and beyond the extended network of the school to further the students' understanding of the real world in which they will work and by actively involving alumni and former staff in its activities. The network supports the quality and topicality of the work done within the studios and labs. Graduates benefit from the contacts the network has to offer.

The flexible set-up of our HR-system functions as the backbone of the quality and agency of the DAE community. The perception of this community as a network (connected to other networks) forces us to think anew about the overall strength of the internal fabric and the position of every individual hub within it. The redefinition of our curricula also leads to a re-alignment of our organisational chart and HR-matrix and a redefinition of roles and responding tasks and responsibilities. It is necessary to redefine the roles and qualifications of our teaching staff in the light of the studio- and lab-model and the possible collaborations with external partners. Newly formulated qualities and conditions will apply for the profiles of future studio- and lab leaders. Coordinators will move away from the actual education practice and adopt a more organisational role as part of the Educational Desk. The potential of teachers will be widened by expanding their roles in the educational process. Experts and partners from outside the field of design will be involved in projects and teaching, much more than they are at this moment. Procedures around the acquisition and intake of new students, specifically Ba, have to be revised to match the ambitions behind the new model.

Just as vital will be the clarification of the different roles and responsibilities within the educational support staff: does it correspond with what is needed in our core processes? Is the support staff adequately and efficiently enough organised? At this point in time it is not yet clear whether a re-organisation is needed for the transition process. However, it is evident that the academy is in need of a mentality change amongst its entire staff; a profound change of organisational culture is a prerequisite for the success of our plans. Otherwise it will just become an old wine in new bottles' situation.

Our community has to be strengthened by a stronger communication and information policy and by developing digital tools. Also, the connection to our alumni will be reinforced to explore their potential for our education and network. We continuously seek connections, collaborations and partnerships to broaden and diversify our existing network for the benefit of our community. Defined by our agenda, preferred partnerships will be established. These partners might be different for our Bachelor, Master and Research programmes and depending on the agenda the partnerships can be either project-based or long-term.

One important focus in the partnerships will be extramural education: We will actively look out for places in the world where important events or socio-political developments are taking place and where students can collaborate with local partners on site (hotbeds).

To implement these ideas and ideals we need to look for extra funding. Next to the first (government) and second (government related subsidies) money-stream we will invest time and effort into enlarging our third money stream: therefore, we need to create a stronger and more solid business network.

Foto: AngelineSwinkels

World

To be effective, the academy must think with the purposefulness of a designer on a planetary scale. A global perspective on design implies a global orientation for all our educational activities, using a conception of design that is total, embraces complexity, looks far into the future, and operates on a systemic level.

DAE has often been described as the birthplace of Dutch design. True or not, this claim has long passed its expiration date. Design today is a global phenomenon with an increasing urgency to reshape patterns of not only consumption, but of care, social organisation, future industries, living conditions and much more. The international context of our educational and research programme is quintessential for our current position. It defines the language we speak and the topics we address. The physical location of our academy in Eindhoven certainly adds to our identity: firmly rooted in the post-industrial hotbed of the Netherlands, the academy has proved to be an ideal base to develop its international outlook. Our European roots and values resound in the curriculum and we aim to further our approach to design as a crucial tool to connect people and to create compassion. This will be supplemented with perspectives and voices from outside the existing canon and from current technological realities presented by global players such as Alibaba and Amazon. We look ahead and stimulate productive, critical speculation on the far-reaching influence of design in different futures and the ethical and political consequences they entail.
We see it as our responsibility to invest in diversification of our student and teacher population in response to this international orientation. Part of our efforts is to help design break out of its white middle-class confinement. Actively scouting potential talent (students and teachers) in developing economies where design can play a positive and emancipating role (and offering student scholarships to those talents who can't afford paying for their tuition) are but two possible instruments. We seek not just to help the individual student, but also to provoke change in the design culture within and outside of the academy. In order to succeed here, our student population and staff need to become more inclusive: absorb and reflect more cultures, nationalities, and socio-economic backgrounds, as to broaden the perspectives on design and its global impact.

Trace

The academy needs to be relevant, not only to our students and partners but also to the realities in which we intervene.
All over the world DAE-alumni and tutors act as our ambassadors. Through their work, their involvement in events, exhibitions and publications, and through their teaching they carve out traces of our approach to design.
It is time for Design Academy Eindhoven to exploit the huge potential of its methods and output for the benefit of the school and its current and future communities.

There are different ways to demonstrate and reinforce this relevance, such as:
- Dissemination of our knowledge and ideas and actively participating in the discourse;
- Actively enabling internal and external debate;
- Using events to create a platform on which students can share and discuss their ideas;
- Extend DAE publications;
- And of course by archiving, nurturing and connecting to our alumni who represent DAE in every part of the world.

All this cannot happen without a coherent mode of expression, a visual and written language that needs to be redesigned. We will invest in the building of appropriate platforms – such as a solid digital platform – to demonstrate its relevance and make its traces stick.

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