

ArtEZ University of the Arts

Part I: Resume Development Interview Master Art & Design Croho 49114 (2020)

Introduction

In July 2019, four master's programs spoke with an international panel of experts. as part of the official accreditation of the funded CROHO MA Fine Arts & Design with four profiles: DAI, Werkplaats Typografie, Fashion Strategy and Fashion Design.

Development Interview: 2020

From the above, the follow-up development interview, was eagerly seized upon. One panel member, a professor at the University of the Arts London (UAL), said that through this network, he had already been made aware of the worldwide reputation of DAI, which he believes is exemplary as a program combining practice and research. He added that he was very impressed with the shared spirit of experimentation following his visit to Arnhem. The emphasis of the four programs on “de-disciplining” instead of professionalization really struck a chord with the panel.

The development advice resulting from the interview is summarized below:

Recommandations:

1. Research

- Ensure transparency of the economics of research at the university and make room for a discussion of the places where and in which way research funds should be put to productive use at a University of the Arts. Research as a bridge!
- The unique status of the MA FAD programs as research units should be defined and discussed by ArtEZ.
- Search for innovative formats and connections which can accommodate queerness as a continual process of becoming. The master's programs should show a strong commitment to this.

2. Bubbles and Landings

Context: The convincing positioning of the programs as four distinct self-directed learning communities in the landscape of international art education, each with its own focus on constant innovation of alternative pedagogical models, was highly rated by the panel. Successful, experimental programs with students and teachers who are closely involved with each other tend to find themselves in an institutional bubble. There is nothing wrong with that, but keep a critical eye on it: can the interaction with the urgencies of our time and world adequately realized within that bubble?

- Make sure that ArtEZ fully conveys the importance and significance of the master's research and facilitates transnational public visibility in a meaningful and relevant manner. For example, by enabling the courses to publish more extensively in relevant international contexts.
- Strengthen existing partnerships and expand them with relevant new partnerships outside the direct working field, where art, experimental design and research are welcome to contribute to processes of social justice.
- Bolster public activities and thus give greater visibility to the research that is being done by (collectives of) students, alumni and teachers.

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3. The Rhetoric of Diversity and Decolonization

- Reflect seriously on diversity in relation to human resources management: break systemic patterns and make your faculty and staff more flexible and colorful.
- Develop structural (financial) policies to reinforce the intersectional nature of the student body and provide targeted support for specific groups so that for them the courses remain attractive, accessible and manageable.
- Be careful with the use of buzzwords and empty statements. Reflect on the ethics of appropriation.
- Decolonization is important, but social justice is key.

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Deel II Full version ArtEZ

Resume Development Interview

DAI Art Praxis

Werkplaats Typografie

Master Fashion Strategy

Master Fashion Design

(CROHO, MA FAD)

ArtEZ University of the Arts, Graduate School Community.

Introduction

In July 2019, four master's programs (which in 2016, together with 6 other master's courses, were first brought together under the same administrative umbrella in the new Graduate School of ArtEZ University of the Arts) spoke with an international panel of experts. This two-day meeting was part of the official accreditation of the funded CROHO MA Fine Arts & Design (MA FAD). MA FAD is a recent CROHO registration at the NVAO, replacing the autonomous registrations of DAI, Werkplaats Typografie and both Fashion Masters, which had existed and functioned since the turn of the millennium. The formal naming, funding and accreditation of the programs were merged – but in the practical implementation of education, the distinctive, engaging profiles of the different learning communities, with their specific expertise, teaching practice and research culture, remain intact.

Assessment and Accreditation: 2019

Discussions took place both at the level of the Graduate School (which presented an outline of the four programs and an overall vision of the Graduate School) and that of the four programs themselves, foregrounding their artistic diversity in terms of content and their educational and organizational individuality. Consequently, the programs used very different forms of presentation. Each course also invited a domain specific independent referee from the international field to observe their program and the development of the accompanying curriculum over a longer period of time (at different locations in the Netherlands and abroad), and to then report back to the panel. The experts' input also informed the interviews of the panel with students, alumni, teachers and the courses' leading teams during the assessment period in Arnhem. For the panel, the overall vision was a reason to ask tough questions about the difference between what is true on paper and everyday reality. In particular, the discrepancy between the Graduate School's high-flying ambitions concerning diversity and inclusion and the conspicuous "whiteness" of the programs and the university as a whole, gave rise to probing questions which were also an invitation to self-inquiry. Other aspects of the programs necessarily weren't always given the necessary attention due to the felt urgency of the panel's critical position. In comparison with earlier accreditations, when the then still independent programs had two full days at their disposal to conduct the discussions in greater depth, the brief half day that was allocated to each program in the new construction was not sufficient to gain a thorough insight into the different working methods, visions and issues requiring improvement. Nevertheless, apart from the aforementioned criticism of the hitherto altogether rather gratuitous appropriation of terms like diversity and inclusion, the panel fortunately also commended the programs for

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their passion, commitment and experimental approach. Later that same day a number of general points to develop were formulated that can be further elaborated in different ways by each program.

The Development Interview: 2020

From the above, it should be clear that the opportunity offered for a more extensive follow-up, a so-called development interview, was eagerly seized upon. Also participating in the discussion besides the heads and artistic leaders of the four courses, the director of the Graduate School, and an educator affiliated with the education and quality department of ArtEZ, were the chairman of the assessment panel, René Kloosterman (AeQui), and panel member Paul Goodwin. Goodwin, a professor at the University of the Arts London (UAL), indicated that he is doing the interview in his capacity of independent curator and researcher, referring several times to his involvement in the European Forum for Advanced practices (EFAP – a self-organized, international gathering of practitioners, scholars and organizers from transdisciplinary realms of art and education). In this forum, he works closely with Professor Irit Rogoff (Goldsmiths University London). On many occasions in the past 20 years, this Grande Dame of the theory of artistic and curatorial research has lectured and published authoritatively on the radical, emancipatory potential of practices at the intersection of art, theory, and activism. Goodwin said that through this network, he had already been made aware of the worldwide reputation of DAI, which he believes is exemplary as a program combining practice and research. He added that, though he didn't really have the other three courses on his radar prior to the accreditation because of their different areas of expertise, he was very impressed with the shared spirit of experimentation following his visit to Arnhem.

The emphasis of the four programs on “de-disciplining” instead of professionalization really struck a chord with him. Goodwin's explicitly formulated affinity and appreciation resulted in a lively and enriching discussion in which he again summarized his observations of July 2020, this time elaborating in a more personal way on both his criticism and his suggestions in concert with the others at the meeting.

1. The “Research Gap”

Observation:

During the assessment of the four master's programs in July 2019, the panel saw great examples of research practices, but was surprised by the fact that on the ArtEZ website research is almost exclusively presented as an activity of the lector ships and the master's programs do not receive any credit for all their (pioneering) work. There appears to be some sort of research hierarchy at ArtEZ. Besides, the panel was left under the impression that generally there is little meaningful synergy between research at the level of the lector ships and the research practices of the masters (with the notable exception of the fashion lector ship).

The programs are pushing the boundaries further and further. But do the experimental research methods that they are developing receive sufficient recognition from ArtEZ?

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Recommendations:

- Ensure transparency of the economics of research at the university and make room for a discussion of the places where and in which way research funds should be put to productive use at a University of the Arts. Research as a bridge!
- The unique status of the MA FAD programs as research units should be defined and recognized by ArtEZ. Avoid definitions and alliances which restrict the space for research and its methods. Search for innovative formats and connections which can accommodate queerness as a continual process of becoming. The master's programs should show a strong commitment to this.
- The not always apparent relevance of the fields of research of the lector ships for the master's programs should be discussed based on the equal status of these programs as research units.

2. Bubbles and Landings

Observation:

The convincing positioning of the programs as four distinct self-directed learning communities in the landscape of international art education, each with its own focus on constant innovation of alternative pedagogical models, was highly rated by the panel. Goodwin even compared the Werkplaats Typografie and DAI to the iconic Black Mountain College (1933-1957). But he also added one caveat: successful, experimental programs with students and teachers who are closely involved with each other tend to find themselves in an institutional bubble. There is nothing wrong with that, at least to a certain extent, but the panel wonders if the programs' explicitly formulated wish to interact with the urgencies of our time and world can be adequately realized within that bubble. How permeable is the bubble? There is no doubt that individual students are well-prepared for their landing in the work field/the world. However, the panel wonders where these spaceships themselves want to land if they want to have an impact that goes beyond the individual interests of the student. Impact on whom, and how is it articulated?

Recommendations:

- Make sure that ArtEZ fully conveys the importance and significance of the master's research and facilitates transnational public visibility in a meaningful and relevant manner. For example, by enabling the courses to publish more extensively in relevant international contexts.
- Strengthen existing partnerships and expand them with relevant new partnerships outside the direct working field, where art, experimental design and research are welcome to contribute to processes of social justice.
- Bolster public activities and thus give greater visibility to the research that is being done by (collectives of) students, alumni and teachers.
- Continue to stimulate discussions with students and teachers about urgency and impact and follow up policy-wise on the insights and wishes that emerge from these discussions. Make sure to involve the board of ArtEZ.

3. The Rhetoric of Diversity and Decolonization

Observation:

It's clear to him, Goodwin says, that diversity and decolonization as an ambition are high on the programs' priority list. He also knows that for many years DAI has done a lot of work on intersectionality, but a frank discussion about decolonization and diversity can't take place

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without confrontation and potentially awkward self-reflection. He explains why, in 2019, the panel expressed its concerns about the discrepancy between this rhetoric on the one hand and the reality of the composition of faculty and staff and the contents of the programs on the other. Recently, many universities and institutes have quickly jumped on the bandwagon, embellishing their decision with all kinds of grand statements. But you can only present yourself by using a quote from Frantz Fanon (like the one on the cover of a text of the Graduate School that was handed out to the panel by way of introduction) if you are fully aware of what Fanon's specific call for decolonization actually entails: according to this theoretician of the decolonial wars of liberation, it begins with the total subversion of existing structures, followed by a radical redistribution of political and economic power. In this light, what does decolonization mean in the Dutch context, what does it mean in the context of our own programs, lectorships and university? Which curricula actually address this specific colonial history? How are Surinam, Indonesia and the Antilles presented in the programs?

How does this resonate in the composition of faculty and staff? Who is leaving to make room for others?

Recommendations:

- Reflect seriously on diversity in relation to human resources management: break systemic patterns and make your faculty and staff more flexible and colorful.
- Develop structural (financial) policies to reinforce the intersectional nature of the student body and provide targeted support for specific groups so that for them the courses remain attractive, accessible and manageable.
- Be careful with the use of buzzwords and empty statements. Reflect on the ethics of appropriation.
- Decolonization is important, but social justice is key.

4. The Trojan Horse in the Neoliberal University

Observation:

During one of the sessions of the (aforementioned) European Forum for Advanced Practices it was observed that small-scale, progressive programs that have been allowed by the neoliberal university to develop experimental curricula, provided that they keep within the financial and bureaucratic limits, are like a Trojan Horse. Sooner or later, the modus operandi of these programs will reveal that the university needs to transform itself if it wants to continue to substantially and morally live up to the fact that it is introducing these programs on the educational market and, to this end, is showcasing them for promotional purposes. If we, as educational programs, want to decolonize art and society, we also need to ensure that our own universities live up to their principles.

There is a fine line between art and reality. Art and art education can manifest themselves as the unique, democratic arena for the radical representation of a different, better future. If we want to ensure that mentalities change and societal structures are transformed and improved, we need imagination more than ever. If we want to stimulate change through education and research, we really need to move quickly and define our goals today. If the programs really wish to choose this trajectory (that is Goodwin's impression), then it is perfectly clear which path should be followed and that the time has come to send a clear message to the world and to our own institutional policymakers.

It is obvious that part of the recommendations in this report can only be implemented if the

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university is prepared to share innovative ideas with the programs and develop a support structure that provides a strong underpinning to self-managing, socially committed, substance driven and research based programs with their outspoken students and renowned teachers.

Goodwin urges the programs to analyze their relationship with the umbrella university in terms of costs and benefits for *both* parties and start a discussion based on this information.

Recommendations:

- Question the umbrella university about its mission statement with regard to the programs: check or challenge?
- Make sure that the master's programs are given more visibility and leverage within both ArtEZ and national institutional frameworks.
- Ask about ArtEZ's institutional vision on economic and social justice and, as programs, organize safe alternative platforms where politicians, board members, students and teachers can engage in serious discussions and listen to each other – while staying aware of the imperfection of communication and the importance of connection.
- PLURIVERSITY not UNIVERSITY

This report of the development interview on 9 November 2020 is based on the notes of the four heads of programs and the then director of the Graduate School (now known as Graduate School Community). Anniek Brattinga, Armand Mevis and Carin Rustema wrote the first draft, Gabriëlle Schleijsen expanded and edited the text. We have tried to reproduce the tone of the observations and recommendations as accurately as possible. Paul Goodwin speaks from the experience that he gained during the assessment in July 2019. Since then, much has happened: however, we have refrained from adorning the report with additional information.

We would like to thank René Kloosterman for hosting the development interview and Paul Goodwin for his genuine commitment and relevant input as a critical friend.

Afterword:

Paul Goodwin's insight into the specificities of ArtEZ is understandably limited; his own university, the UAL, with its 19,000 students who during their study all live in the sprawling multicultural hub that is London, is only partly comparable. With its 3,000 students and subsidiaries in small provincial towns, ArtEZ is institutionally rooted in a regional context. The four master's courses that were examined represent, as the panel stressed during the assessment and development interview, ArtEZ's minority section, which has strong ties to the international working field. However, nobody seems to have noticed that contrary to almost all the competing programs worldwide, ArtEZ's internationally oriented programs must manage without being imbedded in in the (sub-) cultural infrastructure of a metropolis in all its diversity. In recruiting their students, the four MA FAD programs have to be inventive and anticipate. In fact, they have decided, in some cases a long time ago, to embrace this "disadvantage" as an incentive to think and organize education differently (for example by embracing a certain mobility) and thus contribute to a new dynamic between the so-called "center" and the so-called "periphery" – anywhere in the world. The impact and the practical and theoretical consequences of their distinctive transnational teaching practices, which accept and support the importance of the local whenever possible and deliberately distance themselves from any kind of neoliberal city-branding, the ideal

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recruiting tool of universities in the capital cities of the world, unfortunately was not addressed as such during the assessment or the development interview.

(English translation by Walter van der Star)