

## WT

Werkplaats Typografie

ArtEZ Institute of the Arts

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## INTRODUCTION

The Werkplaats Typografie (WT) is part of ArtEZ Institute of the Arts. WT is a two-year master's programme centered on practical assignments and self-initiated projects. It also serves as a meeting place for graphic designers with regard to research and dialogue. The WT is supervised by Karel Martens and Armand Mevis. Further guidance is given on a regular basis by Paul Elliman and Maxine Kopsa. Anniek Brattinga is in charge of general co-ordination and management, Roland Frueh is responsible for program co-ordination and Liesbeth Doornbosch is office manager. Visiting lecturers are regularly invited to provide individual tutoring and/or for presentations. Reviews of work, critiques and project participation are informal in character. Participants work in a professionally equipped studio accessible 24 hours a day. The WT is open to a maximum number of sixteen graphic designers who would like to deepen their knowledge and skills. Participation depends entirely upon proven ability.

## GENERAL (MISSION STATEMENT)

Graphic design involves the arrangement and organization of visual and textual information. The way in which this information is given form is an artistic process determined by the designer. The designer works on the basis of commissions and must feel connected with the nature of an assignment. He/she must have a firm rapport not only with the assignment, but also with the client and his/her public. The challenge is to translate these external demands in terms of personal artistic identity. This identity is determined by the position, which the designer adopts in relation to the world at large – the social, political or technological developments taking place in contemporary society. The WT enables participants to develop their identity and to acquire the knowledge, skills and experience to realize personal ambition.

## AIMS

The aim of the WT is to train talented students to become competent and highly qualified designers with an independent design practice. Studying at the WT means learning through experience and requires a high level of personal motivation and responsibility on the part of each participant. Participants will eventually become a leading graphic designer with an autonomous position in the international field.

## PROGRAMME

The WT programme stimulates and practices critical reflection on the basis of a broad cultural perspective, with theory playing a supporting role. Participants engage in artistic research involving content and form, text and image, theory and practice, in relation to professional practice and supervised by leading designers.

Alongside more theoretical research, participants work on real assignments for external clients. With these assignments participants learn to take on a leading role in the process of designing and realizing a final product. This includes dealings with several parties (editors, publishers, printers...) and handling the tensions between maintaining one's artistic vision and answering to the wishes of the client.

The WT programme roughly consists of three components:

- 1) Presentations, individual and group critiques, workshops;
- 2) Practical assignments and 3) theoretical orientation in the form of research, excursions and a final thesis.

Assignments can be initiated by the WT, external clients, or by the participants themselves. Working for external clients guarantees real content and real deadlines though still within the relative security of a learning situation, supervised by various external experts.

Whether the assignments are commissioned externally or by the WT, participants learn to deal with the complexity of an entire process from the initial development of an idea to its execution. In addition, participants are stimulated to initiate their own projects; these are an extension of individual interests and relate to issues relevant for the field.

#### INTRODUCTORY EXCURSION

During the month of September an introductory excursion is organized. Excursions in the past have been to contemporary exhibitions or events such as the Venice Biennial, Documenta in Kassel, the European biennial, Manifesta. This trip forms the start of the theory programme and establishes the content of the year's first reader.

#### INTRODUCTORY WORKSHOP

Also in September, participants take part in a project determined and supervised by an external guest supervisor. The guest supervisor is initiator of the workshop and can be a visual artist, photographer, editor, publisher, filmmaker or designer whose working method is deemed relevant for the participants. The workshop is a three-week intensive cooperation, which results in a concrete final product.

#### THEORY

Because the WT upholds the belief that a good designer must be broadly orientated and well-informed in order to be able to adopt a reflective position, a theory programme runs parallel as an integrated part of the design process. Current cultural and social questions form its basis. During the entire two-year programme participants visit exhibits, symposiums and other forms of relevant presentations. Lectures are organized, articles are studied and discussed. The theory programme results in two publications, both of which are drawn up, designed and published by the participants of the WT. The publications (or readers as they have been called) bring together theoretical and hands-on research in the creating or sourcing of content, editorial consideration and the final design.

#### THESIS

The thesis is the end product of the participant's independent study spanning his/her two years at the WT.

In general the thesis is a collection of projects, which are part of a continuous exploration of concerns and interests in relation to the participant's position as a designer. During the two years participants will work independently on personal research, supervised by the

thesis tutor. This inquiry is based on a hypothesis, which is answered by means of clear arguments. The final result can range from a written report to a video. There are two main stages in the period of research, the first is the selection and formulation of the hypothesis and the second is the structuring and organization of the content. Both stages of the thesis are assessed.

#### OCCASIONAL LARGE-SCALE GROUP PROJECTS

The WT is open to invitations to participate in outside projects.

In 2004 the WT was invited to take part in the international workshop 'In the labyrinth' organized by the foundation Vivere Venezia. In addition to the WT, other leading European design schools were invited to design a new clear and legible system of signs and orientation for public spaces in Venice with the aim of improving the city's current chaotic character. The WT's proposal was to develop an audio signage system called 'Salvatore'. The film entitled 'Sirens of Venice' visualizes the presence of this system in the near future.

In 2005 the WT was approached by the Festival International de l'Affiche et des Arts Graphiques de Chaumont, France to represent the Netherlands in the festival's yearly exhibition. The WT literally presented itself by relocating the entire school – participants, staff and equipment – for seven weeks to the exhibition space 'le Garage'. Instead of a traditional presentation, the WT selected 11 significant contemporary Dutch designers for their particular ability to provide valid and compelling solutions to contemporary design issues, for a series of lectures, visual presentations and a collaborative publication. Each WT participant worked closely with one of these designers to formulate, together, a means of representing their work. During the seven weeks of the exhibition, participants worked in the exhibition space, constantly updating the presentation of their respective dialogues. The publication 'Dutch Resource, collaborative exercises in graphic design' was presented in Galerie Anatome in Paris, October 2006.

#### ADMISSIONS AND TUITION

Interested students are welcome to come by for an informal introductory visit, but can also send their portfolio directly to the WT any time before March 01. Those selected will be invited for an interview with the tutors of the WT. The interviews are scheduled in June. During the interview tutors will consider the applicant's previous work and specifically discuss plans, intentions and expectations concerning the applicant's studies at the WT. An applicant must have completed a bachelor's degree and demonstrate an engaging attitude to design.

The following criteria are relevant for admission:

- A bachelor's degree in the arts
- A standard of quality in completed work, in terms of content and design
- The ability to act and work independently
- The capacity for further growth

Tuition for students from the European Union (including Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein and Switzerland) is approximately 1.800 euro per year. For students from outside the EU, the fee is approximately 8.000 euro per year. Participants must also allow for an amount of 1.200 euro for additional expenses such as materials and (international) excursions. ArtEZ administers tuition fees, payments may be made in installments throughout the year. Scholarships are available, for more information look on [www.artez.nl](http://www.artez.nl) (chapter Practical Matters).

#### LENGTH OF STUDY

A course at the WT lasts two years and concludes with a thesis. A distinction is made between the first and the second year. Designers in the first year work on assignments they have formulated themselves, on group projects or – to a lesser extent – on practical assignments. In all they explore and define their position. What sort of designer one is or wants to be. This results in defining the subject of the thesis. During the second year a participant is confronted more often with real practice; he/she works almost exclusively on external assignments. That said, a participant is also free to choose to work mainly on self-initiated projects that result in a concrete design. In addition to all other activities and projects, every designer works on his/her thesis.

#### ASSESSMENTS

The supervision of both the practical assignments and self-initiated projects takes place on the basis of discussions both at an individual level and in a group context. The transfer of knowledge takes place on a non-hierarchical basis, and the role of the (guest) supervisor is that of an equal partner in the discussion. The discussions, which take place, relate to professional practice in relation to developments in the contemporary culture of the visual arts.

Evaluation discussions are held with every participant twice a year. These assessments focus on the progress and development of current projects. At the end of the two-year programme there is an individual assessment discussion with an external examiner, who discusses and assesses the assignments that have been carried out, the participant's own projects, and his/her vision of the profession.

#### FACILITIES

The Werkplaats Typografie is housed in its own building, a former radio diffusion station built in 1937. Each participant chooses his/her own workplace in one of the various spaces. The WT has its own library and there is a kitchen where communal lunches can be prepared. Everyone has a key to the building and can thus use the facilities at any time.

Each participant brings his or her own computer and has access to buy affordable software via ArtEZ (Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator, Indesign, Acrobat). Every working place is connected to Internet and both a black and white and a color laser printer. Other equipment is available: scanner, projector, professional digital camera.

Participants can also make use of the well-equipped workplaces in the ArtEZ Institute of the Arts like the photography, screen print, audio- visual workshops, as well as the central workshop for wood, metal and plastics.

The WT has a small collection of books and magazines for immediate use, including typographic manuals, scholarly books, art catalogues and current specialist literature. The WT also has an open archive and a digital archive including all the work made by participants. Participants are free to use the ArtEZ mediatheque, containing an extensive collection of literature in the field of art and design, architecture, music and theatre. Beside books, there are also sheet music, videos, slides, CD-Roms and sound recordings. Viewing and listening facilities are provided and the material can be studied and lent out.

#### TUTORS

Karel Martens graduated from the Arnhem School of Art in 1961. Since then he has worked as a freelance graphic designer, specialized in typography. Alongside this, he has always made free (non-commisioned) graphic and three-dimensional work. Among his clients have been the publishers Van Loghum Slaterus (Arnhem) in the 1960s, and SUN (Nijmegen) in the years 1975–81. As well as designing books and other printed items, he has designed stamps and telephone cards. He has also designed signs and typographic façades for a number of buildings. In 1993 Karel Martens was awarded the H.N. Werkman Prize for the design of the architectural magazine 'Oase'. In 1996 he received the Dr A.H. Heineken Prize for Art; as part of this prize, a monograph on his work was published: 'Karel Martens: Printed Matter'. His work has been nominated several times at the Design Prize Rotterdam. In 1998 at the Leipzig Book Fair, 'Karel Martens: Printed Matter' was awarded the gold medal, as the best-designed book "in the whole world". Over the years his books have featured regularly in

the annual Best-Designed Dutch Books competition. Karel Martens has taught graphic design since 1977. He started teaching at the Arnhem School of Art, followed by a teaching position at the Jan van Eyck Academie in Maastricht. From 1997 onward he has been a critic in the graphic design department at Yale University, New Haven, USA. In 1998 he and Wigger Bierma founded the WT.

Armand Mevis lives and works in Amsterdam, where he started a collaboration with Linda van Deursen after graduating from the Gerrit Rietveld Academy in 1986. Mevis & Van Deursen have been working for clients in the cultural field, producing the new identity of Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam, the identity and publications for fashion duo Viktor & Rolf, and numerous books on architecture and design. They also have worked on several Dutch cultural publications, including 'Metropolis M', and won the competition for the graphic identity for the City of Rotterdam in 2001 as a designated Cultural Capital of Europe. Their work has been shown in museums and educational institutions throughout the world. Mevis is a design critic at the Werkplaats Typografie (Workshop Typography), Arnhem and a critic at Yale University School of Art, New Haven, Connecticut. Their collaboration has been documented in the book 'Recollected Work: Mevis & Van Deursen'.

Maxine Kopsa had her education at the University of Toronto, Canada – cultural studies – and completed a master's degree at the University of Amsterdam in art history/theory. In the past she worked for 'Archis, magazine for architecture, city and visual culture' and as a project and grant advisor for the Dutch Foundation for visual arts, design and architecture. From 1999 until 2003 she founded and curated 'Playstation', Galerie Fons Welters, Amsterdam. She has been a guest curator of several exhibitions and projects such as 'Militant Bourgeois' at Galerie Juliette Jongma, Amsterdam (with Chris Evans), 'Jim, Jonathan, Kenny, Frances & Sol' at the Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam, 'In this Colony' at Fort Vijfhuizen and more recently, 'Just In Time' at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. She regularly gives lectures and is a guest tutor at different institutes including the Frank Mohr institute in Groningen and De Ateliers in Amsterdam. Her essays are published in arts magazines such as 'Metropolis M' and 'Frieze' and she has written on various artists for exhibition catalogues. She is associate editor for 'Metropolis M', a Dutch arts magazine. Since 2003 she has a theory position at the WT.

Paul Elliman is a London based artist and researcher who prefers to call himself a designer, in order, he says, "to be able to get on with the kind of work I want to get on with". His work and writing explores the mutual interests of technology and language, particularly where these intersect through aspects of graphic design, and in emerging forms of audio signage. His work has been exhibited at the Tate Modern in London and included in collections by the British Council, London's Victoria and Albert Museum and the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum in New York. He has contributed essays to several journals and magazines, including 'Wired' (San Francisco), 'Eye' (London), 'IDEA' (Tokyo) and 'Metropolis M' and 'Dot Dot Dot' (Amsterdam). As well as being the thesis supervisor at the Werkplaats, Paul is also a visiting critic at Yale University School of Art.