

architectural *design* department

— we  
don't do  
buildings

space. we do.

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The starting point of a design at our department is always 'the space': the designing, reading and analysing of the space. We call this 'the choreography of the space'. Characteristics of this 'choreography' are: the making of, the experimentation with, the perception and experience of the space.

An essential question we ask within our department is what the making process of tangible things teaches us about ourselves. Experimenting, making, experiencing and reflecting on this lead to answers. This process of change, consisting of a set of infinite unobserved changes, is different for each student.

The starting point is the student as maker, in which craftsmanship, sensory, material, technique, workshop, tools, production and experimentation with these, are key concepts.

The 'making' matures, it becomes ingrained through practice, its' development takes time. Time offers the possibility of reflection and imagination. Not just telling but also showing.

We train students who are critical and inquisitive. Graduates with their own opinions, who confront society and produce work that stands out.

For this reason it offers graduates excellent opportunities to undertake further study at a Master's program in the Netherlands or abroad.

Henri Snel,  
Head of architectural design,  
Gerrit Rietveld Academie

architecturaldesign.rietveldacademie.nl

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#### Outside the Department

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#### (Op)position

We occupy a special position among the existing architecture courses because we are based in an art academy. It's a position that gives us the freedom to study the full breadth of the field.

Arna Mackic, a former student of the ArchitecturalDesign department puts it this way:

*The freedom of thought which I have received and that I've learned I have to take, has not only contributed greatly to my development on a professional level, but also to my personal development. This freedom in thinking and the questioning of things is something the Rietveld Academie sets itself apart with from other academies, and is a valuable thing to which, in my further career and Masters course, I am trying to hold on to.*

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We approach the field as a coherent whole with great attention to craft, sensory, experimentation, concept, positioning and social objectives.

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#### Educational vision in relation to the assignments

We believe in the acquisition of cultural and historical knowledge, interpreting current affairs, learning to deal with intuition, experimentation and the use of different design methods. In our view, the graduate spatial designers from the ArchitecturalDesign department are of value within the profession, offering contributions to: furniture design, design for dance, theatre, set and exhibition design, interior design, architecture, urban design, landscape architecture, design for public space. This added value consists of craftsmanship – the traditional making – and from an exploratory, experimental, critical and flexible attitude.

We train the students in theoretical and practical situations. At least once a year there will be a study component, which involves working to a real-world brief, where the subject has social relevance and the client is from the profession.

Switching between the different scales of space, exploring and operating in the overlapping areas and designing and researching from a general approach to a specific one, and vice versa, is also practiced in workshops, collaborations with other departments within the Gerrit Rietveld Academie, with other (international) educational institutions and through internships.

#### Assignments

The students gain experience by working in different scales: from the detail, the building, the public space and their interrelationships. At the start of the course the tutors formulate the assignments and fix the scale. In the course of the study, the students will have to formulate and define this themselves. During the course of the study it becomes clear which area the student has the most affinity with.

operation between existing disciplines and collaboration with other (artistic) disciplines enrich the thinking and design process. It is consistent with trends in society and professional practice.

#### Architecture in a changing world

Changes are taking place in all parts of our field. In addressing vacancy we see for example the demand for temporary and flexible use increase, with an emphasis on the design of the interior. Social development, expansion, re-use, and privatisation of public space, ensure that spatial designers must find new answers and solutions. In order to be able to work properly under these circumstances, it is necessary to adopt a wide (and experimental) approach.

It must be possible to switch between scale levels with attention to the interaction between the general and the specific. More than ever, students are trained to explore the space on all scale levels in order to design it. Not only the interior but also the theatre and public space are subject to investigation, experimentation and design. This is visible in specific situations, such as assignments from professional practice, and in the more contemplative study components such as theorising about the profession and examining hypotheses.

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The challenges for spatial designers relate to these international developments. Partly because of globalisation, we see the exchange of ideas, beliefs and practices of different cultures as an enrichment of the thinking about our

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The question of the 'why' of the projects is asked time and time again. As an artist you have the right and duty to spatially present the dreams that society needs.

As the Norwegian architect Christian Norberg-Schulz once said: *Imagination is desirable in a world where rationalism and materialism are no longer adequate.*

#### Individual oriented education

The education in the department is focused on the individual. Teaching in small groups enables direct contact between student and tutor, as well as between students themselves. The tutors are from the profession – spatial design, architecture, visual artist, art and architecture history and theory – and confront the students with different views, the professional practice and current developments. The assignments vary in duration, complexity, and levels of collaboration with other students, and in relation to the profession and society.

The curriculum assumes that students can successfully integrate into their development process an increasing complexity of tasks as well as a growing responsibility for selections they make.

#### Interdisciplinarity

The student is trained to explore the space on all levels in order to design it. The various parts of the course can vary in scale, in approach and execution. In all areas craftsmanship, conceptual thinking, experimentation, research and strategy are required. They are the essential principles of our education system. Students learn varied skills and the ability to make inter-connections. The

#### Craftsmanship

Craftsmanship is developed through making and refining by hand. The repetition of sketching, drawing, model making, and working locally ensures that the student undergoes and experiences sensory and tactile qualities, sense of scale and proportions, different functions and applications, and makes them their own.

The development of a personal signature is in our view, stimulated by putting emphasis on sensory and experimentation.

#### Sensory

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According to professor of neuropsychology Edward de Haan:

*"The senses are peripherals." Often a single sense is predominant: the tongue of the chef, the skin of one who touches something, and the nose of the perfumer.*

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How can we help people to experience 'space' differently to our present fleeting perception?

#### Experimentation

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We experiment through unorthodox research. Uncommon research often yields surprising answers and new experiences.

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#### Education at the ArchitecturalDesign department

We want to educate autonomous spatial designers with an independent vision. We want students to learn to develop their own vision about the relationship between man and his surroundings. We want to encourage an independent and critical attitude, which will prepare them for the different situations in which they could find themselves after completing their studies.

We encourage the students to examine the overlapping areas between spatial design and other creative disciplines and experiment within these. For this reason the fine arts are a constant source of inspiration.

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