

BA Honours in Visual Communication

Introduction

This is an exciting time to be a creative practitioner as the world is changing at an unprecedented speed. The creative industries are some of the core drivers and respondents to these changes. Like society, the creative industries are a complex and interlinked ever-changing network. In order for creative practitioners to make a meaningful contribution and transformation they need to have the right mind-set and skills. As such, graduates entering into these industries need to be flexible and adapt their skills and knowledge to excel in unfamiliar situations. In other words, they need to be cognisant of the interrelated nature of theory, context, and creative practice in order to make a meaningful contribution to industry and society as a whole.

This year-long BA Visual Communications Degree presented by the Stellenbosch Academy of Design and Photography aims to produce industry-ready innovative critical thinkers who are able to make meaningful and professional contributions and challenge conventional visual communication thinking.

This degree is built on three interrelated components, Creative Practice (practice-led research), Visual Studies (critical theory), and Contextual Studies (contextual theory).

Students work with a team of highly qualified lecturers and the programme as a whole will be conducted in an open-plan studio environment, which will enable students across disciplines and specialisations to work alongside each other. In this co-creating learning environment shared experience is encouraged by means of personal interaction and the engagement with learning activities such as presentations, seminars, group discussions, and the like. Students will receive feedback from individual lecturers as well as from an interdisciplinary panel of lecturing staff.



Description of subjects

Creative Practice

Students are required to produce a focused body of creative work within their area of visual communication professional practice (Graphic Design, Photography, Art Direction, Illustration or Multimedia). This area of interest is developed and managed through the engagement with and application of practice-led research theories and methodologies. In this subject practice-led research is the overarching method. The creative production cycle is used to structure and guide the process.

The major deliverables of this subject will be:

- 1) a series of presentations which explain the creative process
- 2) a body of creative practice process work
- 3) an exhibition of final creative practice work
- 4) a practice-led research report.

Visual Studies

Visual Studies works in tandem with Contextual Studies to provide the underlying theoretical dimension of the degree. Visual Studies 4 draws on Critical Theory to provide the concepts, research tools and vocabulary to facilitate theoretical research and visual communication production. The intention is to enable students to develop critical thinking skills and to substantiate their analysis of visual culture. Students are exposed to emergent theories and practice relevant to the visual communication industry. One of the core aspects of this subject is the acknowledgment and celebration of African creativity and theory. The aim of Visual Studies is to empower students to critically engage with visual communication and to thus inform their own practice.

The major deliverables of this subject will be:

1. a series of seminars on topics related to the syllabus
2. a research proposal
3. a mini thesis

Contextual Studies

Visual communication practitioners need to grasp the complex contexts in which they work and the responsibilities that they have when designing and communicating solutions to both industry and non-industry related challenges and opportunities. They have both the potential and the responsibility to actively promote socially and environmentally responsible visual communication practice.

In order to do so they need to understand a range of contextual, conceptual and thematic issues related to sustainable and responsible practice. The aim of this subject is therefore to provide a basis to question the fundamental point of departure and final result of visual communication practice.

The class presentations will broaden the students' known context and explore the interrelations between the different realms of political economics, ethics, power relations, technology, democracy, activism, and design. Complexity and uncertainty will be examined in finding ways of analyzing situations, while approaches to design activism will be discussed.

Additionally, in order to foster interdisciplinary socially aware collaborative interaction, these students will be assigned project teams and engage with a societal problem that requires a visual communications solution. The major deliverables of this subject will be:

1. a series of class tests
2. a series of group project progress presentations
3. a final design challenge project presentation.

PORTFOLIO

In order to qualify for the BA Honours Degree in Visual Communication at Stellenbosch Academy a student should have received a minimum aggregate of 65% (theory and practical) in the final year of their undergraduate qualification.

Additionally, a student must have a portfolio of creative work of an appropriate standard to enter into this degree and submit at least one previous academic essay. A certified copy of your undergraduate degree transcript is required.

The suitability of candidates will be assessed by a panel of academics involved in the BA Honours at the Academy.

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