MAKE A MESS

“I’m a strong believer that you learn just as much from your peers as you do from the faculty, its just really important to work in a common space instead of at home.”

Casey Reas

Whenever I’ve seen work environments before in design schools it was always mixed, nobody cared if someone was a grad or undergrad student. They were all working in the same spot basically. Here we have a strong separation that comes along with the fact that most of the undergrads are not working here in school, they don’t make this their work space they use the labs and then go home. This culture has not been established and our grad students work exclusively here on campus. I would love to see melting more together and I would love to see some cooperation between undergrad and grad.

Christian Mueller

I know they (Grad students) don’t come for studio space, because the studio space facilities are really poor. As well as the undergraduate studio spaces so I would really like to see those improve.”

Casey Reas

“I would also hope in the future for there to be more of a studio community feeling. People who do spend a lot of time here seem to have quite a good atmosphere, it’s very friendly.”

Casey Reas

The sum of the parts can be greater and that obviously doesn’t happen here.

in reference to the design community/social aspect

Cameron McNall

“When I was a student...I was there when they were building a new building for the department...It can give a sense of invigoration and new life and can add a lot of energy. I’m a big advocate that it’s really the people that make the department and not the space.”

Casey Reas

The fact that we are able to do what we are doing in this totally compromised condition tells me that going back on campus will be just amazing.

Christian Mueller

A fresh start is always good.

Henri Lucas

"We need serious studio space for students.”

Jennifer Steinkamp

I think we need to open the gates to interdisciplinary ideas. We can set an example. We need serious studio space for students.”

Jennifer Steinkamp

Architecture determines the culture, the image, the behavior, and the attitude of the students and faculty. Architecture is community.

Rebeca Mendez
MANIFESTO

At seminaries, everything is about God, he never shows up but everything is discussed in the terms of God. At Art Center, it’s the Client, the Client with a capital C. The Client as a sort of fountain from which the purpose and reason of our lives are derived. The Client wants this, the Client wants that, Client, Client, Client, Client...If the Client knew what the Client wanted, he wouldn’t be hiring you!

Benjamin Bratton

The pipe should function as it was designed

Benjamin Bratton

"I think the standards are much higher of our ability to think critically and to push the field forward, rather than just turning out practitioners for the present, which I think a lot of schools do, and do well. Our mission is to develop the practitioners of the future."

Casey Reas

"One thing I love about the department is its pluralism. And the fact that the faculty share common and core disciplines, but that they really have different focus."

Casey Reas

"Perhaps our program is more of an artistic approach to media art, and even more of an artistic approach to design."

Jennifer Steinkamp

If we see what design really is, a way of organizing and giving meaning to everything around us then we really keep a wonderful balance between art, design, technology, and science.

Rebeca Mendez

"It is important to be aware of the history that this department inherited. It is a confusing story with many interactions and perhaps now the most solid foundation to build a new department on."

Victoria Vesna

The artistic exploration of media technology is a fundamental human pursuit.

Benjamin Bratton

The DMA should be technologically driven and based on the blurred boundaries between a technological pursuit and a cultural pursuit, an academic pursuit and a commercial pursuit.

Benjamin Bratton

"Outside of being an art school, it gives people an opportunity to think and be critical of culture, and to learn so much more than how to give form and how to create imagery."

Casey Reas

"It’d be wonderful to see the focus remain so diverse but just to have more quality across."

Casey Reas

"I think the design discipline is a wonderful degree, because it doesn’t teach a skill, but it teaches really a process about how to approach everything. It’s really transferable to take what you learn here to other places."

Casey Reas
“We have an opportunity to change the way design is taught and what designers think of their own work.”

Jennifer Steinkamp

“Designers and media artists will infect each other with their similar interests.”

Jennifer Steinkamp

“We are a department that is 7 years old and 30 years old. We are a mix of present and an institutional memory of what we were.”

Victoria Vesna

“I think the undergraduate program is the core of the department.”

Casey Reas

On D and MA- “I would like to see the two inform each other in a much better way.”

Casey Reas

“I think if there continues to be such a dramatic split between what the graduate students are interested in and what the undergraduate students are interested in, if that continues that can be a very bad thing. I think there needs to be more positive crossover.”

Casey Reas

“Design skills work to serve media artists...conversely, I see media arts as a thinking method to get designers out of their box.”

Jennifer Steinkamp

“We are not one discipline; we are a hybrid. Design is piped through media arts. (As in shell scripting in UNIX.) We are the interesting stuff that can occur in-between the categories.”

Jennifer Steinkamp

“The best artists and designers have an obsessive interest in both design and art.”

Jennifer Steinkamp

Designers have to be able to do web, interactive, video. They’re all elements to take into account, like a palette. You can’t be a Renaissance man, but you end up having a good foundation and then specializing and doing what you like the most.

Maroun Harb

I think our students are well prepared for the real world, but most of all, I think our students should pursue a graduate degree in one way or another. We picked the best and brightest to start with, and I think our program gives you a great foundation, I only wish our students could stay one more year to do a masterpiece.

Maroun Harb

There is an entrepreneurial spirit in our undergrads. They could all be freelance designers and graphic designers. They all leave here and start their own new companies, that are on the bleeding-cutting edge.

Maroun Harb

We really help students understand that design is a viable way of living. That you can make a good living with it, not only economically, but really be satisfied in your spirit and in your quest for innovation.

Rebeca Mendez
“it seems like there is no trend in where people go and that people really carve their own path. And I think that it probably changes a lot depending on the current economic situation in the world.”

Casey Reas

“I actually think it’s an exciting time to be graduating, because you won’t immediately go into a company and get pigeon-holed and sort of be doing a specific kind of work, but you may think of getting into things you might not thought of doing beforehand.”

Casey Reas

Whenever something appears on the computer screen it will automatically be compared with the standards set by good designers and you don’t want to have people walking away because they are not familiar with the visual language they are being confronted with.

Christian Mueller

We do a really bad job at telling what we do best and have done best because we forget the past and always focus on the future. The person considered as the grandfather of computer graphics did his research in the design department at UCLA, and it couldn’t have happened anywhere else. There was a grant from IBM and a the UC system that allowed him to do the very first animation in vector forms. Nobody knew where to put it because it wasn’t animation, it couldn’t go into any field. Design has done a good job at being early adopters for new things. I’ve seen the program morph over the years, and it’ll be kind of a shame to stick the department in one mold.

Maroun Harb

From early on, the graduate program has always been our guinea pig program. The grad program was always more experimental.

Maroun Harb

They come in diverse, and they leave just as diverse. I think it’s a big plus for our program. You can always tell by looking at a portfolio from different schools as to which school it came from. Whether they’re from Art Center, Cal Arts or Otis, they have a certain mold. Not to say that they’re not good designer, they are excellent professionals. But our students...well, there is no UCLA portfolio. And I’m proud of that. We don’t dictate a specific direction. Which is a bad thing because it can add confusion for our undergrads, but you’re allowed a lot of freedom to build up your knowledge.

Maroun Harb
"Most people I know or meet who are not affiliated with the academic design world in LA don’t know about it. That’s the major problem, that nobody knows about us.”

Christian Mueller

"We are lucky enough to be able to explore what media arts and design can mean. We have an opportunity to change the way design is taught and what designers think of their work.”

Jennifer Steinkamp

"Most people I know or meet who are not affiliated with the academic design world in LA don’t know about it. That’s the major problem, that no body knows about us.”

Christian Mueller

"I am personally very optimistic, so much has happened in these past few years and I don’t see any reason why increased international recognition couldn’t continue over the next few years as well.

Erkki Huhtamo

"This department is seen internationally as a place to be. In Los Angeles I think they are curious. We are talked about, especially will all the work Victoria has done putting us on the map.”

Jennifer Steinkamp

"What is important is that [the industry] support us, not dictate us.”

Rebeca Mendez

"The time of specialization is long gone and we should make all effort to expand their vision, introduce them to the entire campus. Los Angeles as a city and the world.”

Victoria Vesna

We have had a lot of presence at different kinds of student festivals and this is also on the undergraduate level, but I think its most at this point because of the graduate program that we get a lot of attention.

Erkki Huhtamo

I would feel terribly alienated if this program became some sort of a corporate or industrial annex.

Erkki Huhtamo

"The DMA should be a place where people from different disciplines would come to as a place to find out what was really going on in critical intellectual thought in different sorts of cultural channels.”

Benjamin Bratton
PLAY IN THE STREET

“It is important to continue linking to the sciences and pursuing active collaborations including co-teaching classes.”

Victoria Vesna

My guess is that they don’t see this department but they see UCLA.

Henri Lucas

I think that UCLA is one of the most recognizable brands in the world. Up with Harvard, Yale and Stanford. I remember being in a remote village in Java [...] and you could see people wearing UCLA t-shirts. They may be able to tell you whether that’s a school or a sports tema or a country, but whatever, it’s a thumbs up.

Benjamin Bratton

In a classical design school you have to contact other places, you have to shop around to find a potential collaborator. Here, you have almost open dorrs, and this is an extremely important thing because a lot of the work we are doing is not achievable by the designer by himself.

Christian Mueller

It’s all about UCLA, it’s all about the image that UCLA has.

Henri Lucas
RUN WITH SCISSORS

The mandate of the department is to define and expand political, social, cultural, and economical parameters of this pursuit, from which people will derive careers, as opposed to defining a career for someone.

Benjamin Bratton

I don’t think that the design curriculum should model itself on a kind of practical skills acquisition system that you may see at a place like Art Center. UCLA makes creative directors and Art Center makes designers.

Benjamin Bratton

One thing I think the department has the capacity to do, and this may sound strange, is to not just look at UCLA students as a source to build it’s classes from, but really think and position itself as a UC department.

Benjamin Bratton

The potential ceiling for the UCLA student is one where they are trained to think at the level where they will run the company, or better yet, be the client.

Benjamin Bratton

Our students are first and foremost UCLA students. Which means there is a whole set of filters that initially have nothing to do with design. I’m enough of a humanist to think that students who get a UCLA degree are broader thinkers than those who go to the trade schools and only have to learn how to use the latest software and basically just become good functional cogs in the culture machine.

Benjamin Bratton

Our students are first and foremost UCLA students and secondly are put into the category of Design | Media Arts majors.

Benjamin Bratton

No reason to spend UC money on learning Photoshop.

Benjamin Bratton

I believe that fundamentally the strength of our program is the breath of the studies. So it’s always just a struggle, how much can you offer before you become too diluted.

Cameron McNall

I think the quickest way to solve the problem of having enough concentration in the different disciplines is the make the program twice as large. And this is not difficult to figure out. I mean in all of California, the UC only supports 150 people that are design. Now the economy of California is certainly dependent on design products I mean just look at Hollywood. It’s beyond ridiculous that a case hasn’t been made

Cameron McNall

I would like to see the rigor of a place like Art Center but maintain the liberal arts orientation here. There’s a very simple answer to that, and that is that you put a lot more time and resources towards the creation and establishment of the undergraduate program.

Cameron McNall
I think we have a pool of incredibly bright and talented people who can actually read and write and do other things and we need to take advantage of that - that’s our raw material. I think if we offer a broad program that is intellectually engaging then those people will go out in the world in and make their mark.

Cameron McNall

With the computer it’s a lot easier to appear professional. So I think that our students are very well prepared, but the most important thing is that, even though we may not have a concentration in a particular area, our grads do tend to rise to the top over the years because of the skills they are given for conceptualizing and problem solving.

Cameron McNall

“We are almost in the situation where we can become the strongest design education in California, I think we could achieve that.”

Christian Mueller

When they talk about the most important media arts schools in the world, we are in this list.

Christian Mueller

Ideally they (grads) will never get a job. That’s the whole purpose of an arts education - that you never have to get a job again. A great arts education makes people unemployable.

Christian Mueller

We are almost in the situation where we can become the strongest design education in California, I think we could achieve that.

Christian Mueller

“Skills always have to be contextualized, so while learning those skills we have to learn to understand what the theoretical, ideological, cultural and economic implications of all those skills are. They never happen in isolation, they are in a very intricate manner connected with society at large.”

Erkki Huhtamo

I personally think our strength is the choice, the combination of practice and theory, and also the fact that we are in this research university.

Erkki Huhtamo

The department needs to define itself first, it needs to know who he is and what he delivers and then talk to the industry.

Henri Lucas

Honestly, I would like to see this department have only a graduate program. No undergrads. Because the aims of being a research university and making that bridge between art and science asks for students with design skills already and it needs very smart, highly educated students already, I think it’s a specialization, it’s not an undergrad thing.

Henri Lucas

At CalArts you become something. You become a photographer, or you become a graphic designer or you become a fashion designer. This department wants to keep the options open for what students can become. In ways that’s very good because it can create self-study, creativity; but then you ask a lot from your undergrads and I think they miss a real good program. The undergrad program wants to tackle too many things.

Henri Lucas
What I find it silly that this undergrad program wants to compete with other undergrad programs that are narrow, more narrow in what you want to become.

Henri Lucas

“D|MA is already the design program of the UC system. We need to make everyone know this. Keep bringing in the famous faculty. There are other Media Arts programs in the UC system. What it sets us apart is that we also do design. Perhaps our program is more of an artistic approach to media art, even more of an artist approach to design.”

Jennifer Steinkamp

“We should never compare ourselves to other institutions or departments. We are who we are, unique.”

Jennifer Steinkamp

This department can’t fail. It is designed to succeed and it is designed to change. I have no idea where this dept will be in five years, but I am sure it will be different, and I hope it will be different. To stay on the leading edge, we have to re-invent ourselves. And for the past ten years, the department has been good at re-inventing itself.

Maroun Harb

“A best-case scenario would be that we’re able to create this UC Design niche. We value and understand what design means, rather than just corner it and degrade it to one area of it, like if we did only print design.”

Rebeca Mendez

Our growth depends on the undergraduates, and our direction depends on it too

Rebeca Mendez

Our department and education should be longer, we should foster a PhD because that’s when you really start understanding the equation. Students come in and out, they become too technical and not able to develop their voice as artists, they become technologists.

Rebeca Mendez

Our problem is that we are pushing too strong towards technology, we need to pull back in design and art. We need to find that balance. MIT combined with Cranbrook, combined with a RISD, ArtCenter, or even our own Art department here at UCLA.

Rebeca Mendez

"We are entering a pretty grim period for the UC, California and the world. Our students will be graduating at a most unpredictable time and we have a duty and responsibility to prepare them to be creative critical thinkers, equipped with technical knowledge to be able to respond appropriately and fast to any given situation they may find themselves in…and we should make all effort to expand their vision, introduce them to the entire campus, Los Angeles as a city and the world."

Victoria Vesna

"The time of specialization is long gone."

Victoria Vesna

“Creating great designers and artists doesn’t interest me.”

"We’re training to think holistically. The goal of the department is not specialization. We are not a commercial school.”

Victoria Vesna
"Academia is an old structure that doesn’t work anymore. If you compare an 18th century operating room to a present day one you’ll see much more change than if you compared an 18th century classroom to one of today.”

Victoria Vesna

They can make the case that we are the only liberal arts design education at the UC level, that this is valuable for the state of California and that it should be supported more.

Cameron McNall

I think part of the problem is that there is a confusion between professionalism and rigor. You can have a school that is rigorous and is not professional. There aren’t that many but it is possible and that’s where I would like to see the department.

Cameron McNall

"I think there seems to be a lot of intra-UC communication, they have conferences where they just invite other professors from UC’s. I think it would be very easy to just become very California focused.”

Casey Reas

"I don’t know many people in LA. I visited UCSD, USC, and Art Center and in the faculty there, there has been a great deal of respect for the program”

Casey Reas

In a classical design school you have to contact other places, you have to shop around - where can you find a potential collaborator. Here, we have almost open doors, and this is an extremely important thing because a lot of the work we are doing is not achievable by the designer by himself.

Christian Mueller

It would be great if we were to become more recognized as what we are and not just as a part of UCLA.

Christian Mueller

Design as a field offers plenty of potential to do experimental and non functional work without the need to immediately call it art. So I think we are doing fine having a strong design education in the undergrad department and bringing the artistic freedom in at a later state.

Christian Mueller

Your interest in an issue is totally related to the knowledge you have about it.

Christian Mueller

I think that we are highly recognized within the UC system as a kind of pioneering department. There are no other departments exactly like us in the system, so its kind of somehow special.

Erkki Huhtamo

I can see and feel that the graduates are into research but the undergraduates not at all.

Henri Lucas

The undergrads need to learn so much in practice after school. Getting a job and then learning through practice would be great but I don’t think they are very well prepared to get that job.

Henri Lucas

The role of every undergrad program is to deliver to the professional world and to deliver to graduate studies. But the way that this undergraduate program is structured I don’t believe that that is happening in either right, the competition is too hard.

Henri Lucas
DIMA 170 Database

There should be an equal amount of designers and media artists teaching in the program.

Henri Lucas

I think there should be more typography, I think there should be more intense courses on video making, more intense courses on photography, you don’t do that in one course.”

Henri Lucas

What we are discussing all the time is that we need to find an identity, which is really specific for the DMA department. The power of that could be in that merging of art and science.

Henri Lucas

“’The students need to realize their creative expertise, their obsession and their vision will attract an audience. They do not need to fit into a mold; they already have what they need. We should help students find what they keep coming back to over and over, their obsessions. For example, even though we are not a fashion design department, we have had many students focus on this subject. We should be able to accommodate them.”

Jennifer Steinkamp

“We should never compare ourselves to other institutions or departments. We are who we are, unique.”

Jennifer Steinkamp

“Most designers create what their client wants, it does not need to work this way. Designers, especially graphic designers, can be people that the client seeks for their own style and view of the world. This is a much more rewarding place to work from. This would be working more like an illustrator or artist. Why not??? My commercial clients all come to me expecting my art. I know this can be done.”

Jennifer Steinkamp

Many of our students in the undergrad are doing work that is grad level. I’ve always been disappointed that we’re not good enough at recruiting our undergrads to go into our grad program. They are the best, and a few of them should continue on to be grad students here. We see it, they need another year to do their masterpiece, so they should do it here, now.

Maroun Harb

“The UC really is on the cutting-edge. The tools and technology are there. Computer scientists and engineers are interfacing with students from the arts and humanities to create amazing research. The problem is how to establish and infrastructure as we challenge traditional disciplinary boundaries. Even though the UC is set up to be a family of campuses, we still encounter a mentality of competitiveness. It requires a shift in consciousness and attitude. But that is all changing. Digital arts force this change, both in academia and in society on the larger scale.”

Victoria Vesna

We’ve tended to have a core program in design that’s pretty much stayed the same and I think it is actually strong and sound and once again sort of like the undergraduates are in a situation of neglect – it runs itself, it’s good enough, don’t mess with good enough, and we’re busy, and indeed attention has been placed on the grad program and needs to go to the graduate program. If Victoria goes to the university and says we need more money, the prestige of the graduate program will directly influence what resources we get, which will in turn effect to the undergraduates.

Cameron McNall

We expose students to a lot of things knowing that most students enter this program not really knowing what they want to do, and allow an environment where they can figure this out.

Cameron McNall
What’s interesting is that I don’t think we have that many go into teaching. Which is another whole subject. One way you can measure a school is the percentage of grads that go into teaching.

Cameron McNall

I think trying to identify our program with the greedy corporate world would be a big mistake.

Erkki Huhtamo

I’m so confused about the whole media artist definition. What is a media artist?

Henri Lucas

It’s very important to not model yourself to another school or just to be specifically different, and in that difference try and be consequent about what you want.

Henri Lucas

Instead of professionalizing we need to do a better job of maintaining community here and tracking our alumni. They will have a professional orientation, they will know what the demands of the professional world are, but because they are our grads they will also understand the difference between our programs and some of the other ones out there, and ultimately will have more to offer us than just bringing professionals to this school.

Cameron McNall

There can be one, but there does not need to be one. Let me start with Media arts: computer related design, working with interactive systems requires a distinguished visual language. Working with the computer forces you to follow a few rules and successful working with interactive phenomena is related to a set of rules. For that reason a lot of media art related work has to deal with design issues. I hesitate to say that you can only be a successful media artist if you are a good designer, but for sure it helps a lot if you have a strong background in design or architecture. It helps plenty.

Christian Mueller

I feel that design is used as a basic skill. And I don’t have the feeling that I’m teaching them that because they want to become graphic designers, I’m teaching them that because they need the skills to become media artists.

Henri Lucas

"We are not one discipline; we are a hybrid...we are the interesting stuff that can occur in-between the categories"

My goal is that all the classes that at least I teach, is that they are not focused on the present and that because this is a top university you should really be teaching generalizable skills that they can apply to the rest of their lives."

Casey Reas

"I really like the idea of us doing a lot of multidisciplinary collaboration."

Casey Reas

Most people I know or meet who are not affiliated with the academic design world in LA don’t know about it. That’s the major problem, that no body knows about us. People know more about Art Center and SciArc because they are more visible. For us it’s a little more difficult because we are under this huge roof of UCLA and its much harder to head out of this roof.

Christian Mueller
I don’t want to see the art education too strongly imbedded in the undergrad world. The position of becoming an artist, making this decision at 18 years old, it’s a little early. I mean you are in the position where your parents are spending money and you are spending time you should learn something useful. You should get your irritations somewhere else - there is enough space in a city like LA to become uncertain and unsure of things in general that we don’t have to help you on that one.

Christian Mueller

Research should be embedded in the design process.

Henri Lucas

"The best designers have an obsessive interest in both design and art."

Jennifer Steinkamp

"There is no need to separate learning techniques from creativity and theory.”

Jennifer Steinkamp

"the thing about designers, they tend to be young people and they get burned out by the time they are 40ish.”

Jennifer Steinkamp

Many of our students are prepared to go into various fields and being professionals, but most of our students are leaders in these new fields.

Maroun Harb

"Here we can definitely question design as it evolves. WE can see design in context of science, computer science, engineering, painting and architecture.”

Rebeca Mendez

"Design is an underdog and we cannot ignore that. Everywhere with the arts are snobbish about design. Science is snobbish about design. There is always criticism of design. But everything around us is design.”

Rebeca Mendez
STOP BEING LAZY IN THE SUMMER

"With the currently budgetary situation and the shift in our political climate, we have to create as many large lecture classes as possible and develop a very rich and active summer session program that will generate revenue for the department."

Victoria Vesna

We don’t want to educate potential employees in design companies

Christian Mueller
TALK WITH YOUR MOUTH FULL

Students tend to be completely politically and socially apathetic and intellectually uncurious. One unfortunate result of our time and of the method of weaning students in, we tend to get a lot of go-getter students that are very good at getting good grades and giving teachers what they want, but tend not to be that intellectually curious.

Cameron McNall

It’s a well known fact that (in architecture particularly) you must in the very beginning, show the freshman where to go. That whatever you condition or set up freshman year is what you are going to get for 4 years. And our department and teaching tends to be pretty conservative and little bit sleepy and so every time there is an attempt to rev it up and make something happen, I find that there is resistance or lack of interest on the part of the students to do so.

Cameron McNall

“I think that in general the visual skills of the students are really poor. Just the idea of form. I think the students here are bright and have really good conceptual ideas, but I don’t think there’s really an excuse for not being able to put your ideas into form in a way where they are both very powerful, but also compositionally and aesthetically powerful as well.”

Casey Reas

I see the core classes being tougher, less playful and more difficult and challenging and far more critical.

Christian Mueller

When you do this course you are not a very well trained graphic designer, you’re not a very well trained video artist, and not a very well trained web designer. I don’t know what you are.

Henri Lucas

We should be allowing for what we actually create and generate to be publicly known. This would give us the amount of time to be really critical and self-critical.

Rebeca Mendez

How do you have discourse if you have students who don’t want discourse?

Cameron McNall

Our program is a very conservative program. I mean you don’t usually associate art with conservatism. In our teaching and in our outlook, we are extremely conservative and cautious and we don’t make very great demands.

Cameron McNall

We want art directors and design directors in companies to know about our department and be interested in what we are doing. This makes the future for many of our students easier and I think we would also benefit from being recognized in the professional design world.

Christian Mueller

It is one of my major concerns to make the undergrad education stronger. To have the foundation part in the first two years be stronger.

Christian Mueller