

Domus Academy Master's Degree

Product Design

Program Structure

The Product Design Master's Degree at Domus Academy (DA) is organized into four main modules lasting eight weeks each that include courses and workshops, followed by an 8 week internship period and a final portfolio presentation.

CORE WORKSHOPS – Required

Envisioning Workshop

The "Envisioning" workshop concerns cultural and social signals and themes that will have an impact on our society in a medium to long-term perspective. The workshop emphasizes design activities stemming from ideas to concept scenarios and revolves around envisioning future scenarios based on the crossing of innovative emerging technologies with socio-cultural, geo-political, and strategic values. The design process starts with the elaboration of design concepts by applying a problem-setting approach where divergence and convergence phases alternate.

Concepts are validated through concurrent activities, such as:

- Activity analysis;
- Context and user understanding;
- Technology road-mapping, etc.

Students are invited to elaborate projects with a strong, evocative and narrative focus, creating a synthesis of values that are independent of the specific typology of product examined using a wide range of communication tools, including story telling, storyboards and/or video scenarios etc.

Particular emphasis will be laid on different strategies for sourcing inspiration and drawing actionable insight from the analysis.

Advanced Design & Processes Workshop

The "Advanced Design and Processes" workshop investigates, through a specific design research activity, the different ways in which the adoption of advanced production technologies and the exploration and utilization of new materials can ignite an innovation mechanisms, both at the level of the product quality and of the industrial process.

ELECTIVE WORKSHOP – Choose one

Product Strategy Workshop

Over the last five decades, the design of products has reached a high level of sophistication and complexity. Different design approaches and perspectives have conceptualized visions in manifestos, and this has influenced the design culture at large. The "Product Strategy" workshop aims to develop project proposals able to combine different approaches in a new, innovative and surprising way. The Module explores corporate cases involving the leading design companies whose ability to innovate doesn't concern just products but all the elements that contributes to shape a truly global offer encompassing: positioning, image, distribution and communication.

The application domain can range from established brands (brand extension), to OGM companies wanting to exploit their potentials, to existing companies that want to level up their business (re-positioning), to new ventures (start ups, crowd-sourcing). Substantial part of the workshop activity is dedicated to the definition of a business model that is consistent with the objectives and scale of the project and that explores the scalability of the solution, feasibility and innovation potential.

Design Of Spaces Workshop

The "Space Design" workshop explore the multitude of ways of living the contemporary space, starting from the behaviors, habits, lifestyle, and interest of their daily life inhabitants. The projects explores the relation between people and spatial systems at a small/medium scale, identifying criteria and solutions, developing concepts and scenarios that will address, according to the design brief, one or more of the following dimensions:

- Micro-system environments: reversible structures for relational spaces made of components and semi-finished products
- Social/personal spaces: service spaces, from hospitality (hotel, spa) to leisure, to work etc.
- Design for business and retail spaces: innovative concepts for retail, and shopping, experiences
- Design for public spaces: the relation between urban infrastructure and temporary events

The workshop outcome will include:

- The selection of the appropriate materials for a given design context
- The organisation of the spaces and furnishing
- The consideration of visual and sonic representation aspects

Tangible Interactions Workshop

The “Tangible Interactions” workshop aims at developing projects in the domains of physical computing and haptic interfaces by screening, analyzing and experimenting software and hardware technology in order to develop a confidence with the palette of tools and platforms that constitute the “basis” for designing interactive solutions. Students will be exposed to a range of selected approaches for developing both low-tech and hardware/software prototypes. Project solutions and techniques will be considered in a full spectrum moving from simple reactivity to all-round interaction. The workshop assignment strategically deals with tangible interaction design and interactive behavior for prototyping physical interactions at different scales, from interactive products and objects, to physical installations and environments.

Students will be asked to evaluate the possibility of testing the concept by identifying the most suitable methods and techniques, and, when applicable, to put them in practice on real test-bed and contexts.

Free Choice Workshop

Students are given the chance to select among the active didactic offer in order to end their personal educational path with a strongly autonomous, professionalizing and profiling choice. The student may choose to repeat one of the workshops already developed, enroll in a new workshop coherent with his/her educational path or select a project among the ones offered by the institution as long as it is coherent with the amount of credits required.

COURSES

Design Culture

The course Design Culture aims at exploring and discussing a wide range of case studies, sources and testimonials for understanding the nature, languages and values of the contemporary design scene while developing critical and analytical skills. The course develops the vision that design is an “integrated” activity, capable of perceiving the changes in society, the impact of markets and then transforming into new products, spaces and services, thereby impacting upon strategies of business innovation. Lectures, group discussions and tutorials are based on the following key concepts:

- Innovation for Design: Analysis of new aesthetic and behavioral trends in the market place including consumption. In addition it also includes new user needs and innovative interactions with objects and services.
- Innovation in Design: Design scenarios and innovative aesthetic and social vision, leading to enrichment and changes in the functional and aesthetic language.

The course embraces different scales of design, from product to interior, from graphic to fashion with the aim to highlight and identify the key factors that determine the quality of a design solution, in a path that connects past, recent and future experiences. Emphasis is given on how people live and behave in contemporary society, their lifestyle, interests needs and aspirations, and how they interact among themselves and with the objects, information and spaces around them.

Research And Design Methods And Tools

The course Research & Design Methods and Tools elaborates the relation between design and research, by experimentally applying a wide range of methods and techniques, each addressing and enabling a specific phase of the design process, including among the others techniques for:

- Exploration, analysis and understanding of the context
- Problem setting and solving
- User involvement and participation
- Inspirational benchmarking
- Ideation and concept generation
- Validation and proof of concept

The course proposes the adoption of a co-creational versus a linear approach to the design process that transforms the process itself into a challenge, whose success depends on the ability of the people involved to collaborate and understand the reciprocal cross-disciplinary boundaries.

Visualization Tools

The course is based on the exploration of the world of graphics, providing basic knowledge in order to visualize in a correct and autonomous way ideas and concepts. The course provides the tools and skills useful to guarantee the pre- and post production of images for internal and editorial use.

Business For Design

The course Business for Design offers to students the possibility to understand and put into practice in a real life business scenario the core aspects that determine the economic performance of a company and/or a brand, but also of a studio or consultancy. In particular the course investigates and elaborates, through the usage of specific analytical and design tools and by applying them to real case-studies, a wide range of “business relevant” aspects, such as:

- The competitiveness of a brand in the market
- The short and long term profitability
- The sustainable business proposition and business model
- The intellectual propriety and copyright/creative common trends and regulations

Lectures, case-studies and focused exercises to get an insight, explore and experiment firsthand the core aspects of business applied to the design field.

Personal Branding

The purpose of the Personal Branding course is to develop the appropriate competencies and skills for the identification, creation, and management of the student’s professional identity at different levels that include:

- The ability to present and sustain an argument in front of an audience
- The preparation, organization and production of a personal portfolio of projects
- The ability to prepare and handle a job interview
- The leverage of social media tools for managing his/her own digital presence on the different communication channels

Theoretical classes are alternated with targeted exercises where students can develop and experiment a customized strategy aimed at building step by step a consistent personal identity, aligned with their career development plan.

INTERNSHIP

The internship is the final step of a process in which students thanks to a one-to-one tutorship, receive a deep and balanced evaluation of their skills and aspirations, in order to build a career, which fits their aims.

There are two kinds of internship:

- the first is a working experience in a company active in the disciplinary field;
- the second is an “in campus” internship that is shaped as an intensive workshop in collaboration with a company. This “in campus” internship develops an integrated project strictly related to a practical need (i.e. the resolution of a design problem, or the creation of a brainstorming platform for a new project).

In both cases during this crucial phase students are mentored on a step-by-step basis, and acquire the fundamental experience of dealing with the real world, with real business and with the people working in the field.