

Domus Academy Master's Degree

Visual Brand Design

Program Structure

The Visual Brand 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

Identity Design Workshop

The workshop "Identity Design" aims at developing the skills for designing the brand identity of a company, or to extend a pre-existent one. The starting point is based on the observation that the relation between people and brands tends to be more and more like a relation between people, in which the brands assume a human connotation and a personality, whose core values are represented through the visual image, communication style and behaviors, interaction models, tone and language.

Branding is, indeed, much more than just the definition of a visual image. It is the creation of a rich and attractive environment, grabbing the consumer's attention and bringing that person into the brand world, to share those brand values and to become an informal sponsor of the brand.

Aim of the workshop is to create scenarios and concepts, by utilizing a mix of communication strategies and design tools, in order to design the "global brand identity" of a small to medium scale company, a product line and/or a start-up. The topics covered include:

- Visual design, illustration and iconic design
- Brand identity and corporate culture
- Communication strategies: advertising, events, marketing and design strategy

The identity of a brand and its success is strictly connected to its ability to:

- Leverage and exploit the broad range of media channels, both physical and digital
- Establish and maintain a rich and reciprocal fruitful conversation with the audience, both current and potential clients
- Orient and lead the brand "social media presence"

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 contribute 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.

ELECTIVE WORKSHOP – Choose one

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.

Experience Design Workshop

The “Experience Design” workshop explores, by way of studio-based activities, the designing process from the point of view of the people (not users, neither consumers) in their life context. Everyday experiences are built upon the interaction and relationship with information, communication tools, relational spaces as well as interactive objects and services. The starting point resides in the ability to decipher people’s needs, expectations and desires. Every person must be considered as an active participant in the definition of the service qualities and their main features. The workshop addresses aspects and contemporary methodologies related to people’s activity and context analysis. It also considers, experience scenario development, solution, validation, and assessment.

The workshop investigates the main domain of User Experience analysis, exposing students to methodologies and best practices allowing them to extract knowledge from primary research activities. The workshop activity will also cover domains pertaining to visual representation and the formalization of knowledge garnered. Students are expected to familiarize with techniques for representing activity flows and complex systems.

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.

Graphic Design Tools

The course is aimed at exposing the participants to a wide range of visual design techniques, ranging from traditional illustration, calligraphy and letterpress print to digital images creation, photography and contemporary typography. The structure of the course is a mix of theoretical components and hand-on experiences, that will lead the students to face the mix of technical complexity and sense-making issues related to the creation of communication artifacts. Upon successful completion of the course, the participants will develop a deeper understanding of how and how much the visual language associated to a specific era – and/or to a brand – are influenced by the production

techniques; this will lead to a better awareness about how to use each specific language to enhance and focus the visual communication strategy for contemporary brands.

Research & 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.

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.