

**STRUCTUURRAPPORT**  
*Chair Digital Arts and Culture*  
December 2017

## MOTIVATION

The Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASoS) of Maastricht University (UM) proposes to establish a Chair in *Digital Arts and Culture* in the Department of Arts and Literature.

Maastricht University is the most international university in the Netherlands and stands out for its innovative education model and its multi-disciplinary approach to research and education. FASoS offers BA and MA programmes that combine subjects and approaches from both the humanities and the social sciences in an explicitly interdisciplinary manner. An international group of staff teach and do research into the challenges of contemporary European and other societies against the backdrop of a rapidly globalising world. This interaction across national and disciplinary boundaries is at the heart of the FASoS identity and one of its core strengths. This is also reflected in the faculty's central mission defined as 'Moving boundaries, bridging disciplines'.

Digital technologies currently play a crucial role for arts and popular culture, media and everyday life. Research in the areas of arts and culture requires a thorough understanding of how digitalization impacts the shaping of cultural objects and their uses. New kinds of artistic and cultural artifacts and practices are emerging. In the arts we can observe various forms of digital art and literature, game art, interactive art installations and digital performances. In digital culture more generally the use of mobile and locative media, augmented reality, gamification in various fields, quantified-self apps, smart fashion and the internet of things are all affecting everyday cultural practices. In both the public and private sectors there is a growing need for experts who can build bridges between the cultural and technological dimensions of digitalization, and who are able to understand and translate the ethical, aesthetic, cultural and social challenges of the multiple roles of digital technologies. Moreover, research and education in arts and culture increasingly use digital technologies and methods. "Arts, Media and Culture" is one of the main research pillars of the Faculty, and "Digital Culture" is a main focus of current and future educational programs; for these reasons the Faculty has chosen to enhance its specialization in the area of digital arts and culture, including media, popular culture and everyday life.

## PROFILE OF THE CHAIR

We are looking for an expert in the field of digital arts and culture with an emphasis on the concrete artistic and cultural practices in which digital technologies are used, and with expertise in interdisciplinary approaches and digital methodologies to investigate those practices.

Specific to research in the field of (digital) arts and cultures at FASoS is an interdisciplinary approach, including methods from the humanities and qualitative social sciences, investigating digital cultural practices and the way artistic and cultural objects are constituted, used and transformed. FASoS includes humanities scholars from fields such as (digital) media studies, art, literature, philosophy, history, specialists with a focus on (artistic) objects and practices. The Faculty also includes social scientists such as political scientists, anthropologists and sociologists with a focus on science and technology, politics and globalization. But *the* defining characteristic of FASoS is its broad definition of 'culture', so as to include the arts, science, technology, politics, and everyday life. This combination of disciplines, approaches, methods and skills means that FASoS is uniquely positioned to understand how modern societies and modern culture are constituted by digital technologies, and how, vice versa, social, political and cultural conditions shape digital developments.

The chair will contribute to/ take the lead in the scholarly development of this broad interdisciplinary approach to the field of Digital Arts and Culture. The candidate will be located in the research program Arts Media and Culture (AMC). Current research on digital arts and culture in AMC comprises topics such as communities of practices (making, hacking, biohacking, bio-art and gaming); digital typography; ethics and digital technologies in care; ethnography of the internet and the digital mediation of arts and cultural heritage. The candidate will furthermore be supported and be able to collaborate with scholars with expertise in digitalization from the other research programs, including the social and ethical implications of digitalization (MUSTS), digitalization of regulation and governance processes, and vice versa (PCE); and the role of digital technologies in migration and globalization (GTD).

## FUNCTION REQUIREMENTS

- The candidate is a scholar with a thorough background in one of the humanities disciplines (e.g. (new) media studies (including film & television), art history, philosophy or cultural studies) and with extensive expertise in research and teaching in the field of digital arts and culture.
- The candidate has an excellent record as an interdisciplinary researcher, which is evidenced through national and international publications, lectures and other expert roles.

- The candidate has a successful record of instigating, applying and receiving research grants, both as individual and as team player.
- The candidate is a first-class and inspiring teacher, experienced both at bachelor and master levels, and willing to work with our system of small-scale problem based learning (PBL).
- The candidate has experience with fulfilling academic leadership roles.
- The candidate has proven skills in talent-scouting and in supervision and coaching of students, Ph.D. students and post-docs.
- The candidate has a high-level national and international network in relevant fields and communities.

## TASKS

### Contribution to research

The research of this chair focuses on the impact of digitalization in the domains of the arts, media and/or popular culture. It connects the interpretation of digital objects and phenomena with the analysis of the practices in which they are embedded. The chair combines the use of hermeneutic methods with digital methods, such as digital ethnography/ethnography of the internet.

Relevant areas of interest are:

- Digital arts and art worlds, including practices of artistic production, circulation, consumption/use.
- Digital user practices, including questions of access and participation, information politics, sharing/collaboration and knowledge production, in arts, media and/or popular culture;
- Digital design and the shaping of (online) communication and interaction in arts, media and/or popular culture;
- The internet of things and the materiality of digital cultural objects in the domain of art and culture (including critical infrastructure studies to understand the ways in which digital infrastructures shape, constrain and facilitate access to and interpretation of digital cultural objects);
- Digital heritage; impact of digital technologies on the appreciation, conservation and use of cultural heritage;
- Digital practices of (audiovisual) documentation and archiving.

## **Contribution to teaching**

The candidate will take on a central role in the development, teaching and management of the educational programs offered at FASoS. The Faculty hosts a BA program in Arts and Culture and is in the process of developing a new BA program in Digital Society. In addition, it has three MA programs in which digital technologies and their relevance for society and culture play a central role. This includes the MA Digital Cultures (former MA Media Culture), the MA European Studies and Society, Science and Technology (ESST) and the research MA Cultures of Arts, Science and Technology (CAST). A more prominent role for digital technologies is also envisioned in the MA Arts & Heritage.

Questions related to digitalization, to transformations of digital cultures, user practices/new communities of practice are core to the new BA and the MA Digital Cultures. A few electives in the BA Arts and Culture also refer to these topics but on a more general scale. In addition, more advanced questions related to methodology and the role of digital technologies in our societies are covered in the Research Master CAST. In order to be able to contribute to this wide set of courses, the new chair is expected to offer specialized knowledge of digitalization and digital user practices in the field of arts and culture, with a focus on the new BA and MA Digital Cultures.

In addition, each academic year, a wide variety of Bachelor papers and Master theses relate to topics on digitalization and the role of digital technologies in the field of arts and culture. The new chair needs to demonstrate extensive experience in supervising papers and theses at both BA and MA level. As both undergraduate and graduate teaching programs are organized in an interdisciplinary way at FASoS, the new chair is expected to be able to teach and cooperate in an interdisciplinary environment. Furthermore, FASoS employs a wide range of PhD candidates whose research topics link to Digital Arts and Culture. The new chair should have experience with the supervision of (interdisciplinary) PhD students.

Finally, the new chair will play a leading role in the management of the teaching programs at FASoS, either as Director of Studies of one of the programs, or in a more general management function contributing to the development of education at the Faculty (also see below). In light of the rapidly changing field of higher education, it is crucial to be open to new developments in educational formats and in the Faculty's educational system. The new chair will thus have broad experience in teaching and the management of teaching in the field of Digital Arts and Culture, and has a demonstrable interest in teaching innovation, and in motivating and stimulating junior colleagues in their teaching careers.

## Contribution to management

In addition to research and teaching, the newly appointed professor will have management responsibilities at FASoS. Potential positions are chair of the Arts and Literature Department, director of the research program 'Arts, Media and Culture', director of studies in a BA or MA program in Arts and Culture (including the MA Digital Cultures), or positions in the FASoS Graduate School or the Faculty Board. In order to be able to fulfill those tasks, he/she should have broad administrative experience, and demonstrate an open, collaborative, inspiring and effective management style. Leadership and managerial skills are of considerable importance for the new chair.

## INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

This chair will be situated in the Department of Arts and Literature, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Maastricht University.

The research institute of FASoS comprises four programs: 'Arts, Media and Culture', 'Maastricht University Science, Technology and Society Studies', 'Politics and Culture in Europe', and 'Globalization, Transnationalism and Development'. The newly appointed professor will contribute primarily to the 'Arts, Media and Culture' program, but the technology/digitalization-related aspects of the chair will allow the development of further links to the 'Maastricht University Science, Technology and Society Studies' program.

Within the Faculty, the new chair *Digital Arts and Culture* will cooperate closely with the following other chair holders:

- Prof. dr. Renée van de Vall, Art and Media
- Prof. dr. Elisabeth Wesseling, Gender, Cultural Memory and Diversity
- Prof. dr. Leonie Cornips, Language Culture in Limburg
- Prof. dr. Pip Laurensen, Art Collection and Care
- Prof. dr. Sally Wyatt, Digital Cultures
- Prof. dr. Tsjalling Swierstra, Philosophy of Technology
- Prof. dr. Harro van Lente, Science and Technology Studies

The chair holder will be an active member of national and international research networks. At the national level, the chair is expected to be a senior member of the Dutch research school for Media Studies (RMeS).

## **HIRING COMMITTEE**

Chair: Prof. S. Vanhoonacker, Dean, FASoS, UM

Prof. R. van de Vall, Chair in Arts and Media, Head of department Literature & Art, UM

Prof. R. Zwijnenberg, Chair in Art and Science Interactions, University of Leiden

Prof. A. Swinnen, Special Chair in International Humanism and the Art of Living, UM

Dr. K. Wenz, Assistant Professor, UM

Prof. S. Wyatt, Chair in Digital Cultures, UM

Martina Leljak, student member, Master Media Culture