

Transdisciplinary Design Research

Autistic Exploration

Plan Mediamatic 2021 - 2024

Introduction

Mediamatic's mission is to develop and present art projects that arise from design-based research into socially urgent themes. We work on the cutting edge of art and science and use this crossover to break through existing structures and make room for progressive ideas. We pay special attention to design and ecology. We house several laboratories where we can design with living organisms, intimate senses, metabolism and death, among other things. We develop new art forms and new talents and function as a laboratory for other institutions. We are located at the last frayed edge of Amsterdam city centre and function as an international breeding ground. We see our role in the cultural chain as explorers and innovators of the arts.

Interest in scientific and technological development has characterised our programme since our foundation in 1983. We still find it fascinating and inspiring. However, it is becoming painfully clear that technological progress alone will not save the world.

Today's society asks a lot of mankind and the earth and that has disastrous consequences. We live in close quarters in a society that continues to over-consume on a large scale, where overwork remains work-related disease number one and global emissions are only rising. Can we use the current crises as a space for new forms? How should we inspire change? And how can we stop overburdening

ourselves and the world? These are the design challenges that Mediamatic will take up in the coming years.

We want to continue to engage in difficult conversations and not push them away. To this end, we draw inspiration from our colleagues on the autistic spectrum.

Why autism? Autism is a mental condition characterised by extreme sensitivity to different stimuli: there is less pragmatic filtering of sensory and mental input than in neurotypical people. Moreover, there is often a stubborn tendency to focus strongly on specific areas of interest. What is often seen as social awkwardness turns out, especially in a design role, to be a strength: through the inability to participate in the collective blinkering and a reduced sense of social desirability, they handle their assignments and challenges without compromise. We believe we can learn a lot from them. Therefore, this way of thinking will be our guiding principle in the coming period. In addition, we will also extensively investigate the artistic potential of neurodiversity by involving autistic makers themselves and approaching design questions from their perspective.

Our vision is to continue to explore persistent autism.

It is precisely by not closing our senses to input and by consciously addressing the issue that we create the space to find play, fun, humour, temptation, happiness and possibilities in it. Within the boundaries of the body and the earth.

After all, there is no planet B.

Mediamatic Methodology:

We are always looking for social challenges and changes. We collaborate with new, progressive makers who go against existing expectations and explore the boundaries of their disciplines in their joint research. Mediamatic offers space to their design questions, precisely because there is often no room for them in the field. The following values are central to our programme: artistic quality, innovation, originality, transparency, sustainability and social urgency.

Mediamatic selects makers and projects by being alert in the design sector. We test makers and projects against our values and objectives by asking the following questions: Does it offer a new perspective? Does it rub off? How relevant will it be to culture and society? Do we expect the project to produce artistic quality? Does it fit within our programme? Is it realistic for us? We answer these questions by discussing them thoroughly with the core team and invite relevant partners and makers to serve as a sounding board.

In our role as an exploratory and innovative living lab, we need a lot of openness and space in our programme. This means that we do not tie down all our projects long beforehand and that we retain the flexibility to put the designer centre stage and to

prioritise on the basis of artistic and social urgency. In our opinion, flexibility is an excellent precondition for innovation. Some of our most talked-about projects have been realised in the very short term. We came up with our El Hema project less than four months before the shop opened, and the Tostifabriek, an urban farm where all the ingredients for a toasted sandwich are grown locally, started only six months after the first brainstorm. The first fablab in the Netherlands: four months. Fashion Machine, where Conny Groenewegen and hundreds of volunteers wrapped our entire building in knits made from recycled fleece: three months. Squirt Ding: award-winning N8 programme about female ejaculation in 2017: two months... For example, we are currently taking stock of the new design challenges thrown up by the corona crisis.

We have space for makers in our workshops. In addition, we have a large network and are constantly looking for interesting partners, from universities to companies and other cultural institutions. One of our roles is that of connector: we connect makers with each other, with partners and with visitors. We select partners on the basis of the possibility of deepening a project, or the possibility of offering a healthy counterbalance by illuminating a different perspective; our partners therefore serve not only as knowledge carriers, but also as reflective means.

During the process, we blog on mediamatic.net about challenges and new insights. Our website acts as a living knowledge archive that is included in both the royal library and SFMoMa. This website is openly accessible and well viewed (369,000 visits in 2019).

We design new working methods. We notice that the audience wants to participate more and more. We therefore use working methods such as sensory experiences, workshops, interactive lectures and open workshops to challenge the maker and the participant even more and to promote participation. This interactivity influences the process, and thus the work and the development of the maker.

Makers are connected to us in various ways. Through a residency, by doing research or by presenting work already made. Even if the work is presented alone, we ask for an interactive attitude towards us, partners and the public.

We see how our themes, after we take the lead, become more widely supported. When that happens, we let go of the theme again. Letting go of projects that are too widely supported makes room for innovative experimentation and progress.

Examples of makers who were given space at Mediamatic at an early stage in their development: Sascha Pohflepp, who after Mediamatic also ended up at MoMa, Boijmans van Beuningen and the Art Institute of Chicago. Massimo Banzi, who gave his first Arduino workshops here. Katja Novitskova, who started her journey at Mediamatic and was allowed to represent her country at the Venice Biennale in 2017. Melanie Bonajo, who after Mediamatic made it to MoMa, Stedelijk, Tate, IDFA, Mediamatic Amsterdam | *Transdisciplinary Design Research: Autistic Exploration* | Plan 2021-2024 | p. 3 / 22

Venice Biennale 2021 and beyond. Debra Solomon, who may represent the Netherlands at the Venice Biennale in 2020, Maurizio Montalti, who was given the opportunity to cultivate fungi and bacteria and has now become a European expert in this field, with his work exhibited all over the world, and many others.

Corona

We have been dealing with climate and sustainability issues for a long time. Now a new complexity is being added: pandemics. The current crisis is a new inspiration for both our content development and our forms of work and presentation.

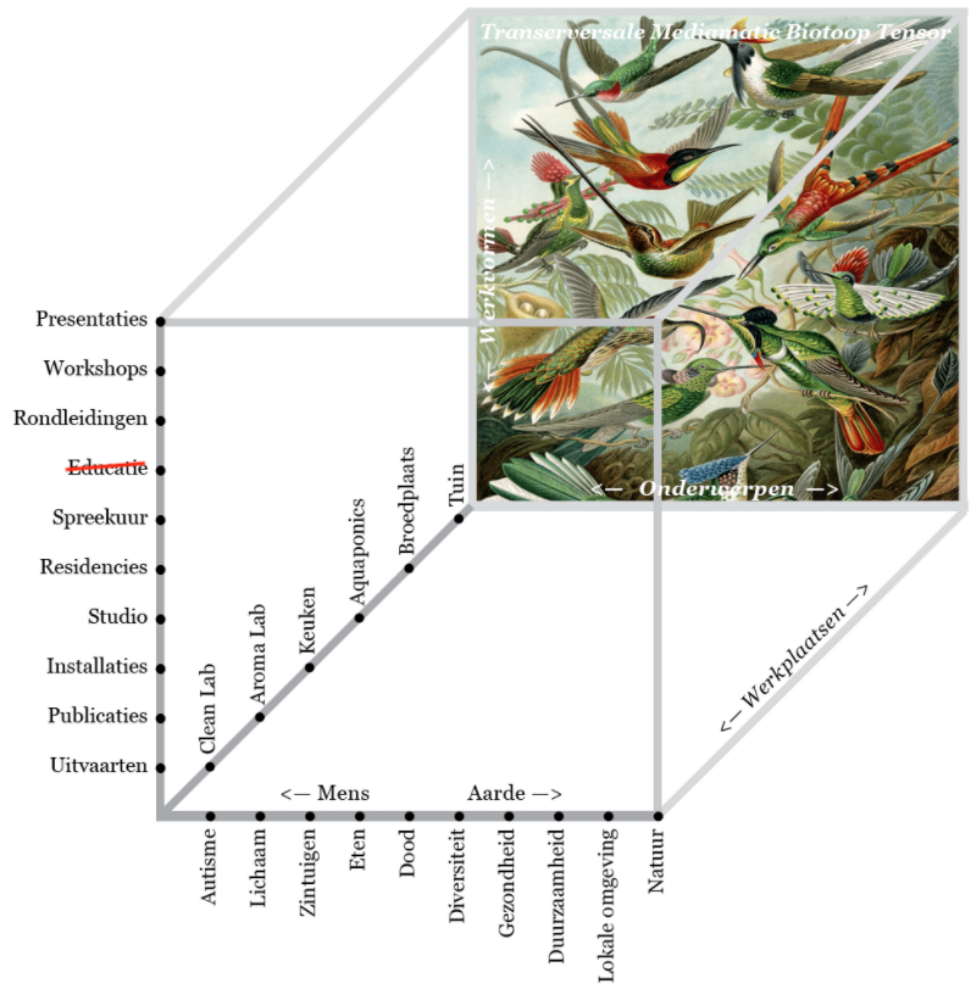
Contagion prevention is a circumstance that inspires us and fits in with many of our themes. Redesigning togetherness and new ways of sharing will be an important issue.

We are now rapidly exploring and researching new possibilities. This research is leading to a deepening of our programme. Currently, for example, funerals are exempt from the ban on events. In line with our Nature Morte programme on design and death, we are making facilities available to bring the organisation and redesign of funerals to the foreground. In addition, research into sensory stimulation and togetherness in times of corona led to the Serres Séparées: quarantine greenhouses where intimacy is rediscovered during a pandemic.

How we may touch each other in 2021-2024 is impossible to predict. We will have to redesign the way we work. It is one of our main tasks to rethink what the cultural sector will look like as a place of gathering.

Programme 2021-24

So we explicitly do not make a fully coloured programme, but a framework. We make this framework transparent by means of a three-axis model. On the first axis we place the themes, on the second axis are the working methods and on the third axis are the workshops. This creates a three-dimensional space for the projects. Below, we first explain the model and then the concrete implementation.



Over the years, our focus has shifted from the structures outside humans, such as media and social platforms, to the inside, where we look at the biological connection. In the past, our themes were connected through the internet. Today, we prefer to look at Man and Earth, which are organically connected through the microbiome and the gastrointestinal tract. We group our themes around these two focal points and assess each project from both perspectives.

Man

Autism | Body | Senses | Food | Death | Diversity | Health

We investigate how we can enjoy ourselves as human beings without overburdening ourselves. We explore the possibilities of our bodies, experiment with the power of our senses and search for the meaning of health. We evaluate rituals, such as the carefree continuation of life in a time of ecological crisis, and design new rituals. In addition, we celebrate things that are inextricably linked to human beings, such as bodily fluids, secretions and death. And we explore a broader spectrum of mankind by exploring the artistic potential of autistic creators and approaching design questions from within these creators.

Earth

Death | Diversity | Health | Sustainability | Local environment | Nature

Social issues such as the climate and the economy can only be answered if the earth is also recognised as an important player. Contemporary discussions about privacy and big data can also be better understood in the context of nature. We investigate the field of tension between artificial and natural. In our Biotope, we experiment with local possibilities of sustainability, urban agriculture, circularity of nature, waste and water, which paradoxically can provide answers to global issues. We design from the needs and possibilities of the earth and approach supposedly sustainable solutions critically. In addition, we investigate what the earth can offer us without exhausting it and in what ways we can contribute to the health of the earth and the earth can contribute to the health of mankind.

Forms of work

Our work forms are development and design research, but also presentation and publication. In particular, we look for ways to facilitate the transition from audience to participant. This means that we involve the public actively as much as possible and let them participate in the activities.

The way we interact with participants, visitors and market parties influences the work and the maker. Mediamatic offers workshops and laboratories that cannot be found for miles around outside Amsterdam. This is one of the reasons why we are an important institute for the urban region. We offer the space to try out, experiment and discover, and to test prototypes in practice. The budget is divided according to the forms of work. In order to keep the budget as clear as possible, Interactive Presentations and Funerals have been grouped together under Interactive Presentations. Consultations and Guided tours have been merged under Guided tours and Mediamatic STUDIO and Residencies have been merged under Residencies.

Interactive presentations

A place where makers can show, feel, smell and hear their research and projects to their audience. Current examples are: Odorama, about olfactory art, design and research, and Still Life, about design and death. These are joined by the Autistic Lectures, on design from the perspective of autism, and Fake eco?, a series of presentations on the discussion and evaluation of eco-design. These evenings are an important platform for meeting creators and the public and are typically attended by 50 to 120 people. Events are also streamed and sensory experiences are distributed by mail whenever possible.

Consultation hours

The consultation hour (EN: *Meet your Maker*) is held weekly by makers who are currently involved with Mediamatic with visitors booking 1:1 appointments.

Workshops & Masterclasses

Workshops and master classes are given by makers who are connected to us and are part of the research. They ensure cross-fertilisation between participant and maker. The workshops offer a basic level, the master classes are for advanced participants. The programme is constantly being updated in response to our own research questions. We professionalise the production so that the workshops generate income for both the organisation and the makers who give them. Since 2016 we have achieved an annual growth of 25% (78 workshops in 2019). Our ambition is to continue this increase. However, in 2020, due to the measures, we are not going to make it. After that we will continue (with partially revised design) with the same ambition.

Exhibitions/installations

At Mediamatic we present work over longer periods of time. The choice of presentation form and location is determined by the work that is often created in the Mediamatic Studio programme or during a residency. With these installations and exhibition we reach a larger audience and strengthen the experience of a visit to the Biotope.

Guided tours

We give free guided tours of the installations and workshops in the biotope every week and also offer paid tours for individuals and groups by appointment.

Mediamatic Studio

The experimentation space for design research by visiting makers-in-residence and local designers and artists. This space is used to develop projects and test new designs. There is also room for meta-design: the evaluation and redesign of our own working methods, public space, encounters and organisational structures.

Residences

We are part of the 3package deal programme of AFK/ Broedplaatsen. We form a consortium for Bio-Art with Waag Society and Toby Kiers' microbiology group at the VU. Besides 3pd, we have several residency spots in the Biotope. Mediamatic has a curatorial role and selects artists on the basis of their artistic quality and their connection to our programme. We can provide artists with a spare room, make our various workshops and exhibition spaces available to them, and offer specialised guidance on content, both internally and externally. Residencies vary in length from weeks to a maximum of a year. Arcam is also a cooperation partner for the residencies. Together with Baltan laboratories, we also set up the artists-in-community residencies. Creators who work in the biotope are remotely linked to international creators. The makers do not have to come to each other for their joint

research, but can make use of the knowledge and facilities in their own networks. In this way, makers are challenged to generate impact within their local communities.

Publications Online

Our website acts as a living archive for all the knowledge we build up and as a platform for collaboration. On our website you will find blogs and articles by artists, designers and scientists reporting on their research. In these articles, special attention is paid to repeatability and DIY. This inspires readers to do their own research and experiments.

Neo Futurist Dinners

The Neo Futurists dinners are evenings about the future of design and food. We ask artists to design a multi-sensory dining experience of the future and play in the area where food, art, design, sensory experience, sustainability and politics meet. For the Neo Futurist Dinners, we always ask creators who do not primarily work in the culinary field to develop the programme together with a chef. In this way they challenge each other to explore the boundaries of their disciplines. Examples of these dinners are the seven-course dinner that we designed with artificial intelligence, and The Eating of Humans where the participants used their own blood as flavouring. A new development of the Neo Futurist Dinner are the neo-futurist life-celebrations. How weddings and funerals should be redesigned as examples of joint celebrations of life moments in corona times is an interesting design question. We focus on the redesign of togetherness and have extra attention for sustainability and the senses. Arcam is a collaboration partner for design labs on neo-futurist life-celebrations.

Funerals

Mediamatic becomes a funeral home. In line with the Nature Morte programme, we will work with artists and designers to explore life and death by facilitating funerals. If donating your body to science is a service where you can give something back to society, what about donating your body to art? We design new rituals, new tools and new ways of body worship and mourning. This programme component exists alongside our facilities for regular funerals in the biotope.

Workshops

Workshops are located in the Biotope and are open to makers and participants who want to experiment with new ways of working. These labs change with the times. We create new kinds of labs if the makers feel there is a reason to do so. Ateliers63 and the Rijksakademie are collaborative partners for the labs. To support the labs, we have a general workshop. Here, tools and products can be made and work is done on installations and maintenance.

Bio Clean Lab

In the Bio Clean Lab, microbiological work can be developed and performed in the Cleanroom: a very clean room where cross-contamination is prevented and where sensitive organisms can be worked with. Biomaterials are cultivated but there is also room for more traditional kitchen-related work such as fermentation, extraction and brewing.

Aroma Lab

The Aroma Lab has a working collection of hundreds of natural and synthetic fragrances used by designers and artists for their projects. Alongside this collection is equipment for working with olfactory techniques such as vacuum distillation and magnetron extraction.

Aquaponics plant and fish nursery.

We cultivate fish and plants on the site in a closed system that not only feeds us, but above all attracts many visitors. This circular system addresses research questions on urban agriculture and vertical growing, waste reduction and questions on water scarcity.

Restaurant

Besides being a catering facility, the restaurant functions as a laboratory. With a view to multi-sensory experiences, taste can be explored here. Our professional kitchen has a wide range of culinary facilities at its disposal. The restaurant allows for experimentation with audience and taste experience. It is a place for workshops and the Neo Futurist Dinners.

Garden

We converted the Biotope's garden into a public park. Because a large part of the outdoor area is tiled or asphalted, we placed 165 plant growth boxes. In the coming period, we will redesign this garden. The emphasis in the garden is on medicinal plants that grow in our climate zone, and through this redesign of public space, we are making the invisible visible.

Incubator

We rent out workplaces for artists and offer working hours in our various laboratories. These workplaces provide a small positive cash flow through the rental income and thanks to the rental discount from the City of Amsterdam. Besides workplaces, we offer simple facilities such as work and discussion rooms, a vinyl cutter, computers, beamers, welding and carpentry tools. These facilities are not part of our programme, but are supportive.

The most important projects

Nature Morte / Still Life

The existential questions posed by the climate problem are pre-eminently about transience. Therefore, we also investigate our own impermanence. In 2019, we launched our project Still Life (Nature Morte) under the curatorship of progressive funeral director Susanne Duijvestein. We explore radical changes in the polluting funeral industry. In that sector, too, the mourner is turned into a consumer. In this programme, we design new rituals and approaches where sustainability and do-it-yourself play a greater role. By means of lectures and workshops on architecture, design, rituals and life stories, but also on the biochemical processes surrounding the funeral.

In this context, we will design and facilitate funerals at our location with a special focus on sustainability, DIY and social (distance) design. Redesigning togetherness is a very relevant design question for funerals.

This is also the reason for a design question that we will answer in the Mediamatic Studio. Can a dead body, even temporarily, serve as material, context or object for a work of art?

With the help of Susanne's network, we are looking for people who want to donate their bodies to art. If you can donate your body to science, why not to art? We make space for artists to make work with death as an object of research. Arcam is a cooperation partner.

Autistic Research

The list of autistic people of particular social and artistic merit is long and includes names like Greta Thunberg, David Byrne, Steve Jobs, Oliver Sacks, Albert Einstein and Andy Warhol, but also closer to home: Filemon Wesselink. Autism is therefore, certainly in a designing role, a great strength. Due to a certain hypersensitivity to stimuli, autistic people have a different way of ordering and systematising the world. This perception of the world is still underused in the arts sector.

In addition, many autistic people have the characteristic of being very intensely engaged in their areas of interest. This is often expressed in an exceptional skill in one area. We therefore see that many autistic creators work in a specialist manner. Yet society is opposed to applying this working method. Our generalist society demands more and more from artists and designers. They are expected to actively network, give interviews, hold lectures and interact with their audiences. While autistic creators, in particular, lack skills and intelligence. This makes it more difficult for autistic makers to find their place in the sector and this is at the expense of valuable artistic quality. This is why we also want to investigate how autistic makers would adapt their working methods in order to fully exploit their artistic potential.

Especially now that today's society is characterised by rapid changes and a large amount of stimuli, the artistic potential of autistic creators is very relevant. Over-Mediamatic Amsterdam | *Transdisciplinary Design Research: Autistic Exploration* | Plan 2021-2024 | p. 10 / 22

stimulation is a problem for everyone. The boundaries of people and the earth are being crossed on a large scale. For example, the limits of the earth are being challenged by the repeated encroachment of exhaustible raw materials and nature. And also the limits of man and the body seem to be consistently exceeded: overwork is work disease number one. This is partly due to the sharp increase in the number of stimuli that people have to process. Our attention is constantly being drawn and has become so valuable that it is even being traded. The body and the earth are focus points within our current programme. Autistic people can have an antenna function here. Precisely because they are already sensitive to certain structures and stimuli. We are going to investigate to what extent autistic layouts and structures can contribute to the solution of social problems through the design of spaces, products and social design.

The autistic voice often does not find its expression through symbolic language but has a physical or visual form: in dance, images, impressions, colour, smell and a handling of and fascination with objects. Autistic people are over-represented in the first year of art academies: more than 5 times the national average. And even that estimate is on the low side according to many art teachers. That is why we are going to investigate how art education can be redesigned. Together with the Sandberg Institute, we are going to work on the development of a "Temporary Master" Autistic Research that will focus on the development opportunities of the autistic mind. This master will focus on creators with ASD and investigate specific social issues surrounding autism. The Temporary Master will run from 2022 to 2024 and is not formally part of our own programme. The pre-development and cooperation are. Another cooperation partner is the ArtechLAB of the Amsterdam School of the Arts.

We will also investigate how autistic people can help in the design of meetings and public spaces. We are co-creating the layout and public approach of Mediamatic itself in the first instance, and other public spaces at a later stage. It has great advantages to arrange forms and spaces in a different way: it creates new awareness and renewed attention for otherwise invisible things. What if, for example, a garden were sorted entirely by colour? Or if everything in a room is exactly the same size? We do not yet know what these experiments will lead to. It is our goal to investigate and discover this.

We are aware that our target group requires atypical treatment precisely because of its strong sensitivity: extra importance will have to be attached to the formulation of realistic expectations, effective and clear communication, possible over-stimulation of the makers and stigma and criticism from the community. For this reason, in designing this treatment we are working together with people who have experience in guiding people and makers with ASD, such as the coaches of AKM Kunstmaat, and with experience experts on the spectrum.

Autistic Research will pay extra attention to documentation and dissemination of the results. We seek cooperation with academic researchers and specialised care institutions.

The corona crisis requires a rapid adaptation of society. For the redesign, we can make good use of the specialist knowledge and perception of autistic creators. There is extra attention for the redesign of encounters.

Olfactory History Oosterdok

Together with partners VU, Scheepvaartmuseum, Amsterdam museum and Nemo we are developing OHO. A *blockbuster* exhibition in 2022 in which we tell the history of Amsterdam with the help of scent for a national and international audience.

Mediamatic does the design research for this exhibition on the presentation of olfactory heritage.

The Oosterdok in the centre of Amsterdam is where globalisation began in the 17th century. It is the former port and naval base of Amsterdam. At the end of the 16th century, after the fall of Antwerp, traffic outside Europe began to grow enormously and transcontinental shipping became an alternative to the Silk Road and a connection to new continents. Many of the fabrics that were traded had special tastes and smells. An olfactory explosion took place at that time, with the Oosterdok as its epicentre. Now, around the Oosterdok, ten cultural institutions and businesses cooperate in Expedition Oosterdok. Based on the scents of history, we will create an immersive experience with the neighbouring institutions.

Mediamatic investigates how a story can be told with smell. The historical research is done by teams from the VU and Scheepvaartmuseum, but translating the stories requires experimental design exploration, which we will do in a series of test projects with different designers ahead of the event. This project has a strong interaction with the rest of our programme. We work with artists and designers like Sissel Tolaas, Masuma Khwaja and Pieter Decupere.

Secretopia

Human beings pose a huge threat to all life on earth, including their own species. However, it is limiting to see man only as a threatening manipulator of nature. Man is also a part of nature and is organically connected. Secretopia examines the culture of the body, its fluids and secretions, sexuality and body odour. Together with Wim van Egmond, we investigate the visual beauty of the intimacies of our microbiome. In addition, contagion prevention is a new and relevant focus. How do contagion fear and sexuality relate to each other? Do we need to design new intimacies? A durable beak sheet instead of a beak flap? In workshops and design assignments, we investigate the relationship between man and earth through the microbiome, and our love-hate relationship with filth.

Guerrilla Hortus Amsterdam

We started to make neighbours and visitors aware of local nature and its medicinal effects with Hortus Dijkspark by placing infographics at more than 300 plants growing in the neighbourhood. The project is being expanded into a network with FramerFramed, Tolhuistuin, Groei&Bloei, Zone2Source and TheBeach. We are

identifying the city's biodiversity and investigating how we can re-imagine the richness of our cultural relationships with plants. Our ambition is to seed the whole of Amsterdam with these infographics and in doing so, draw attention to plants that have been forgotten or are considered undesirable, but which actually have beautiful properties such as medicinal effects, exceptional taste or cultural significance. But above all, the network offers a platform for art and design projects about the value of nature and cultural relationships to plants.

Fake Eco?

Sometimes the line between inspiring eco-design, fashionable rhetoric or even greenwashing is hard to draw. We address the paradox of our sustainable ambitions by taking a critical look at our projects, and in 2020 we will launch the long-running evaluation project Fake-Eco, which critically evaluates sustainable design innovation. Not only engineers, but also artists are addressing the sustainability issue and developing products and ideas that should give us direction. Yet we find that a lot of ideas and products inspired by sustainability don't actually save anything. That is fine at the beginning of the chain, but as soon as they go beyond the research and prototype stage, that becomes problematic. Our own aquaponics urban agriculture practice and many bio-material products show such a contradiction. Does this mean they are better off not being made? How should we assess this, and therefore our own work? In 2020, we will start this programme with an exhibition in cooperation with solar designer Marjan van Aubel (Nemo Lab is partner for presentation). The programme will continue as a series of interactive presentations and workshops where we continue to question ecodesign and look for ways to provide context for different types of ecodesign.

Odorama

Odorama is a series of interactive presentations about olfactory art, design and research. In the coming period, this series will expand to include the intimate senses: in addition to scent, touch and proprioception will play a greater role. Curators Caro Verbeek and Frank Bloem together with their team create the programme in which makers and researchers from different disciplines meet each other. There are no electronic media yet that can work meaningfully with intimate senses. Until now, the obvious solution was to gather the audience for sensory experience in a physical place. We will investigate how to distribute the sharing of multi-sensory experiences.

Open Labs

At the moment, we successfully open our Aroma Lab to the public on a weekly basis. In the coming period, we will also open our other facilities to interested parties on a weekly basis, under the guidance of an artist, designer or chef. This way, interested people can get to know our laboratories and workshops in an accessible way and design with living organisms, scent or food themselves.

Lex Lota: Design award for laws.

Humanity will have to collectively organise major changes in the short term. New laws are needed. The beauty, elegance and effectiveness of laws are the subject of this project. We will consider laws as works of art. Laws move us, create our definitions of right and wrong and determine our world and reality. But which laws affect us? And why? In which elements of a law is beauty? And in which laws? We organise a biennial design award for laws on the themes of climate, migration, food and natural rights. Around this, we organise workshops and hackathons on the development of effective laws and rules. This project will be prepared in 2020. We are currently discussing the composition of the jury with specialists such as Simon Zadek, Paul van Zyl, Mustafa Suleyman and Marjan Minnesma. We will raise significant additional funds for the project.

Mediamatic EATING

Our restaurant Mediamatic ETEN is a welcoming and experimental place to put sustainable and delicious food on the table. Participants can combine their activities at Mediamatic with a drink or a meal. Conversely, the restaurant attracts visitors who want to learn about our programme in the Biotope in an accessible way.

The vegan kitchen uses plants and herbs from the aquaponics greenhouse, contributes to our circular compost practice and works with fermented food and fungi from the Bio CleanLab. Led by food designer Giulia Soldati and Chef Tomasso Buresti, we create dining experiences that come about through research and experimentation. In addition, the restaurant and kitchen offer space for workshops and receptions and serve as a lab for the Neo Futurist Dinners. As a department, ETEN has a profit motive: the income for the rest of the programme is modest. We want to improve this and will communicate this more clearly by showing a programme contribution on the receipt. An important contribution by ETEN is that it enables us to make Mediamatic open and hospitable seven days a week in a way that our programme budget alone would never allow.

We are currently rebuilding and redesigning ETEN in response to the new circumstances. The first tests are hopeful.

Geographical distribution

We have been part of the cultural infrastructure of the country and city for years and have many formal and informal exchanges with other parties. These parties consist of cultural institutions, but also knowledge institutes, schools and companies.

We have a good name and reputation as a place for artistic renewal and research. In addition, by opening our facilities, we are also a facility for the city. As a catalyst of cultural innovation and freedom, we contribute to the reputation of the Netherlands and to the innovative image in the field of design and the life sciences. Through neighbourhood-oriented projects, we are also of great significance at the local level. In addition to our local and national ties, we also have a global reputation. By collaborating with international parties and attracting international artists, we are an important point of international cross-pollination for the Netherlands. In addition,

many international schools in the field of innovation, art, design, architecture and nature come to Mediamatic. We see that half of our website visitors come from abroad and many of our physical visitors are international as well.

Our location, close to Amsterdam Central Station and close to Schiphol Airport, contributes to our international accessibility.

Although we do not focus on presentation abroad, but rather on international cross-fertilisation at our own location in the Biotope, our developed projects are presented abroad. There have been several international editions of our Neo Futurist Dinner (Los Angeles, Seattle, Dubai, etc.), our food-related projects have also been exhibited in Asia, America and the Middle East, and our Serres Séparées are currently gaining international recognition, with press coverage from all over the world. We deliberately do not focus on presenting abroad because we want to give a meaningful meaning to the place where we are located. The trend towards expansion abroad feels contrary to our sustainable and social ambitions. We seek sustainable international ties by working with makers and interns for a longer period of time, keeping our website innovative and interesting, and entering into collaborations with various partners.

Operations

We subscribe to the principles of fair pay and fair practice. We pay artists and designers for their time and give them project budgets. The personnel budget is, in the absence of guidelines for making institutions, based on the guidelines for presentation institutions according to De Zaak Nu. We maintain a transparent and fair salary structure. The overtime of staff members and makers is compensated or paid out where possible.

In recent years, we have achieved rising audience revenues through better organisation and marketing. The workshop programme in particular performed better as a result (37.5% in 2019 compared to 2018). We have always ended recent years with a small positive result. We achieved an average growth in audience income from the programme of 25%. However, growth in hospitality income lagged behind due to the total renovation of the Dijkgracht and the closure of the Oosterdoks swing bridge, respectively. We are negotiating with the City of Amsterdam about compensation, which, if granted, will benefit our programme budget. The bridge will reopen in mid-2021, greatly improving the accessibility of the area and bringing new activity to Oosterdokseiland. The new building now causing closure is the future head office with 5,000 workplaces for Booking.com. If this company survives the corona crisis, by 2021 we will have a large number of highly educated expats as neighbours. We see this as an opportunity and expect a substantial growth in turnover for both hospitality and programme. If the crisis proves unfavourable, we may have to squat the half-finished building in 2021 and turn it into a palace of culture.

Unexpectedly disappointing revenues can normally be compensated by shifting to cheaper solutions and more emphasis on activities that generate good audience revenues such as repeatable workshops - at the expense of development projects.

In this light, as far as business planning is concerned, we should hold our breath now.

It is probably better not to count ourselves too rich until well into 2021. As exciting Mediamatic Amsterdam | *Transdisciplinary Design Research: Autistic Exploration* |

and inspiring as we find the substantive challenges of the crises, it is difficult to plan the financial operations now. But we trust in our flexibility. The accelerated inclusion of funerals in our programme not only offers substantive depth, but also generates rental income. And our research into togetherness during a pandemic in Mediamatic Eten led to the Serres Séparées (presale of 240 tables) selling out in one day, where we redesigned intimacy and infection prevention.

We have a diversified funding mix of local government, national government, commercial sponsorship, hospitality, rental and audience income and we will strive to maintain this mix and find new ways to finance our development.

Communication plan

We realise that even though our themes are very inclusive, our working methods are experimental and progressive. This is not necessarily appealing to a large audience. This is inherent to our role in the chain. By definition, our experimental character does not attract a large mainstream audience. Yet, we believe that there are more potentially interested people than are currently being reached. We are therefore developing our communication channels to reach our target groups.

We distinguish the following target groups:

- Creatives (artists, makers, designers and researchers)
- Knowledge institutions (teachers, researchers and students)
- Partners (cultural institutions, businesses and knowledge institutes)
- General public
- Press on: biotechnology, design, science and cross-over art.
- Financiers (funds, sponsors)

Our most important tools:

Website (365,000 visits in 2019, growing) | Monthly newsletter (after clean-up in 2019: 13,411 subscribers) | Direct communication via network, events and presentations | Analogue advertisements (posters etc.) | Articles in online and printed media | The Mediamatic Bon: a gift card for experiences at Mediamatic | Collaborations with major events such as: Museumnacht (Museum Night), ADE, We make the city, Expeditie Oosterdok | Cooperation with workshop marketing platform dedi.co | Social Media: *Instagram* 7,657 (3 years ago 963, an increase of 6,694) and *Facebook* 18,209 followers (3 years ago 14,299, an increase of 3,910)

We have learned to separate these target groups better per subject and to approach them more specifically (think of plants, fermentation, autism, etc.). Since the current period, we are therefore making smarter use of social media. We use social media targeting intensively because we serve many different areas of interest, and we notice positive results for new audience reach. We are doing well compared to our colleagues. We serve an internationally diverse target group. Last year, more than half of the website visitors were international. Therefore, the main language of our communication is English. We also translate important statements into Dutch.

Collaborations

Baltan Laboratories: Residencies | Expedite Oosterdok: OlfactoryHistoryOosterdok | Amsterdam Museum: OlfactoryHistoryOosterdok / CityStudio | Monuments and Archaeology Amsterdam: OlfactoryHistoryOosterdok | Noordjes Kinderkunst: AutisticResearch / Education | Sandberg Institute: AutisticResearch | Amsterdamse Hogeschool voor de Kunsten: Autistic Research | AMS: LexLota | Urgenda: LexLota | Design Academy Eindhoven: Neo Futurist Dinner | Openbaar Onderwijs aan de Amstel: Educatie | Waag Society: 3PackageDeal | Vrije Universiteit: 3PackageDeal | Alan Turing School: Educatie | Framer Framed: GuerillaHortusAmsterdam | The Beach: GuerillaHortusAmsterdam | Tolhuistuin: GuerillaHortusAmsterdam | Zone2Source: GuerillaHortusAmsterdam | Ateliers63: structural collaboration workshops | Rijksakademie: workshops | Arcam: Nature Morte and residencies

Sustainable, diverse and fair: the codes

Sustainability Code

This is not a formal criterion for the arts sector. Perhaps in a subsequent policy period? Mediamatic aims to reduce its use of energy and materials. Both in its programme and in its practice. In terms of content, sustainability has long been an important part of our programme. The catering works vegan and with local organic ingredients as much as possible. An obstacle to further improvement is the temporary accommodation: this makes it difficult to further reduce our energy consumption. The depreciation periods for the necessary investments are often more than 10 years. We rent from the municipality, which has a cautious policy in this area. However, we have disconnected a large number of air-conditioning units from the building and replaced old-fashioned lighting. Placing greenhouses around the outdated, moderately insulated main building creates a heat-saving climate zone. Since 2020, our organic waste stream has been completely eliminated by compost. We have installed roof insulation in our monumental sluice gate shed. The whole building can be made much more sustainable through long-term investments. We are discussing this with the municipality.

Diversity code

As a progressive public cultural institution, we consider compliance with this code essential. We actively pursue awareness and implementation of a more transversal and integral way of thinking and working. In our view, attention to new art forms is by definition room for diversity.

Mediamatic is there for everyone, and this is reflected in our programme. Our focus is on neuro- and biodiversity, but we also pay attention to income inequality, gender, sexuality and cultural diversity. At the beginning of the century, we had many social projects around cultural diversity, such as El Hema, Noord and Gastarbeider Dating.

Although these themes are still well represented in our programme, we would like to draw extra attention to neurodiversity, which we believe is still underexposed. We make sure that various experts are involved in the concept development of our projects. For example, we discussed our plan for the 'autistic research' project with several autistic people before we drew up the concept. We ask people from our staff or our network for this.

We are always looking for different stories and perspectives and are aware of our own limited vision. That is why we always aim to involve a diverse range of partners in our work.

Cultural identity, age, sexuality and gender are already well represented in our audience. In the coming period, we want to design our facility to serve a more neurodiverse audience and we will continue to be accessible to people with low cash flow. We will do this by offering free tours of the exhibitions, installations and labs on Fridays and continuing to accept cash as a form of payment, making it possible for undocumented people and those with insufficient funds to visit us. We also accept the city pass as a ticket and are part of the cultural food bank. Poverty is a big issue in the Netherlands and Amsterdam that should not be forgotten.

Our public vision is as follows: At Mediamatic you can always walk in and experience something new or experimental, even if your personal situation makes it difficult for you.

In recruiting, we take diversity as a given. We typically employ 15 trainees and these trainees come from all over the world to take their first career steps. Yet despite years of effort, our small core team is not culturally diverse. We struggle to recruit diverse applicants. We are going to systematically evaluate the platforms where our vacancies are shared and the tone of the vacancies.

There is a confidential advisor in the organisation to whom any problems can be addressed. We also have clear house rules.

We ensure that employees can continue to develop; our Biotope is not only a work environment, but also a learning environment. We always encourage employees to be involved in our own learning processes and the learning processes we offer.

Cultural Governance Code

In accordance with the Governance Code, we changed from a management model to a supervisory board model. This supervisory board includes: Hajo Doorn, Gitta Luiten, Toby Kiers, Farid Tabarki, Caroline Prisse and Jaap Schoufour. The tasks of the Supervisory Board in relation to the directors and the foundation are clear. The prevention of conflicts of interest is laid down in the articles of association. The board meets the requirements of the Governance Code Culture. The requirements of the Code are kept up to date within the board and evaluated every three years.

Fair Practice Code

Mediamatic endorses the importance of the Fair Practice Code. The principles on which the code is based, are a guideline for Mediamatic. We have open and transparent discussions with external parties about each other's expectations at the start of a new collaboration. Long-term projects require trust for the best possible

outcome. Mediamatic strives for sustainable collaborations, both with our team and with external parties. Volunteers are often active for several years and interns regularly stay involved with Mediamatic in different roles.

There are also areas where we can still learn a lot. For example, we noticed that we are understaffed in the current period, and are looking for ways to reduce the workload of our team. In addition, because of the fair practice code, we resolve to evaluate more openly and consistently, so that we can identify where we need to pay extra attention.

Paying artists for their presentations is at the heart of our financial vision, and is done well. For us, this is the most important aspect of the fair practice code: we will do everything we can to pay artists well for their work and to accommodate them in as many ways as possible.

Evaluation of the current period 2017-2020

Currently, biomaterials, biodesign, sustainability, nature and waste are important topics. We made edible tableware from fungi, designed cosmetics from vaginal fluids, criticised fast-fashion by dressing the Biotope in knits made from discarded fleece jumpers and Pei-Ying Ling investigated the influence of viruses on different plants in *The Secret Life of Plants*.

Our current programme builds on the current period.

Yet it is also radically different: We learned that it is no longer enough to be concerned only with sustainable and circular ideas. For with how many good intentions we designed with biomaterials, it remains to be seen whether materials are the solution to our challenges on a large scale. That is why we are becoming more critical this period. Hence our interest in the uncompromisingly stubborn aspect of autism. This interest and inspiration will bring about a radical change in our programme approach.

Our sensory focus is also a reaction to our ongoing programme.

We began in 2017 with our successful *Neo Futurist Dinners*: gourmet performances that bring together food, design and science in a multi-sensory experience. Examples of these dinners include *DimensionAir*, a dinner where the food changes shape and substance throughout the courses. And *The Beauty Dinner*, where the relationship between gastronomy and beauty products was explored in 8 courses.

In addition, we developed *Odorama*, the ongoing programme on scent and design, together with Caro Verbeek, Frank Bloem and Sanne Groeneveld. We offered thirty-six different editions from the start of the programme in 2016, ranging from *The smell of fear* to *Smell/Memory/Dementia*. We opened the *Aroma Lab* to work more with smell and hosted a summer of *Art Olfaction Amsterdam* in collaboration with the *IAO* from Los Angeles.

In the current period, the focus is on smell. We noticed in practice that the need arose to involve all the intimate senses: not only smell, but also touch, taste and proprioception.

From 2017 to 2019, we facilitated more than 150 workshops in line with our programme lines, which is well above the expected number. It was therefore necessary to formulate more policy on this. This is because facilitating workshops is expensive and labour-intensive. To minimise the workload and costs, we have recently started to standardise the workshop process. In this way, we can limit the organisational costs, so that workshops can be given more often.

Despite a successful programme, with systematically more events and more audiences, our subsidy has shrunk. We would benefit from a larger core team, so that we are equipped to keep up with Mediamatic's growth.

For all the other great things we did this period, look here:

[https://
www.mediamatic.net/
best](https://www.mediamatic.net/best)