

## **How do we build or design in 10 years if it were up to you?**

In 10 years, sustainable and circular design and construction should be the standard. I have faith that that is also possible. I feel that a real transition is happening now. Sustainability and circularity were the undercurrent for a long time, but are getting more and more momentum.

You can see it happening on trade shows and events, like in Milan, Dutch Design Week in Eindhoven and also at MaterialDistrict Rotterdam. Young designers want to be relevant and contribute to a better world, if possible with an impact. They want to offer solutions for the challenges we face, on ecological, economical and social levels. They aren't driven by high ideals or political vistas, but are instead practical and pragmatical. More and more companies focus on sustainability and circularity as well, if only because they see the market growing. Or because of pressure from the inside out. Recently, 300 Amazon employees signed a petition openly to demand that the company puts more effort into being climate neutral in 2030. Additionally, IKEA is making serious strides to become fully circular in 10 years. That is very ambitious and there are a lot of aspects involved.

Personally, I try to contribute by passing on my knowledge to young designers via Yksi Expo and Yksi Connect. Along with the Young Talent Team, I host exhibitions, presentations, projects and workshops revolving around sustainable and circular designs. I also include as many companies as possible, to ensure that those young designers have access to the too often closed-off world of the hardcore industry faster and more easily. Actual changes you can create by forming collectives. Making the world a better place together, with help of creative processes, that is what I think is the future of design.

## **What can every architect or designer do differently tomorrow to make the world a better place?**

The role of design has shifted over the years. I have been trained as interior and product designer in the 80s, when the subject was mainly aesthetics, about 'making things more beautiful'. And about adding meaning, or emotional value. Little by little, sustainability was added to that: limiting damage to the environment, or rather, preventing it. Now, we are in the next stage, and circularity is starting to become a central concept. Circularity goes much further than sparing the environment, saving energy, or recycling. It is about restoring the balance between humans and the earth. That requires systems thinking and a holistic view. We are currently too occupied with incidents and putting out fires. We run from CO2 and climate problems to nitrogen, and from food waste to plastic soup. It is up to designers and architects to look at the broader picture, to see the connections. That is something you can start with tomorrow. With everything you think of and make, you have to consider the

effects on humans and the environment, on short and long term. Keep asking yourself questions: can't you do it differently, aren't there better, more sustainable alternatives? That goes for any product or object, for every raw resource and material, for every connection you make.

### **Which advice would you give designers and architects?**

Eventually, we have to bring about a transition, not just in energy. We have to start manufacturing and consuming in a fundamentally different way, our whole lifestyle has to change. It will be a long and bumpy road, but as the Chinese say: every journey of 1000 kilometres starts with the first step. In that transition, designers and architects can and should play an important role. In fact, I think they bear the responsibility to use their knowledge and skills for that. That also requires ethical awareness.

My advice? Dare to take that step, dare to assert yourself as independent professional. The freer and more self-aware you present yourself, the more you can achieve. I found that out when I made the conscious choice for sustainability and circularity. Soon, that led to new contacts and clients that fit within that route.

Above all, I recommend designers and architects to let themselves be inspired by nature, because that is the best example of a circular system. Nowhere else you'll find better examples of closing cycles.

### **Name an example of an architect or designer who makes the world a better or more sustainable place.**

Architects like Thomas Rau, Paul de Ruiter, Bjarne Mastenbroek, and Daan Bruggink. Fortunately, their good example is being followed. In the field of design, which is more my expertise, Dave Hakkens is a good example, mainly because of the international community he built around his open source project Precious Plastic. I also have a lot of respect for Boyan Slat (The Ocean Cleanup); it's amazing how he tries to make a wild idea reality, despite setbacks. On a large scale, with large parties and much publicity – that alone makes many people think. As a commercial company, I can appreciate Niaga. This start-up, by now a joint venture with DSM, creates impact by radically redesigning products like floor covering and mattresses. Closer to home, I find inspiring what Daria Biryukova as participant of the Yksi Expo Young Talent Team manages to achieve. Basically by herself and with lots of perseverance, she made a connection with the ceramics industry and is she trying to make substantial changes with a glaze that consists for 60% of incinerated household waste.