

DECEMBER 2023

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DESIGN
FUTURES

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CONTEXT WE WORK WITHIN:

Minimal resources and support for design curriculum that centers community agency

Design field exalting practitioners that exert “design on” people, rather than designing with communities.

Students and faculty that center community power in their pursuits are often isolated.

OUR YEAR-ROUND PROGRAMS INCLUDE:

Five-day interdisciplinary student conference and training

Faculty and practitioner convening

Institutional change peer mentorship for faculty

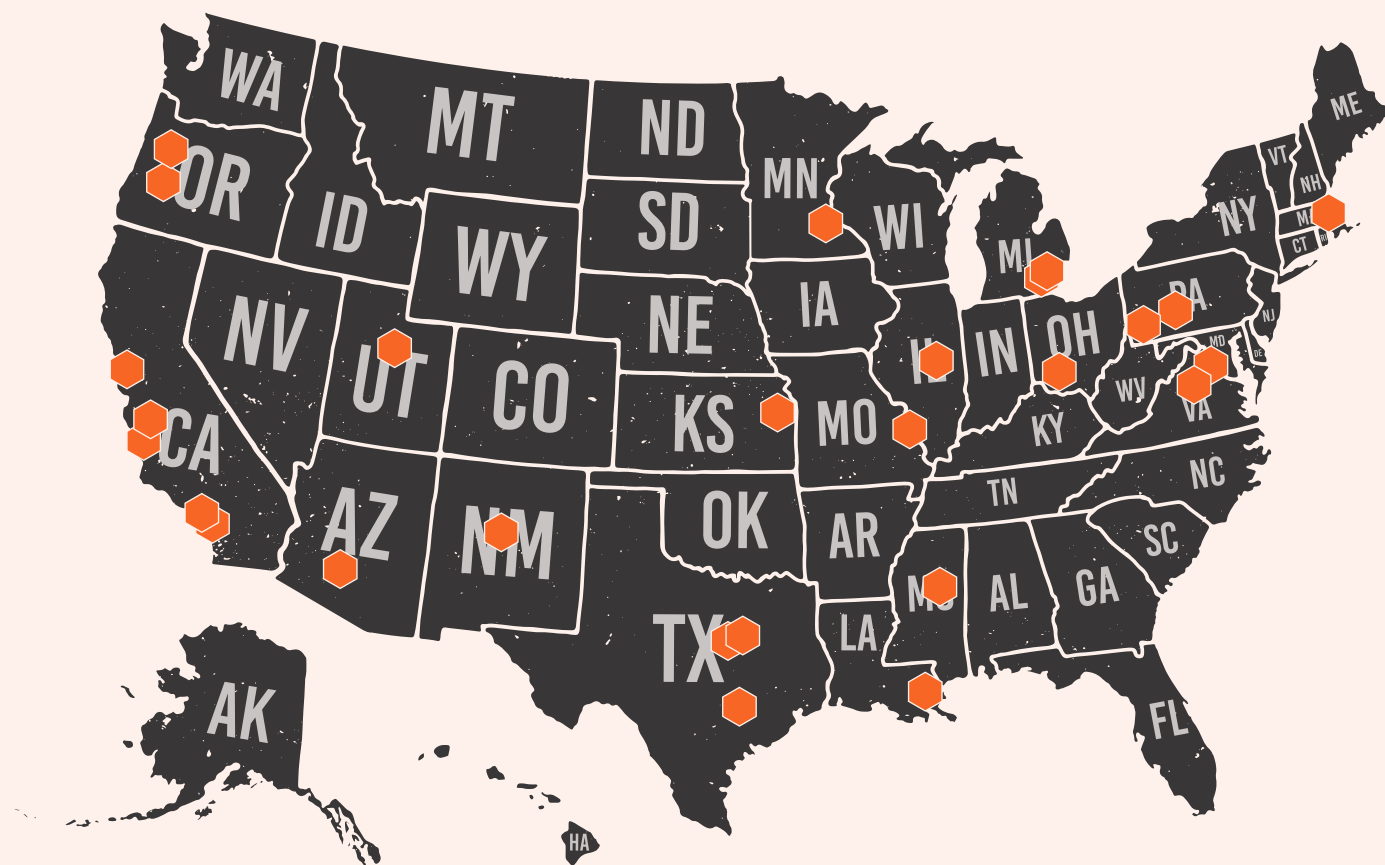
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Design Futures is a place to reimagine the role of the designer in addressing and dismantling human and ecological exploitation in the built environment. Dedicated to aligning the field of spatial design with social movements, Design Futures creates critically needed design education spaces by bringing together students, faculty and practitioners together to learn and advance community-based design practice.

Design Futures alumni work in many fields, including:

ARCHITECTURE **AFFORDABLE HOUSING** **ENGINEERING**
URBAN PLANNING **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT** **PUBLIC POLICY**
SUSTAINABILITY **LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE**



Our university network has included 28 institutions:

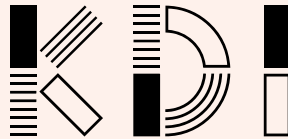
Arizona State University
 Art Center College of Design
 California College of the Arts
 Carnegie Mellon University
 Cornell University
 Kansas University
 Massachusetts Institute of Technology
 Mississippi State University
 Morgan State University
 Penn State University
 Portland State University
 Southern Methodist University
 Tulane University
 University of California, Berkeley

University of Cincinnati
 University of Detroit Mercy
 University of Georgia
 University of Illinois
 University of Michigan
 University of Minnesota
 University of New Mexico
 University of Oregon
 University of Southern California
 University of Texas Arlington
 University of Texas Austin
 University of Utah
 University of Virginia
 Washington University in St. Louis

Past practitioners have included
representatives from:

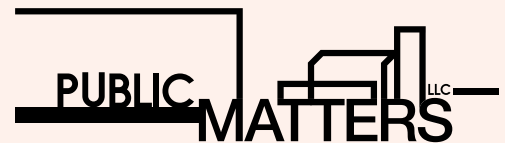


**DEPARTMENT OF
BELOVED PLACES**



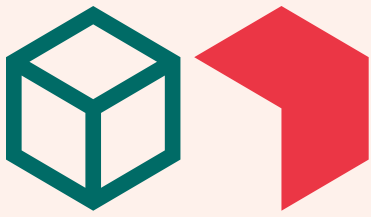
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DESIGN FUTURES BY THE NUMBERS.

Over the years we've directly
engaged with...

650
STUDENTS

150
FACULTY

110
PRACTITIONERS

In 2021, over 80% of student attendees identified as women or non-binary and 49% were people of color.

100% of the design workshops were led by people of color and 100% co-led by women.

What students have to say about their experience:

“To be surrounded by like-minded people and engage in deep, constructive discussion for a whole week was so cathartic — it was a life-changing experience for sure.”

Arielle Meisel (2023)
Washington University of St. Louis

“Participating in Design Futures was critical to my personal and professional development as a public servant... I feel exceedingly more equipped to advocate for equitable standards in the provision of resources.”

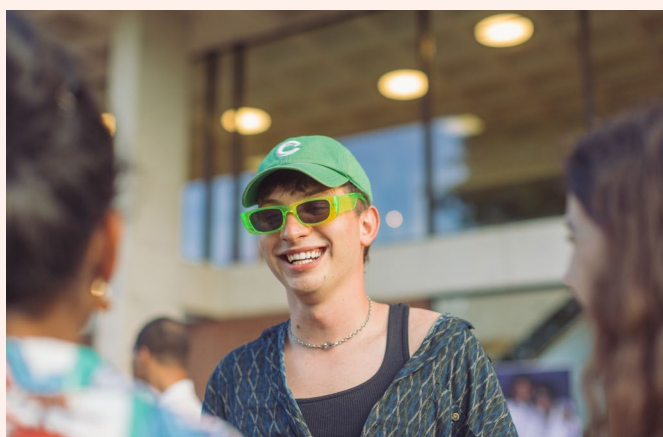
Linda LaNoue (2019)
University of Michigan

“Overall, the forum reframed my perspective of design and opened a space for me to reconsider my role and impact as a designer.”

Tulane University Student (2023)

“There were a lot of amazing students and practitioners there and meeting them helped me to find my tribe... all that you did and continue to do in developing students has made a huge impact in my life and I hope to continue giving this gift you have given me.”

Cornell University Student (2016)



Impact on students

COMMUNITY

Breaking isolation and finding other people who are dedicated to spatial justice

ADVANCING SKILLS

Bringing rigor: Learning and practicing frameworks, tools and mindsets

CAREER CHOICES

Expanding their understanding of what career pathways are possible by meeting people who are practicing community-based design in the field

MENTORSHIP

Receiving mentorship from award-winning practitioners and building peer-mentorship circles

Impact on faculty

COMMUNITY

Joining a network of peers to share curricula, student engagement approaches, and systems change strategies for their university

ACADEMIC RECOGNITION

Renewing energy for their work in receiving validation for efforts that aren't always recognized within their university

Impact on the field

COMMUNITY

Building relationships between aligned practitioners across the country

CENTER BIPOC LEADERSHIP

Lifting up the existing BIPOC leadership in community-based design

EXPAND ACCOUNTABILITY

Creating space for practitioners to share their work and be accountable to responsible practices

FREEDOM TO INNOVATE

Providing an opportunity for practitioners to try more radical frameworks than what they can typically explore in the field

Get involved in Design Futures by:

JOINING AS A
UNIVERSITY
MEMBER

Take a look at what a University Membership includes!

SHARING YOUR
DF STORY

Have you joined us at Design Futures before? **Tell us a bit about your experience and how the forum has impacted your career.**

APPLY TO LEAD
A WORKSHOP
AT DF 2024

Ready to help cultivate the next generation of leaders? **Check our website** to apply to join us at Washington University in St. Louis from May 20 - 24, 2024.

Questions about individual registration? Reach out to Ezra Kong at DesignFuturesForum@gmail.com



In our 2023 post-forum survey, participants described the forum as:

“Educative,” “Informative,” “Insightful,” and “Thought-provoking” — suggesting that the forum provided valuable information and encouraged participants to think critically and gain new insights.

“Transformational,” “Intense,” “Reflective,” and “Life-changing” — pointing to the idea that Design Futures helped facilitate personal growth, self-reflection, and even profound changes in perspective.

“Community,” “Connection,” “Inclusive,” and “Human-centered” — reflecting the sense of belonging and interpersonal connections participants felt during the experience.

“FUN!”

“It made me think of how much more fun designing will be without having to use the same tired formula.”

“Empowering,” “Hopeful,” “Joyous,” “Exciting,” “Enriching,” and “Affirming” — indicating that the experience had a positive impact on participants and left them with a sense of empowerment and enthusiasm.

“I learned new things about my own identity, others, and the intersection between design and social change.”

Staff

Ezra Kong (they/them/theirs)
Executive Director
DesignFuturesForum@gmail.com

“There were a lot of amazing students and practitioners there and meeting them helped me to find my tribe....all that you did and continue to do in developing students has made a huge impact in my life and I hope to continue giving this gift you have given me.”

Board of Directors

Elgin Cleckley (he/him)
Assistant Professor of Architecture and Design Thinking
School of Architecture, University of Virginia
With appointment in the Curry School of Education and the School of Nursing

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The Albert and Tina Small Center for Collaborative Design, Tulane School of Architecture

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Community-Engaged Design Practitioner
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RAE Consulting

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Director of Research
Monument Lab

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Founder + Principal
Studio O

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Assistant Director of Research
School of Architecture, University of Texas at Austin

“I’ve been to Design Futures to teach, learn and now to participate as a board member...”

To learn more about our team, visit designfuturesforum.org



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