



# Pressing Matters 10

University of Pennsylvania's Weitzman School of Design

Winka Dubbeldam

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- Innovative educational concepts with an emphasis on Open Source sharing, integral teaching methods, advanced robotic manufacturing, and greater diversity and equity in design-research to better prepare students for the challenges ahead

Already number TEN, **Pressing Matters 10** is a special issue reflecting a year of reflection and change, after several waves of the pandemic, Black Lives Matter protests and newly developed hybrid teaching methods. It follows last year's *Pressing Matters 9* that was completely rethought with the aim to present an Open Source publication that shares the Department of Architecture's concept of design-research, an integral approach of critical thinking, rigorous research, and design, representing a deep understanding of the complex layers of architecture. Together with Jonathan Jackson & team of WSDIA, a more integral design was developed, allowing input from research [ARI labs], students, faculty and Penn's special events.

This anniversary of *Pressing Matters* is celebrated by adding the "decade" colour of silver to the usual recycled cardboard cover of Weitzman's architecture publication. It also represents a year of new opportunities brought by a complete rethinking of education through the introduction of remote learning, zoom lectures and meetings. A much larger international group of diverse jurors, experts, and critics could be invited as travel was of no hindrance for attendance.

In conjunction with the 17th International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, CityX Venice, a virtual exhibition of new and recent work by leading architects and designers from around the world, opened online in May. Winka Dubbeldam, who is Miller Professor and Chair of the Department of Architecture and Director of the Advanced Research and Innovation (ARI) Lab, served as one of the creative directors, inviting six faculty members to present examples of the design-research under way at Weitzman. We are also very excited that the Department of Architecture at the Weitzman was selected for the next Acadia 2022 Conference called Hybrids & Haecceities, which asks how technology enables, reflects, and challenges established disciplinary boundaries and design practices. Hybrids & Haecceities aligns with a fundamental shift away from abstract generalised models of design and production towards custom or bespoke design now possible at an unprecedented scale due to Industry 4.0. After a summer of protests the department immediately created a DEI committee, restructured its curriculum and student and faculty body to be more inclusive. The department also instigated a free summer school for the students as internships and jobs were hard to come by. The generous support of the great group of external experts really helped the students in their design for a temporary Covid testing station, issues such as prefabrication, social equity, and race and gender were discussed and became the source of inspiration for the exquisite designs published by Surface Media.

Part of an important research university, the **University of Pennsylvania's Weitzman School of Design** as one of the top ten Graduate Architecture Departments in the USA, prepares students to address complex sociocultural and environmental issues through thoughtful inquiry, creative expression, and innovation. The Department of Architecture operates at the forefront of research and design by focusing on new design methodologies and future manufacturing through the interlinked intelligence of digital design, computational analyses, and robotics.

**Winka Dubbeldam**, MArch MS-AAD, is a seasoned academic and design leader, serving in her 8th year as Chair and Miller Professor of Architecture at the University of Pennsylvania Weitzman School of Design, where she has gathered an international network of innovative research and design professionals. She is currently the Creative director for the Venice Architecture Biennale's virtual Italian pavilion, and also serves as the External Examiner at the Bartlett School of Architecture in London (2019-present) and juror in several international competitions. Professor Dubbeldam was named one of the DesignIntelligence 30 Most Admired Educators [2015]. As the founder/principal of the WBE certified New York firm Archi-Tectonics, Dubbeldam is widely known for her award-winning work, recognised as much for its use of hybrid sustainable materials and smart building systems as for its elegance and innovative structures.