

Who | Institutional Profile

Institution	IMPAKT [Centre for Media Culture]
Location	Utrecht, the Netherlands
Short Description	IMPAKT [Centre for Media Culture] is a critical art platform that focuses explicitly on media art and culture. Starting from contemporary art and digital culture, IMPAKT looks at the influence of technology and media (social media, mass media) on our lives, our society and our democratic rule of law. Throughout the year, IMPAKT organises events, exhibitions, performances and more, including our yearly IMPAKT Festival: a five-day multimedia event that takes place in Utrecht and online. In its programmes, IMPAKT aims to provide space for a broad spectrum of views on the topics that are important to us, around technology, media, art and society. IMPAKT takes a critical look at the dogmas and power structures in our society and aims to provide space for dissenting voices.
Ownership	IMPAKT is privately owned.
Size	In 2022 IMPAKT had 6.32 FTEs employees and 10.16 FTEs in total (freelancers, interns and volunteers included).

Approach to Digital	<p>Input by Esther van Zoelen and Thomas van't Groenewout</p> <p>IMPAKT sets out to be at the forefront of technological advancements, and it is crucial for us to keep evolving and developing new formats that use and showcase new technology.</p> <p>As part of this mission, IMPAKT has been successfully experimenting with online and hybrid formats for two years now. The IMPAKT Festival 2020, for example, took place entirely online, with 5,592 online visitors from all over the world, and the 2021 festival had a hybrid format. At IMPAKT we believe in the great added value of digital and hybrid formats, yet we are also conscious that it is not yet ideal in terms of audience engagement, especially when it comes to interaction and participation across the online/onsite boundaries.</p> <p>Through our approach to digital, we want to create more value for people as they become able to actively participate in our programmes in new ways, lowering the threshold for online participation and interaction. Our focus on the creation of online and hybrid programming is also made with the values of inclusion, diversity and equality in mind. These are reflected both in the themes we discuss as well as the speakers, artists and other participants we invite for our events. Sustainability and climate change is another important issue we try to address with these new formats. Our focus on digital programming partly started due to the wish to reduce our carbon emissions and make our events more sustainable.</p>
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What | Case

Project Title	Innovating Audience Engagement for Hybrid Events
Timeframe	November 2022 - July 2023

Concept & Approach

How it got started

At IMPAKT we have been working on hybrid and online events for a while now. Both during our annual festival, as well as smaller events and projects. We are also part of the [Project Going Hybrid](#), a 24 month-long research project into the future of hybridity for the cultural field. The [IMPAKT Hybrid Art and Wine Tasting Event 1.0](#) is an example of a hybrid event we experimented with before DOORS.

For researching how we can best approach our audiences, we started using specific communication strategies. In order to reach a specific group of visitors for the IMPAKT hybrid events and to give them a suitable and good experience, we used several methods that helped us determine our target audiences. The focus was on how to communicate with them in a clear and exciting way. All communication actions together eventually helped us to construct an arch of engagement. This arch can, after the first events, become a template for more audience communication in the future.

During the DOORS project, we worked with four Work Packages, in which we researched and worked on different phases of the project. These are:

1. Project Management
2. Research audience segments and design visitor journeys
3. Production and development technology
4. Evaluation and dissemination results.

Throughout these phases, we prepared the tools and communication strategies that we could use with our audiences. These are described below.

The hybrid events

Before we examine the tools and strategies used, we will briefly describe the hybrid events we worked on and organised during the DOORS project. When we began working on the events, we found that in order to receive more insights from their outcomes, a third event should be added. Since the events we organised were small-scale and not many people could participate, a third event would be a way to receive more feedback from our audiences. This is why we first focused on two events and later the third event was added.

IMPAKT Hybrid Wine and Art Tasting Event 2.0

17 March 2023

For this event, the audience was invited to taste several wines, with guidance from a wine connoisseur. Aside from this, there were also hybrid art presentations the audience could experience. The art programme of the Wine Tasting focused on two things: 1. On how a virtual environment can influence our taste experience (so more an exploration of the digital than the social) 2. The second artwork was more an examination of the ritual of eating together using AI. This event was an interesting project, since it combined the very physical sensation of tasting wine with digital communication. This way the audience could experience how a typical social and often intimate event of tasting wine in a group can become hybrid and connected to a digital community of other people around the world. The IMPAKT Hybrid Wine and Art Tasting Event 2.0 was made to attend from home, with the intention of reaching more audience members and more flexibility in who could join, compared to the first wine tasting event we organised.



Hybrid Wine and Art Tasting Event 2.0, IMPAKT, photo by Pieter Kers

Project Stargaze

19–21 May 2023

Project Stargaze was the second hybrid event that IMPAKT organised in May, a hybrid experience by artists Roos Groothuizen and Derk Over. This interactive game explored the future of humankind, when we have become one with digital technology. It challenged participants to play games and overcome challenges, together with their 'online mind' – another participant with whom they communicate digitally.

The Great Idle

31 May 2023

The hybrid, mixed-reality performance The Great Idle was made by artist Benjamin Pompe and invited its audience to follow a lone person on a digital deserted island. Connected to this person was a live performer at IMPAKT. The audience determined the movements of the performer, who controlled the main character through a motion capture suit. This way they became one body: physical and digital. Moreover, the audience – both online and onsite – could influence the lone person's wandering around the island, by choosing what they would do next.

Tools used

The tools and strategies we used for audience engagement before, during and after IMPAKT's hybrid events helped us in defining our audience, how to approach it, but also how to flow our gained knowledge towards the rest of our IMPAKT team. The following tools show how we approached these issues.

● Personas and profile types

The first tool contains templates with personas and profile types that help us in determining what our audience looks like and in gaining insight into how we can approach and connect to our visitors. In the past years, IMPAKT has developed and divided its audience into seven audience segments (what we call: IMPAKT Profile Types). These types are created by looking at their interests, age, life stage, the amount of money they have to spend and how they spend their time. Starting from this year we are more actively working with these segments for all the events we organise. Concretely, this means that during the development of each event, we select focus segments, based on the content and typology of the event. The communication and marketing strategy of the event is based on the choice for the segments.

As a part of our research and to help us prepare for our first DOORS pilot event (the IMPAKT Hybrid Wine and Art Tasting Event on 17 March 2023), we engaged with the entire team in a workshop to further define one of our audience profile types. We conducted an extensive workshop and group brainstorm session, led by Kim van den Brink of [Ask Your Audience](#), to help us discuss our existing audience segments and how we felt we could best appeal to them. This was an interesting experiment that proved to be of huge added value, as we were able to gain many insights about our audiences from the different departments in the organisation. We found that keeping our audience segments in mind from the start led to different decisions being made. To build on that awareness, we are looking for ways to integrate this into our standard workflow for developing new programmes.

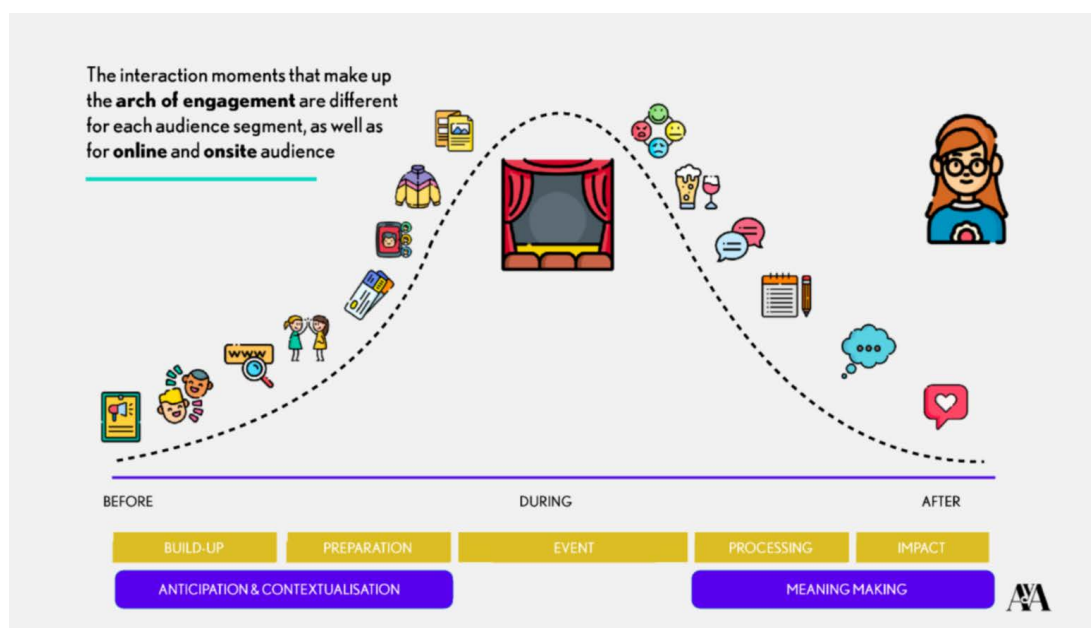
Using the profile types as a starting point, together with Van den Brink, we also discussed several personas for specific hybrid events that helped us to imagine visitors attending the events. Here we zoomed in on the specifics of the personas, their possible names, gender, age, typical features and personalities. Also covered was their connection to IMPAKT, how well they know the organisation, how they prepared themselves for their visit and how they would experience the event. This was an important aspect of our communication plan, since it made us think about who our audience is and how we should respond to them.

PROFILE TYPE	PROFILE	SHORT DESCRIPTION	IMPAKT PROGRAMMES
1) Young culture vultures	Age 17-35 students or recent graduates no children not much money to spend	Students or recent graduates (for instance in humanities or arts). Active, cheerful, adventurous, but have to be careful at the end of the month. Broad tastes or heavily or over-artistic). Focus on physical activities with a social component.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Out of Office Hybrid events: Project Stargaze + The Great Idle Betweter Uitfeest
2) Creative extroverts	Age 25-40 no children quite a lot of money to spend	Young, creative city-dwellers (including expats). New experiences and trends (NFTs, memes). Tech-minded. Outgoing and extrovert programmes: experiencing culture is above all a social activity. Broad tastes and less social criticism, as long as it's trendy and being talked about.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Out of Office Uitfeest Art & Wine Tasting IMPAKT at NFF
3) Art & culture connoisseurs	Age 30-45 young children quite a lot of money to spend	Busy jobs and not much time to spare, and therefore very choosy. Have tastes of their own and know exactly what they want. Content is the key. Niche programmes such as Weird Gnosis or Tabita Rezaire. The social component is important, but if they want to see someone in particular they're perfectly happy to go there on their own.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IMPAKT Festival 2023 EMAP Residency IMPAKT at NFF
4) Professionally motivated	Age 30-60 Dutch or foreign professionals; enough money to spend (especially on work), but are often on guest lists	Art & Culture Connoisseurs with a professional interest in IMPAKT's programmes. Busy jobs and not much time to spare, and therefore choosy, but will come if the topic is worth while. Their standards can be high, for their professional background makes them familiar with the topics and debates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IMPAKT Festival 2023 (accreditation, separate communication flow) EMAP Residency
5) Tech-minded	Age 25-45 usually no children plenty of money to spend	Keen on technology and gadgetry, and enthusiastic about the new things you can do with them. Open to criticism as long as it's substantive. Have no problem with show-case technology, but do expect IMPAKT to offer them something special.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CODE Share your Techlore (EMAP Residency events) Hybrid events: Project Stargaze + The Great Idle
6) Critical thinkers and activists	Age 20-55 no children not so much money to spend	Environmentally aware, with commitment to today's problems. Critical and sceptical about technology and the impact of tech and tech firms on our lives and our planet. Less interested in art, but more interested in the critical debates and topics in IMPAKT's programmes. Looking for greater personal and in-depth development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IMPAKT Festival 2023 Out of Office CODE
7) Cultivated art-lovers with settled lifestyles	Age 40-65 Single, or children who are already adult or have left home; quite a lot of money to spend	University-educated. Looking for quality. Very familiar with more traditional art forms, but also curious about new ones. Above all socially committed, and very interested in climate issues. Not so fond of very theoretical and complicated art. Also less drawn to online programmes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tentoonstellingen Debating events IMPAKT at NFF Art & Wine Tasting

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● Arch of engagement

To map and visualise the specific needs of each audience segment, we chose to work with the so-called 'Arch of Engagement'. An Arch of Engagement is a helpful way to visualise the entire experience of the visitor and the ways they interact with IMPAKT in the different stages of their journey. After experimenting with user journeys during the workshops in the first phase of the DOORS incubation programme, we found this arch extremely helpful to map the different communication moments. For the scope of this pilot, we chose to focus on the phases that were not yet tackled within our current experiments with hybrid formats: the anticipation and contextualisation and the meaning-making phases. Each phase can consist of several touchpoints. The concept is to hook the customer at every point of the process. An important aim we have with hybrid events in general is to draw the audiences from their 'spectating' role, to a more participatory 'co-creative' role.



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The specific personas we created were placed into an ‘arch of engagement’, which consists of a timeline with stages before, during and after the event. The stages are: 1. Becoming conscious of the event and deciding whether to go 2. Preparation 3. Artistic exchange 4. Evaluation 5. Ending decision and impact. Within these stages we included the actions of the persona and the communication coming from IMPAKT, with steps such as ‘reads Instagram post’, ‘it’s worth the money’, ‘stays for a drink’ and ‘feels inspired and will come back to other events in the future’.

The short texts in an arch of engagement are of course ideal developments of actions and reality will most likely differ from what we think could happen. Still, these considerations helped us prepare for how audiences would react to our communication, as well as how we can adjust our communication with an eye towards our expectations and actual behaviour of the audience. The arch of engagement furthermore is still an experimental tactic that is in constant development and in the process of setting up. The audience feedback will also constantly influence our communication strategies in order to give visitors online and onsite the best experience we can offer.

A persona we have worked with to create an arch of engagement for The Great Idle is a ‘Young Culture Vulture’. We named them Tom and imagined he would know about the event – this is the build up phase – through a newsletter, an Instagram post, or possibly through his study’s teacher. As preparation, he would send the post to his friends and read more about the artist who created the artwork. Then he decides to go. During the event he is immersed into it and does not process a lot of it until just after it has ended. He stays for a drink and asks the artists some questions, or checks out some of the other events that are happening. In the impact phase he looks up things that he wrote down earlier and would enjoy seeing another event, especially if it connects to his studies or if he can go with some friends. This is an example of how the arch of engagement is put into action.

● Direct and indirect communication

During our hybrid events, we made use of different kinds of communication, these are indirect as well as direct. Some examples of indirect communication with (possible) audiences are social media, newsletters, advertisements generated by other institutions and partners, and information spread by cultural agendas and artistic platforms.

Along with personal types of communication such as ‘word of mouth’ and personal letters to partners to join the events, an interesting direct form of communication is Whatsapp messages. During our hybrid events in this pilot, we experimented with sending Whatsapp messages to connect with audience members. When buying a ticket, audience members could write down their phone number, to which we could send messages in the preparation phase, as well as just before the event or after it has ended. For this, we prepared some messages beforehand, which we could send to everyone who would join. Some of these messages had a practical nature, such as asking whether visitors of the hybrid wine tasting event had already bought their wines. And others were more informal, with the intention of making personal contact with the audience members and creating an active atmosphere. We experienced that visitors mostly replied to our messages in a practical manner, for example, saying they would be slightly late or if they had bought their wines already. We are still looking for ways in which we can make these messages more interactive and exciting.

● Coaching sessions

During the hybrid events period we talked with mentors Lauren Vargas and Vanessa Mignan. With Lauren Vargas, we focused on the IMPAKT Hybrid Wine and Art Tasting Event. She helped us with gaining more insight into our communication with audiences. We specifically went into Whatsapp communication. We reflected on whether our messages are clear and transparent enough, as well as what we would do with the messages and pictures audiences sent us. Moreover, we focused on creative ways of asking for feedback from the audience, instead of a traditional survey.

We spoke with Vanessa Mignan shortly before our other two pilot events, Project Stargaze and The Great Idle. She helped us gain more insight into our way of communicating and how

to develop this. For the hybrid events, we have been working with small groups of audiences, due to technical aspects of the events. This resulted in intimate meetings and experiences, which were qualitatively rich and in which communication between participants could emerge. Whatsapp is an example of how we tried to increase this intimate and close communication. As mentioned above, these messages were sometimes replied to in a practical way and did not seem to connect to all of the audience members, although others reacted positively to them. For the audience target groups, we want to focus on not over-segmenting them and to diversify our personas.

With each event, we will understand better what the wants and needs of our audience are, by formally and informally asking them about their experiences. These vary from 'How did you prepare for this event?' to 'Did your experience match your expectations?' and from 'What are your main takeaways from this event?' to 'What could we improve?'. Something we can try for this is organising group interviews, creating interviews that go in depth about the event, or use fast interviews to grasp a visitor's first impressions of the event. Importantly, all these interview versions should be transparent about our need to learn from the visitors.

- **CRM programme**

Together with Dutch software developer Loggix, we have started developing our FileMaker-based CRM (Customer Relationship Management) system. During the DOORS project, we continued working with them to develop our system so we can better organise and further enhance our audience communication, and also have better communication within our IMPAKT team.

Through the CRM, we can store and organise our visitors' data, which we receive from different platforms, such as our newsletter and our ticketing system. This allows us to more effectively segment our audience, as well as improve our communication. The CRM allows us to get a more detailed picture of our visitors, such as age and which programmes they visit. That way, we can better see which programmes resonate with which audiences.

This CRM is still a work in progress, and we look forward to the increased possibilities it will offer us.

Benefits & Impact

Our online and hybrid events and exhibitions have proven to be very effective formats to engage wider, more international audiences. There is great value in continuing the development of online and hybrid formats as a potentially sustainable and inclusive way to reach audiences and organise international collaborations, to prepare for possible new pandemic-related restrictions, and as a way to connect with younger generations that spend more and more time online.

Transfer gained knowledge to the team

In order to improve our knowledge on communication strategies and to reach audiences, it is important to transfer our gained knowledge to the rest of IMPAKT's team, as well as to other partners. We aim to do this formally, as well as informally, depending on the content and group of attendees. An informal way of doing this is by raising these issues during IMPAKT's internal two-weekly meetings. A formal way of transferring knowledge is by writing guidelines and a toolkit about our insights and by stating their importance for future use. This way we can apply our knowledge to the next hybrid projects. In the first year, we will reflect on these guidelines after each event and adjust them where necessary. As they become more and more concrete, this will be needed less regularly. This will be driven by the team members who were also closely involved in DOORS. By sharing with our partners and other art and culture platforms, we can enrich the artistic field with new knowledge on hybrid events as well. Just like we do during our festival and other events, we aim to include artists who are experimenting and working with hybrid formats.

Here we pointed out some more benefits and impact we noticed when working on the DOORS project:

- inspired audiences during the hybrid events through engaging with them in new communicative ways;

- engaging with artists who specifically work with hybrid art;
- a better preparation for future hybrid events, by engaging with online and onsite communication and by connecting audiences in a direct way to hybrid experiences;
- reflection on hybridity with other institutions and organisations;
- experience of tailoring communication with visitors and reflecting on these by understanding the insights they give, which we can communicate to the other IMPAKT team members;
- a better understanding of what our audience looks like;
- a better understanding of how to connect to small-scale audiences of hybrid events.

Limits & Drawbacks

Possible limitations and challenges we faced and are still working on, are the following: Firstly our dependency on audiences for receiving feedback after the event has taken place. It is often difficult to make audiences fill in surveys or receive more information on their experiences of attending an event, when it is not built into the event itself. The low number of visitors that would likely attend our hybrid events makes this even harder. For Project Stargaze there were 16 participants for each game and during the Hybrid Art and Wine Tasting event not more than six people could join in front of one camera. The limited number of visitors both during the IMPAKT Hybrid Wine and Art Tasting Event, as well as during Project Stargaze and The Great Idle, created intimate and social experiences for the participants, but also made our learning process slower. The scale of the audience influenced the pace of learning, since more people provide more diverse and informative insights that help us to further nuance our way of programming events and the corresponding communication. We find that direct communication strategies can already improve this difficulty, but it remains something we want to explore further.

Another difficulty that we are currently facing is how to involve the whole IMPAKT team into our communication strategies plan and our insights into how to create richer audience experiences for our events. IMPAKT has a relatively small core team, which is often changing, especially since we work with many interns. This means we have to find ways in which we can share our wishes and needs for audience engagements, also when we are working in busy periods. We aim to communicate our approach to audiences consistently and to involve IMPAKT team members from all departments.

A third challenge is finding ways to bring in audience members, especially when the set-up and medium of the event is not entirely clear and the idea of hybridity scares visitors. For the hybrid events we organised, it was often not entirely clear how this would be experienced from the start, because of the new and experimental characteristics of the artworks. This was made evident by the ticket sales of *Project Stargaze* - an event for which friends had to be online and offline, separated in space. Although in the end both game days were filled with visitors, ticket sales started off very slow. The hybrid aspect of our events also had a negative effect on audiences' enthusiasm, since they expected to have to work out technical difficulties themselves.

Since the end of the Covid lockdowns at the start of 2022, we have found that audiences have been late with deciding whether to go to an event or not. This makes the anticipation and contextualization phase difficult to engage with audiences. Because of this, it is important for us to take into account this consumer behaviour when setting up an arch of engagement.

Future Prospects

With the continuing development of technologies, the possibilities for creating engaging hybrid experiences will only keep improving. Meanwhile, the ever increasing need for creating sustainable and inclusive programmes shows us the necessity of hybrid programmes. This means that working on enhancing the *anticipation and contextualisation* and *meaning-making* phases is an ongoing process, with many new opportunities and challenges to come.

- To make the most of these opportunities, we found several aspects throughout our DOORS research that we want to work on in the future and wish to implement into our workflow:
- Arches of Engagement for each of our seven profile types.
- (Semi-)regular workshops to discuss our target audiences and the Arches of Engagement.

- Sharing our findings with other organisations so they can build upon our research.
- Collaborating with other organisations, artists and educational institutions to find new audiences and keep developing our product.

Key Take-Aways

Our biggest take-away from our experiments with hybrid formats so far is that we must invest in new and engaging ways to communicate and interact with our audiences. Our current hybrid experiments focus on the experience of the visitors during the event. Yet, there are also numerous contact moments for visitors before (anticipation) and after (meaning-making): how they get their tickets and event reminders, how they get context information and how they are asked for feedback. How, when and through which channels and platforms this happens, might differ; not only in relation to the audience segments, but also in relation to the way in which one is following the event (online or onsite).

Other take-aways connected to this are: how we can use templates and prototypes for audience engagement, what way of communication works well before, during and after hybrid events and how we can approach online and onsite audiences for receiving feedback about their experiences in creative and new ways.

We have had to analyse our audiences thoroughly in order to apply our communication strategies to our audience in a good way. This means adjustments have to be made throughout the process, for example, changing a profile type completely in accordance with our current visitors, and reflecting on who we think our audiences are, and who they actually are.

Another important take-away is how we can transfer these insights to the rest of IMPAKT's team and how we can let our learnings come into practice in the future. Sharing new findings is difficult to put into words when we are still processing them ourselves. This is something we are working on.

Lastly, we find that it stays difficult to make the anticipation phase for online audiences as strong and exciting as it is for onsite audiences. Their environment and social connection is often less immersing and all-embracing compared to that of physical visitors. This, again, is a work in process, and also shows the importance of this research.

Involved Parties

[Ask your Audience](#) (audience analysis)
[Loggix](#) (FileMaker)
[Voordemensen](#) (ticket sales)
 Artists IMPAKT Hybrid Wine and Art Tasting Event: [Sophia Bulgakova](#), [Leo Scarin](#) & Cemre Deniz Kara, [Cenk Güzelis](#), [Valdemar Danry](#) and [Anna Pompermaier](#)
 Artists Project Stargaze: [Roos Groothuizen](#) and [Derk Over](#)
 Artist The Great Idle: [Benjamin Pompe](#)

IMPAKT is involved in two large research projects that experiment with new hybrid formats for public events. Within the multidisciplinary collaborations of the Innovation Labs, RAAK-SIA we work with multiple partners that help us in curating and realising hybrid events in 2023:
[Institute of Network Cultures](#)
[Framer Framed](#)
[The Hmm](#)
[MU Eindhoven](#)
 Varia
[Hackers & Designers](#)
[The University of Applied Sciences Amsterdam](#)
[The University of Applied Sciences Rotterdam](#)
[Willem de Kooning Academy](#)