



Image 1: Portrait of Anika Kok

## My identity

I am a structured, all-round and business-oriented designer. I started working on design at Fontys, HBO-ICT and Media Design where I graduated in July 2019. During my studies, I started my own company for graphic design and videographic work. This allowed me to work with many clients. Meeting new people with different skills and insights on life, and collaborating to grow together inspires me. I can learn from others, and in return use my knowledge and skills to capture their story in a design, video or strategy.

I am a generalist that knows a little bit about a lot. This ranges from creating (marketing) strategies, video making, coding and designing. I am good at project managing and creating structure, which is why I often take the lead in project groups. Although I naturally lead the groups I work in, I want to keep creating and designing myself, which is why I chose the track 'Research, Design and Development'. My interest in bringing people together while staying close to the executive part of projects leads to the role I now envision myself in in a few years: a design director.

In order to become a design director, I believe I need to gain experience and get a better grip on my design and research processes. Learn how to create products that suit the needs and wishes, are feasible but maybe also stretch the possibilities. This is where the master of Industrial Design comes in. When graduating at Fontys, I felt like a certain depth in my research and design was missing. I was able to create concepts and digital designs but I missed the theoretical background and substantiation that goes beyond the direct feedback of users.

To learn more about user research that extends beyond basic, unstructured literature reviews, questionnaires and interviews, I chose the expertise area 'User and Society'. In addition, I chose to focus on Creativity and Aesthetics to learn how to design more innovative products and services that go a step further than graphical user interfaces only. By combining my knowledge of all expertise areas and the extra skills in the aforementioned selection, I have been and still am learning how to design solutions that reach for impact in smart and achievable ways.

## Successes & milestones

Graduating from ICT and Media Design is one of the biggest goals I have achieved so far. During my studies I interned at two companies, moved to a completely different city, worked for Fontys and started my own company in videomaking, design and marketing. A highlight were the two internships, which were important for my development. I found that people at companies are honest and likely to push you out of your comfort zone, making the internships a true learning experience. Both companies were completely different but in both cases, I was responsible and accountable for both my own learning process and the results relevant to the company.

As mentioned, another big milestone was starting my own company. I think this is a great way to gain experience in the field you will likely work in after studying. During the three years of doing business with real life clients, both small and bigger, I have come across many different people and challenges. Learning how to manage these with flexibility without crossing personal and professional boundaries is something to keep working on. The same goes for taking leadership, expressing why decisions are made, convincing people that what you are proposing is a good option, and listening, truly listening. Without a doubt, I am happy that my soft skills and entrepreneurial insight have been able to grow in reasonably safe yet real, result demanding environments.



Image 2: Collaborative work with colleagues

## My vision

Because of my personal experience and the rising number of people with stress and burnouts, I believe there should be more focus on bringing tranquility to this world in which impulses from all angles become increasingly intense [4, 18]. To lower the burden on our mental capacity and to increase focus on important things in life, I envision a world in which products and information disappear to the periphery, occurring only when needed. This approach was first pointed out in literature by Weiser and Brown [13]. They wrote that calm technology engages both the center and the periphery of our attention, and in fact moves back and forth between the two.

Later, people like Amber Case endorsed the notion that reducing the attention needed to receive information from products, services and interfaces around us is necessary, and that designers can play a huge part in making that happen [2]. Bakker and Niemantsverdriet elaborated on these beliefs by creating the interaction-attention continuum: a concept supporting the idea that interfaces should facilitate interaction at varied levels of attention, to seamlessly fit interactions with technology into everyday routines. Therefore, technology should support shifts between focused, peripheral and implicit interaction [16].

My vision for the future builds on this, as I believe products will become more connected and coordinated in order to determine what a user needs at what time. That being said, it's not just about what a user needs, but more interestingly about how a user can be helped and supported. How we can create calmness in all the currently distracting technology so that the mind space of people can be freed up, in order to focus on the important things in life. Although smart home (systems) and IoT are already hot topics, I picture this will continue to spread and become increasingly noticeable in other products, so that the best of society can be highlighted.

Exploring 'how' information should be communicated is of great essence when designing for calmness. For instance: forms of natural interaction that make products intuitive to use, therefore requiring less effort and attention. But also: the power of using different modalities is something to be considered, as it can allow communication and interaction to happen in parallel. For example: a vibrating but silent smartwatch that notifies only the people to whom the message is relevant, instead of notifying everyone with a sound that cannot be ignored. Or: being able to control a car system by voice or one handed gestures, so that the hand(s) can stay on the wheel and the eyes of the driver on the road.

*By learning more about what elements contribute to products, services and interfaces feeling calm, and by working towards a world in which these elements are better represented, I hope to play my part in designing for tranquility and growth.*



Image 3: Filming at Glow 2018

## Future steps & career

By the time I am writing this, I am able to answer the question: where do I believe design should be headed? However, it felt like my ideas regarding design and my future career were not completely in line. I love designing following the calm technology philosophy, but in the future I want to become a manager, design director or whatever term can be used for someone that guides a team of designers, marketers or strategists.

A talk with my coach helped me to understand the connection between my wish to lead a team and the desire to design products that are there to bring more calmness and room to breathe. Let me start by giving an example of an important event in my life:

During my bachelor, I followed a 'powertraining' in videomaking. The training was extra, suitable only for motivated people interested in the topic. We ended up with a small group that I'll describe as dynamic, engaging and energetic with a sense of belonging and community. We were learning while growing stronger together. I always think happily of this experience. It was the first time I so clearly felt the uplifting energy of a team!

Since then, I started to believe that I can offer people structure and a safe place where they can excel. I am empathic and good at listening but also looking for balance and the truth. Thinking now, I might feel this passion because I haven't always felt like I belonged. Like I was in a safe environment and part of the group. Not feeling like you can be yourself and belong gives stress, which in my case lead to a burn-out at fifteen years old.

It almost feels like people, events, and other factors are something that end up being a sum of triggers that can result in an overload. This is why I believe products and services shouldn't add to the stress. I am sensitive to (negative) stress, impulses and opinions which is not something I wish others to feel like I did and sometimes do.

So: that's why I want to help take away stress from people around me and replace it with positive energy. Whether it's a product that is gracefully designed to seamlessly fit, or a team that runs like a well oiled machine.

# Goals

- Over the past few years, I have learned to analyse, listen to and learn from other peoples perspectives, stories, decisions, findings, etcetera. To do what others expect from me. Now, it is time to find my own voice. In order to define who I am and to leave my personal and professional mark, I need to be more confident in my choices and opinions. Even if these don't necessarily accord to choices and opinions of others. The learning goal to push myself towards taking a well-founded stance: **Within this semester, write three statements that I then write arguments for and against. Do I agree with the statement? Why or why not?**
- Last semester, the M2.1. semester, I lost myself a bit in rules and expectations of both myself and others. Good timing considering I am at the brim of defining how you would like your work life to start. I believe it will be helpful to use this last semester to define what I want to do after graduating. I know it can always be changed if needed, but it would be great to get off to a flying start! My learning goal is therefore: **Write a short reflection regarding an achievement each week for the entire semester.**
- The previous learning goal ties in with my third learning goal, as I want to prepare for a career after graduation. I have talked about future jobs with many friends, family members, colleagues, fellow students and experts so that is a taken step. The next step is to start talking to the actual companies itself. **Therefore, I want to contact at least two companies regarding job opportunities before graduating.** That way, we can discuss how we could potentially help each other later on.
- Lastly, I have found that I do a lot of work within my design process. However, that work isn't as structured as I would like it to be. I don't want to define too much as I think not everything in design processes should be strict and forced. Otherwise, I am afraid it might kill the creativity and flow. That is why I have chosen to **try the framework by Hummels and Frens.** Fellow students have told me this might be a good framework for me to get more grip and structure. **At the end of the semester, I will write a short reflection to look back on how the framework has affected my project.**

## Strengths

- Project management
- Business oriented mindset
- Communicating ideas in both words and visuals

## Weaknesses

- Perfectionism in the process or design
- Having too much to do, which negatively influences my focus
- Being devoted to one idea or design too quickly

## Opportunities

- Improve methodological skills
- Use personal experience with overwhelm and stress in design

## Threats

- Perfectionism prohibiting from making decisions and taking action
- Being overwhelmed by all of the possibilities and opportunities
- My stress level becoming too high

## Previous goals

### M21 project goals

- Because of my project last semester and the work that I am doing for clients of my company, I have realized that perfectionism is still apparent in my work. This helps to have high standards, but it also keeps me from thinking outside of the box, letting go of the standards and actually being creative. To stop myself from perfecting solutions and to ensure that the process runs faster, I have set a concrete goal for myself: **Make at least 35 sketches at the start of the project and create at least two iterations that lead to the final end result of the project.**
- During the last semester, I have found that I am struggling with making choices. Sometimes, I am skipping steps by making choices too quickly whereas at other moments, I am lingering in the same 'spot' for too long. I need to learn that I can't study everything and gain an awareness of what to include and what to deliberately leave out. Be aware of the pros and cons of decisions: Why am I doing this and what are (potential) problems when I do it like this? The learning goal to help me from lingering in certain phases of the project is therefore simple but concrete: **Create a project planning that allows for depth in the study without going into too much detail and stick to this planning until the final assessment. Hereby, it is important that there is room for flexibility and adjustment if necessary.**
- Lastly, I have become really aware that I am preparing for my future career. As the last year of my studies has started, I have to think of what skills I want and need to learn before starting in the work field. As for now, I feel like my work and study are not aligned in some areas. For example: in my studies I am very focused on Calm Technology whereas that doesn't really play a role in my current work for clients. Also: at the University we can take months for one extensive research project. In the professional field however, projects must achieve the best possible result in a short period of time with a low budget. Learning how to balance this will be critical when combining my newly gained skills from university with my work life. To make this concrete, I have set the learning goal: **Search for interesting job opportunities and study what skills are needed when applying. Write one SMART learning goal that can be achieved before the end of the Final Master Project.**

### M12 project goals

- I want to take advantage of the M1.2. research semester to improve my skills as a **researcher**, rather than focussing on design. Part of this is to learn how to be more inclusive and take side effects from researching in consideration when drawing conclusions. Up until this point, I have mostly done research that is not being mindful about external factors. "What is the location of the study?", "What is happening in the surrounding?", "What is the skill or knowledge level of the user regarding the subject/ topic?" and "What should we focus on or not?". These are just a few examples of things that as I imagine, can have a great influence on the study results. I want to learn how to critically reflect on **what should be included in the research and what should be excluded**. Not only in relation to the research product but the surrounding factors as

well, so I can address these when drawing conclusions of the study. This also means that the result should not be positioned as something finished or perfect, but instead, as **a starting point for more research**.

- Another part of becoming a better researcher and designer is using **design as part of the research process**. Last semester, I followed the course 'Researching The Future Everyday' by Lenneke Kuijer which gave me a whole new perspective on research. During this course, I learned that you can **use research to ask questions** rather than coming up with solutions. I have been intrigued to learn more about this 'asking questions' approach as it is completely different than how I had been trained to research before. I have always seen design as an end goal: something you are working towards by doing user research and iterating, rather than using the design to provoke people and **start a conversation**. I think this approach is starting to help me to **postpone user research less** because it means your design or prototype doesn't have to be perfect. It should just **answer the question** that you are asking at that moment. These answers can then **accumulate to a design** that is meant to solve a problem. I am intending to explore and utilize this new approach of using designs to answer research questions so I can aggregate all answers and present a design solution to a problem regarding the Workwalk and Hub at the end of my M1.2. semester.

### **M11 project goals**

- During my pre-master project, I realised that my perfectionism was holding me back. My team members had to push me to finalise tasks like creating a protocol and start user testing. I wanted to conduct a good user test and be completely prepared which made me postpone a lot. I should learn how to focus less on perfecting one iteration and to keep my eye on the end goal. Making quick iterations and getting out of my own head by just doing things rather than overthinking. **In my M11 group project, I want to make at least two iterations of the product I am designing to be able to deliver an advice for a third version at the end of the semester.**
- Since starting at Industrial Design, what distinguishes me as a designer has become much clearer. My Professional Identity and Vision have come a long way and are defined much better. Designing more consciously towards my Professional Identity and Vision as defined right now is an objective for the upcoming semester, so I can review my standpoint and design even better fitting products in the future. **During my M11 semester, I will create at least three requirements that I believe a product should match to fit calm design. At the end of the semester, I can use these to test whether the product matches my personal view and vision on 'calm design'.**
- When it comes to 'Calm design', I believe it is important to have a deeper understanding of human behaviour, thoughts, needs, motivations, etcetera. Because so many of these processes take place unconsciously, I want to gain knowledge on the human brain and psychology. I can then use this theory in my design process, to create better,

more suitable solutions for the users. I will work on this by following the course User Experience Theory and Practice during my M11 semester. **My goal is therefore to complete the course DDM150 with a pass.**

#### Short term goals - **pre-master**

- Find out what I really like to do and want to learn so I can work towards this in a more focused way. I find so many things interesting that it can be difficult to focus. I will work on this goal by talking to people around me and reflecting on what I have already done in the past. I also want to use the Vitality project to do a lot of different things so I can see what I like best.
- Find a rhythm or good way of working on education related things. I am not used to homework which means I have to find a good way to plan this efficiently. This is especially important since I want to join the Media committee from UNiD, and have my own company with multiple clients to work for.
- Pass all of my courses in one go. I haven't had exams in a while since all my activities at Fontys were graded by assessments. This is the same for most courses at Industrial Design, but Economics of Innovation is an example of a course that uses exams to grade students.

#### Long term goals - written during **pre-master**

- Improve my theoretical knowledge on humans and their user experience. Specifically about human behaviour and the human brain/psychology. I want to learn more about this because I find that what people say isn't always true when you put it to the test. If I know about this process, I can use my knowledge to create better, more suitable solutions and products. For as far as I know, the study Human Technology Interaction is all about this subject, so I would like to follow some of their electives.
- Improve my research skills to become a better user experience designer. I want to become better at this so that I can create solutions and products that fit into, and improve the lives of humans, without interrupting, disturbing or being predominant.