



Design Education Forum of Southern Africa



# DE+ AFRIKA+ 4IR+

DESIGN EDUCATION /AFRIKA/4TH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

16th DEFSA CONFERENCE  
5 - 7 OCTOBER 2021

**CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS**

Hosted virtually by  
University of Johannesburg &  
Inscape Education Group

## Editors

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## Introduction

### ***Conference overview and publication of proceedings***

The 16th DEFSA Conference was hosted by the University of Johannesburg and Inscape Education Group from 5 to 7 October 2021. The conference was the first virtual conference hosted by DEFSA. The theme of the conference: DE+AFRIKA+4IR+: DESIGN EDUCATION/AFRIKA/4TH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION, challenged design academics to self-reflection and explore forward-thinking approaches by addressing the past, present, and future of design education while considering the fourth industrial revolution in the context of Afrikan scholarship.

The initial call for abstracts was published on the DEFSA website and circulated to member institutions, resulting in the submission of 55 abstracts. The editors accepted 45 abstracts for full papers, nine for short papers, and one was rejected. The final 36 full papers were received for a second review. Over the two days of the conference, the 36 papers were presented, representing 11 public and private higher education institutions that offer design education in South Africa and Kenya. As this was the first digital conference, registration for the conference was free for DEFSA members. Over the two days of the conference, an average of 75 attendees were in the digital room. Additional to the proceedings, an online welcoming event was held on the evening before the start of the conference, and a live interview with a few key DEFSA members enabled reflection on the rich history of DEFSA. The interviews highlighted the importance of DEFSA and future visions for the organisation.

All abstracts and full papers for the conference and subsequent publication were selected using a double-blind peer-review process that ensured that both authors and reviewers remained anonymous during the process. The double-blind peer review of the full paper was completed prior to the conference by a group of academics drawn from nine institutions, representing the disciplines of architecture, communication design, education, fashion design, fine art, graphic design, jewellery design, interior design, photography, and visual studies. A list of the peer reviewers is included in the conference proceedings. Authors received feedback in the form of peer review reports. The improvements and corrections to the papers could be implemented before the conference and were necessary for acceptance in the conference proceedings. Authors were asked to reflect and report on the reviewers' comments by highlighting their changes in response to the report. Ultimately, 34 papers are published here in the *16th DEFSA Conference Proceedings*.

### ***Foreword by editors***

The conference theme was decided by the DEFSA Management Committee in 2020. At the end of a very challenging year in design education due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the need to reflect on the impact of isolation and teaching in a digital space led naturally to the need to consider the future of design education in relation to the fourth industrial revolution (4IR). Therefore, the call for papers allowed researchers to explore the unique context of design education in Afrika. At past DEFSA conferences, design educators would reflect the conference theme through their context, lived experience, and specific design discipline. The 16th DEFSA Conference allowed for self-reflection and encouraged forward thinking to address the past, present, and future of design education while considering the fourth

industrial revolution in the context of Afrikan scholarship. The title of the conference was specifically chosen to further the focus on local contexts and reflect on the envisioned future of design education.

This year, the call for papers deliberately did not specify focus areas and rather allowed the discussion in the papers to inform the focus areas of the conference. Three themes emanated from the papers received, namely *design teaching strategies*, *design-discipline-specific teaching*, and *design education and 4IR*. The themes determined the nine sessions of the conference, each with a specific focus. All the presentations were pre-recorded, and the session was led by a moderator who introduced the session's papers and authors. Sessions were concluded with engaging discussions with all the authors in the virtual room.

Due to the high number of discipline-specific focused papers received, a third of the sessions focused on design-discipline-specific teaching in the jewellery design, interior design, and fashion design disciplines.

The remaining sessions spoke to broader design-education-related issues and focused on specific themes:

- Complexities in an Afrikan context
- Disrupted spaces and the Afrikan [online] university
- Digital pedagogies, ethics and design, 4IR for design education
- Thinking through 4IR – reflections on teaching in the digital space
- Physical spaces for 4IR functioning
- The human side of 4IR – shaping design education for the future.

*Complexities of an Afrikan context* considered the impact of transdisciplinary and/or multi-disciplinary educational approaches have on developing critical and creative thinking competencies while considering ways of improving the ethical quality of projects, unequal access, and the lack of student social presence. *Disrupted spaces and the Afrikan [online] university* considered the perceived change in employment opportunities. *Digital pedagogies, ethics and design, 4IR for design education* considered how to prepare design students for the world of 4IR and the types of skills required in production processes, theory, epistemological curiosity, intellectual tools, authorship, commodification, representation, and distribution. *Thinking through 4IR – reflections on teaching in the digital space* addressed emerging 4IR systems. *Physical spaces for 4IR functioning* acknowledged the capacity of 4IR to negatively and positively disrupt. *The human side of 4IR – shaping design education for the future* highlights the resultant urgent need to ensure that systems are integrated into the human world in a way that enhances the human condition through human-centred design (HCD), ensuring sustaining the planet.

Sustainability requires a recasting of the traditional role of design. One of the main concerns of the fourth industrial revolution is the effect of the revolution on gender equality. Speculative design and Afrofuturism afforded a deepened understanding of gender equality and centrally positioning Afro-diasporic speculative design (ASD) episteme in South African higher education design.

A reflection on design pedagogy and teaching in digital spaces remained the central theme of the conference. Educators reflected on how they were challenged to align with shifting conditions and had to re-think traditional strategies of teaching design. 4IR is characterised by rapid automation and high demand for technological, social, and emotional and higher cognitive skills. 4IR requires that design thinking positions human and societal needs at the centre of crucial and critical technological innovation. Collaboration, interdisciplinarity, and multidisciplinary were forefronted as important strategies.

### **Keynote speaker**

Saki Mafundikwa is the founder and director of the Zimbabwe Institute of Vigital Arts (ZIVA).\* Mafundikwa is a well-known African scholar specialising in visual communication and design education. He is an author, filmmaker, and farmer in Zimbabwe who dedicates his life to sharing Zimbabwean culture through design, film, and education. As Mafundikwa states: “Afrika has to find Afrikan solutions to her problems, otherwise we will always be colonised by others,” Mafundikwa is a TED speaker and is invited to lecture at well-known design schools worldwide. He is best known for his work in Afrikan typography, emanating from his graduate studies. His expertise in the written traditions of the many Afrikan alphabets and their symbolic representation resulted in his comprehensive review of African writing systems.

\* ‘Vigital’ is the teaching of visual arts using digital tools

### **Peer reviewers**

The 2021 DEFSA conference peer review group have more than 700 years of combined experience in higher education. The peer-review process for the 16th DEFSA Conference and the publication of the conference proceedings followed two phases. In the first phase, abstracts were submitted and peer reviewed in a rigorous double-blind peer-review process. Then, the peer reviews and reports were verified by the peer review committee. Based on the outcomes, approved abstracts were accepted into the conference, and authors received feedback. In the second phase, full papers were submitted by authors and again went through a double-blind peer-review process before the conference. Reviewers received a review guideline and review reports were completed online to a secure location on the DEFSA website. The papers selected and approved through this process were presented at the conference and then published here in this conference proceedings.

The double-blind peer-review process ensures that two people review each abstract and paper and that authors and reviewers who are experts in their fields remain anonymous.

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