



## Sara De Bondt

Graphic designer, lecturer at KASK Gent

As a graphic designer, Sara De Bondt has acquired an important position in the cultural domain. Her clients include the V&A Museum, Barbican Centre, Tate and BOZAR. She leads a small team in her independent design studio. She has also held guest lectureships and taught at the Royal College of Art. Nowadays she is a lecturer at the KASK in Ghent. (source: [Henry Van De Velde Awards](#), [Sara De Bondt Studio](#))

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Although during my graphic design studies at Sint Lukas Brussels at the end of the 1990s I did not have a single female practical lecturer, as a student and starting designer I thought that gender inequality was no longer an issue. But when I was interviewed in 2010 for the book *How to Be a Graphic Designer Without Losing Your Soul*, half of the questions were about the fact that I am a woman instead of about my work, while the male interviewees could talk about their performance. At that point, I realized that there was a problem, and with two collaborators, I started an investigation into gender balance in graphic design. We started counting how many women and men graduated, found jobs in studios or became self-employed, and how many of them were recorded in professional organizations, publications, exhibitions, congresses, awards, juries and articles. In 2012 we presented our findings at Iaspis in Stockholm. We had converted the figures into data visualizations, which made the facts even more shocking. Although every year more girls than boys graduate in graphic design, their representation in the field is totally disproportionate. In 2019, the American professional organization AIGA had to come to a similar conclusion after its inventory of international congresses. The graphs can be consulted on the *Eye on Design* blog.

During the compilation of the exhibition *Off the Grid* last year in Design Museum Ghent, it was very important for me not to repeat this negative pattern. Martha Scotford's text, "Messy History vs. Neat History" was very inspiring, in which she argues for making history "dirty" instead of "clean". A clean history focuses on the biographies of successful, solitary designers, while a messy history is open to others: employees, office managers, interns, wives, partners, teachers, critics, historians, and other configurations. It is a way to open up the field and its history.

Wikipedia plays an important role for students and researchers. It is often a starting point for research, and for young designers looking for examples to identify with, representation can be crucial. Together with my students at KASK School of Arts, we have been writing Wikipedia articles about graphic designers in Belgium for several years now. Although there was always interest in creating articles about women, we regularly got stuck because information can be difficult to find. Thanks to the many partners in the Women Wiki Design project and the content and technical support from the Flanders Architecture Institute and Wikipedia, this year for the first time we managed to write only about female designers.