France occupies a strong international position in the design field, thanks to its rich cultural and manufacturing history. Emblematic of that strong position are many great French names in the world of design—among them Matali Crasset, Ora-Itò, Charlotte Perriand, Andrée Putman, and Philippe Starck. The last three decades have seen increases in organizations, institutions, and events dedicated to promoting design and innovation in the field. Consider these developments:

- During the 1980s institutions for design training and promotion were established, such as the École Nationale Supérieure de Création Industrielle (national higher school for industrial design), the Agence pour la Promotion de la Création Industrielle (agency for the promotion of industrial design), and the Centre de Création Industrielle (center for industrial design) at the Pompidou Center.
- During the 1990s promotional expositions emerged, such as the Saint-Étienne International Biennial and the Observateur du Design in Paris.
- During the last decade policies to popularize design were adopted, as embodied, for example, in the Lieu du Design d’Île-de-France and the Cité du Design in Saint-Étienne.

As the art of giving form to function, design is a key feature of many sectors. Once the province of manufactured products, design is now applied to food, sound, textiles, data, and even medications. Designers understand the relation between an object and its users and aim to improve users' experience. To do that they must master drawing, various technical disciplines, and computer science (2- and 3-D multimedia). The many design training programs now offered in France's schools of art and design are of excellent quality. Organized around a 5-year curriculum that begins by providing the general training that future designers need, the programs emphasize both artistic and scientific skills, combining art, engineering, and computer science. After completing the general core curriculum, students specialize in one of many media, materials, or sectors of activity.

**ORGANIZATION OF STUDIES**

More than 100 industrial design programs in France award a degree after 2 years of postsecondary study; nearly 60 after 3 years; 20 after 4 years; and about 40 after 5 years. All require as a condition for admission a good command of French (at least B2 in the Common European Framework for Reference for Languages). It is possible to transfer into programs at any year, provided one can demonstrate sufficient academic preparation or professional experience.

**The public school network**

In the field of the Visual Arts, of which Design is one, France’s public institutions are divided into two groups:

**Schools Overseen by the Ministry of Culture**

Among the 45 higher schools of art overseen by France’s Ministry of Culture, 27 offer a design option:

- **DNAT (Diplôme national d’arts et techniques)** is a 3-year postsecondary degree offered in 3 areas: product design, graphic design, and textile design. Graduates of the practically oriented programs are recognized as design specialists.
- **DNSEP (Diplôme national supérieur d’expression plastique)** is a higher degree earned in 2 years of study after the DNAT. Placing more emphasis on artistic expression, the program leads to a diploma in creative design.

Beginning in 2012, the DNAT and DNSEP will be recognized as the equivalent of the Licence and Master. Applicants to the first year of degree programs are admitted by examination. Decisions on transfer admissions are made by admission committees or equivalence committees.

**Two national schools confer institution-specific degrees:**

- **ENSCI/Les Ateliers,** the École Nationale Supérieure de Création Industrielle
- **ENSA/DNA**

Two DNSEP degrees (textile designer or industrial designer) and two Maîstères Spécialisés (specialized master = master + 1 year): (i) creation and contemporary technology and (ii) innovation by design. Applicants may choose to be examined in English. Successful applicants spend their first semester completing a project with faculty supervision in English while taking intensive French. Students enrolled in this special semester pay a rate higher than national tuition rates. After completing their first semester, students begin the normal 3-year curriculum. ENSCI also offers a double degree in Design and Science with the Université Pierre et Marie Curie (Paris VI) as well as a unique European degree, the Master of European Design (http://medes.kisd.de).

http://www.ensci.com

**ENSAD, the École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs**

In its decorative arts curriculum, the school offers specializations beginning in the second year: object design, graphic design and multimedia, textile and material design, clothing design.

http://www.ensad.fr

**Schools Overseen by the Ministry of National Education**

This group of schools offers the following degrees:

- **BTS, Brevet de Technicien Supérieur** (2 years of postsecondary)

Applicants must possess a French baccalauréat or the equivalent. Public lycées (secondary schools) offer more than 40 BTS degrees in design. Product, fashion, and textile design are the most popular. BTS programs are designed to enable students to begin their career immediately after graduation.
• Licence Professionnelle (3 years of postsecondary study)
Fifteen different licence professionnelle programs enable students to develop specialized skills in 3 years of postsecondary study. Available specializations include textile design, sound design, packaging, 3-D modeling (including one program in automobile manufacturing), and drafting.

• DMA, Diplôme des Métiers d’Arts (2 years of postsecondary study)
DMA programs do not prepare students directly for design careers, but they lead there indirectly. Offered in art schools, DMA programs concentrate on specific arts and crafts, depending on the school. Their goal is to transmit traditional know-how to future craftsmen. Among the 20 or so DMAs related to design are programs in the design and creation of jewelry, furniture, ceramics, books, and textiles. Applicants are admitted on the basis of written applications, interviews, or written examinations, depending on the prior degree they hold.
One-year remedial classes in applied arts are offered in most schools.

• DSAA, Diplôme supérieur des arts appliqués (4 years of postsecondary study)
Holders of the DMA may elect to continue on for a DSAA (diplôme supérieur des arts appliqués). Equipped with the solid technical training they gained in the DMA curriculum, DSAA candidates have the opportunity to refine their artistic skills and sensibilities in preparation for a career in design or a related field.

Some 20 different DSAA degrees are available in visual communication (typography, illustration, and graphic arts), industrial design, and fashion and textiles.

4 schools have international sections that welcome foreign students for a nondegree year. The schools are:

Ecole Supérieure d’Arts Appliqués Boullon
BTS (certificate) in product design, after which students may continue for a DSAA in furniture design and a master’s in design (5 years of postsecondary study) in cooperation with the Ecole Normale Supérieure de Cachan.
http://www.ecole-boullon.org

Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts Appliqués et Métiers d’Art Olivier de Serres (ENSAAMA), specializing in textiles and ceramics. BTS (certificate) in spatial design, product design, fashion design, textiles, materials. DSAA in industrial design.
http://ensaama.net

Ecole Supérieure des Arts Appliqués Duperré (ESDA)
The Ecole Duperré offers a 2-year course of preparation for the rigorously selective entrance examination for the design department of the Ecole Normale Supérieure de Cachan (teaching certificate, Master, Doctorate).
http://www.duperré.org

Ecole Estienne
The Ecole Estienne specializes in the arts of the book (gilding, binding, engraving, typography), leading to a DSAA in book design, visual communication, or communication strategies.

Private schools
Some 30 private secondary schools (lycées) offer a BTS (brevet de technicien supérieur) in design (products, fashion, or textile options). Private postsecondary schools offer a 5-year curriculum capped by the school’s own degree. The curriculum is typically structured as 3 years of general design education followed by 2 years of specialization. These schools emphasize the acquisition of operational skills in the business world. Some specializations involve innovation in materials and management of design projects (design and business; management of transportation design, product design, or digital design). Tuition at private schools is generally higher than at public institutions.

École de design de Nantes
http://www.lecoledeledesign.com

Administered by the Nantes chamber of commerce and industry, the École de design de Nantes welcomes applications from international students who have completed 3 years of postsecondary education in design. Four programs are taught in English: (i) New Mobility; (ii) Responsible Innovation; (iii) Design and Interculturality, China (dual degree for Shanghai university students); and (iv) Design and Interculturality, India (dual degree for Bangalore-Srishti students).
Institut Supérieur de Design (ISID)
http://www.design-valenciennes.com

ISD offers a bachelor’s degree followed by a 2-year master’s-level program in design management (digital design or product/transportation design).

RESEARCH THEMES

“Visual and Urban Design” is a research unit of the Université de Valenciennes. It is also affiliated with the doctoral department of humanities and social sciences at the Université de Lille.

Some schools of art offer 1-year postgraduate programs in research and creative methods in very specific fields, such as food design. Public schools of art feature workshops for research and creativity (ARCs, ateliers de recherche et de création) in which faculty members and artists cooperate across disciplines to create an environment in which students receive supportive feedback while exercising their creativity and experimenting with new techniques.

INTERNATIONAL STANDING

Since 1999, France has been one of the most active countries in the area of industrial innovation through design. The Observeur du Design is an international exposition organized by the Cité des Sciences et de l’Industrie in Paris, which confers awards on the most innovative products. The exposition has been awarded the “International Competition” label of the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design.

The Saint-Étienne International Design Biennial invites design students (15,000 fr) to display the designs of the future while discovering the best of current work.

France’s regions have also developed spaces for the sharing of knowledge, such as the Lieu du Design (“the design space”) and the Île-de-France Innovation Center in the Paris region.

Useful Web sites

• Agence pour la promotion de la création industrielle (agency for the promotion of industrial design)
http://www.apci.asso.fr
• National association of public preparatory programs for schools of art
• National association of art school directors
http://www.anlea.fr
• Centre George Pompidou
http://www.centrepompidou.fr
• Centre National des Arts plastiques (national center for the plastic arts)
http://www.cnap.fr
• Cité du Design
http://www.citedudesign.com
• Federation of national associations of contemporary art professionals
http://www.cipac.net
• Le Lieu du Design (“the design space”)
http://www.lelieududesign.com
• National association of public preparatory programs for schools of art
• VIA (commercialization of innovations in furnishings)
http://www.via.fr/fr/home.htm
• Weekly French design webzine
http://www.admirabledesign.com

Keywords

3D design - applied arts - aeronautic/aviation design - automotive design - ceramics - drawing and drafting - fashion - furniture design - glass - graphic design - imaging - industrial design - materials - plastic arts - product design - sound design - textiles - textile design - visual arts - visual communication

Search for schools, majors, and degree programs on the CampusFrance website.

CampusFrance’s online catalog contains information on every program in France—from the licence (bachelor) level to the doctorate.
campusfrance.org > academic programs and research opportunities in France

CampusArt allows prospective students to submit a common online application to 200 licence and master’s programs at 60 schools of art.
http://www.campusart.org

Programs taught in English enables anglophone students to search for programs taught in English at French institutions:
http://www.campusfrance.org/fr/rd-catalogue/programs_taught_english/programs.html

CampusBourse is CampusFrance’s directory of grant and scholarship programs: