



### **What is Zero Footprint Campus?**

*Zero Footprint Campus* is a new art programme in the public area of the Utrecht Science Park, the area formerly known as De Uithof in Utrecht. Twelve artists selected from the Netherlands and abroad have been commissioned to conduct a one-year artistic study into the possibilities and impossibilities of Zero Footprint Campus. To what extent is this area, with its users (researchers, students, canteen staff, security staff, etc.), suitable for creating new works of art? How can this work contribute to and shed some light on our search for a sustainable society? Through intensive collaboration with experts from the university of applied sciences, the university and other institutions and knowledge institutions, artists can use the Science Park as a scientific search engine. The study takes one year and will result in new work that will be presented in the public area of the Science Park in June 2017.

### **Who is the initiator of Zero Footprint Campus?**

*Zero Footprint Campus* was initiated by the *Department of Search*, an organisation founded by artists – a department *of* search as well as a department *for* search. This new artists' organisation was founded at the Utrecht Science Park after a one-year study by Dutch artist Melle Smets and Cynthia Hathaway, a designer working in the Netherlands. This new department links artists to the scientific practice of the Utrecht Science Park, it offers them the space for their study and experiments, and it commissions them with developing and presenting new work. The Department of Search offers the participating artists and scientists an

opportunity to meet each other, enter into new relations, start new partnerships and gain other insights.

### **Why De Uithof?**

The Utrecht Science Park, formerly De Uithof, is an area just outside the city centre of Utrecht where the university of applied sciences, the university, companies, NGOs, the hospital and many other institutions are located. The Utrecht Science Park is a campus after the American model, a city in its own right, a place where knowledge and research are concentrated and where the wishes and needs of employees and students are met. It is a geographic piece of land where searching has priority, where everything is organised around facilitating the searchers and their search, ranging from cancer research and stem cell research to applied gaming, the circular economy and problems concerning the sustainable city. These various subjects and the wide range of companies and knowledge institutes are part of a shared theme and interest summed up by the Utrecht Science Park under the denominator *Healthy Urban Living*. Healthy living in the city is an inescapable issue, given the increasing global urbanisation. How do we ensure cities and their residents remain healthy? This question is so big and so many domains are involved that a powerful search engine is essential. The Utrecht Science Park is one of such powerful search engines and consists of people, buildings, infrastructure, data, technology and organic material.

*The Department of Search* joins this search power of the area and adds a new search method to the Utrecht Science Park: the 'artist method'.

### **Why? What is the reason?**

The artist method is important as a voice in the large-scale *Healthy Urban Living* research project of the Utrecht Science Park, since sustainability is not something intended for consumption (by giving a discount on the Dutch Sustainability Day or by recommending items with 'Are you sustainably savvy?' for instance), but it primarily implies a change in mentality, a different view of the world, reality and possible solutions. In addition to adjusting production processes and consumer behaviour, these solutions can be found in thinking about the essence of the problem, in looking for solutions via untrodden paths and in being open to answers of another order altogether. This is precisely what many artists are good at. The fact that they can use the big Utrecht Science

Park search engine and join forces with Science Park employees or contribute with new expertise, renders this initiative special and unique.

There is another reason: the generally shared wish to make the campus a 'better' place. The Department of Search facilitates the cross-fertilisation between art and science by programming the public domain of the Science Park for the longer term in a playful way. This will improve the liveability on the campus, promote interaction between the Science Park users and institutions, and make it easier for 'outsiders' to contribute.

### **How were the artists selected?**

The artists were selected by the artistic team of the Department of Search: Melle Smets, Cynthia Hathaway and Carlijn Diesfeldt. The participating artists were invited on the basis of their body of work and their working method. Artists were selected whose artistic development was expected to be stimulated by this commission as well as to give a valuable impulse to the Utrecht Science Park. The artists were selected for their capability of asking original questions and for their specific and special view of reality. They *highlight the capacities of the Utrecht Science Park* by looking for useful materials and use these to put their ideas into practice.

### **Are there any tangible results yet?**

Since September 2016, the Department of Search has been using its own open-air faculty building, a public platform where participating artists present their search questions, organise meetings, and communicate with the Utrecht Science Park audience. All artists work on the campus on a regular basis – visibly and invisibly – and will also be building in the next few months. This will lead to the Zero Footprint Campus presentation in June with absurd, realistic, futuristic and critical views on a sustainable society.

The results of the various art projects will also become evident in ways less visible: a 'breach' in the existing and sometimes hampering systems, a new insight or view, a special partnership. These results, too, will be brought into the open.

### **Can I join in Zero Footprint Campus?**

Yes, please do! The artists are all building their own network, inside and outside the Science Park, and frequently organise workshops,

experiments and meetings. We are looking for volunteers for the presentation in June. Go to [www.zerofootprintcampus.nl](http://www.zerofootprintcampus.nl) for the latest news and follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

### **Why does this lead to nothing?**

‘This leads to nothing’ is a provoking campaign slogan in the first place, a light-hearted reference to ‘Zero’ in ‘Zero Footprint Campus’. It also refers to a major similarity between autonomous art and fundamental scientific research. In the strategic agenda of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, it is aptly stated that “originality rather than practical use is necessary for both the scientist and the artist. Art and science both represent democratic values that are typical of our society, such as openness, experiment and confrontation. Both disciplines are nourished by the will to interact with the unknown, and they appeal to the creativity needed to gain new insights.”

### **Does the name Zero Footprint Campus convey any actual ambition?**

No, it does not. Zero Footprint Campus has several meanings. Most research on De Uithof is focused on the world outside the Utrecht Science Park, so its involvement in research could rather be described as abstract and theoretical. This distance also strikes visitors to the USP. Although everybody comes to the university to learn, build a network and get inspired, the public area is sterile. There are few self-organised meeting places. Research conducted behind close doors is invisible in the public domain.

The Department of Search wondered what would happen if we use the immediate vicinity of researchers to test research in practice. How do we link a local search-and-practice function to the international *Healthy Urban Living* search engine of the Utrecht Science Park? Can involvement be generated by making the immediate vicinity a subject of study? These questions have led to the *Zero Footprint Campus idea*. Zero is the circle that marks the border of the Science Park. If we are forced or willing to confine life to this circle, what will this area offer in terms of material? What can *you* do? The artists’ search shows the richness of the Utrecht Science Park under such circumstances. Zero thus represents inclusivity, and *Zero Footprint Campus is about local inspiration*. The name *Zero Footprint Campus*, therefore, has a double meaning. The most obvious meaning refers to sustainability, to reducing your ecological footprint as a human being and as a campus. But there is another, more complex connotation: this project calls for leaving a

footprint, not one of emissions, waste and pollution, but one of self-organisation, own initiative, awareness, and of asking the right questions about your own position and the role of the Utrecht Science Park, art and science, and eventually the world.

### **What distinguishes this art programme from other projects?**

This is a good question. Zero Footprint Campus is about urgent issues, which many artists and designers are concerned about. It is encouraging that the capability of the creative sector to come up with innovative ideas about current and urgent social topics is increasingly appreciated and used. This project stands out for the fact that the ideas are put into practice, that they are concretised and can be tested. The artists stay on the campus for the long term, they adjust their concepts and interact with the location and the users. This working method, by which ideas are actually implemented, yields new insights into a healthy future, new partnerships, new meeting places on the campus, but also insights into the limits that our systems pose to the ideas and how to cope with this.

### **Will people wonder why this is art?**

Possibly. The project shows in particular in how many ways art can manifest itself. All projects have one thing in common: they are based on the artist method. To artists, the line between an initiative – like setting up the Department of Search – and making work is very thin. Artists regard this kind of initiative as part of their practice, as a piece of art. The artist method allows for experiments that may fail. Real failures hardly occur, for what initially looks like a failure may often prove useful for a new idea or project. Besides, much work is done without any predefined object. In other words, there is enough leeway to make modifications, to change the idea, or to end up with a completely different result. Even though people may think this is a noncommittal affair, it is anything but that. Anyone who has worked with artists for a longer period of time will admit that there is a huge difference between an open process and a noncommittal process. Finally, the artist method has another quality, which we might call ‘the longest way’. Artists working on the basis of an open process often take a longer route to achieve the final result than they would have taken in the event of more rational working processes.

The special results yielded by the artist method at the Utrecht Science Park can be experienced in June. The current processes can be followed on [www.zerofootprintcampus.nl](http://www.zerofootprintcampus.nl).

### **What will happen after Zero Footprint Campus?**

The Department of Search wants to be at the Utrecht Science Park permanently and has the ambition to initiate new art projects after and on the basis of the results of Zero Footprint Campus. A permanent institute that links the artists' searching capability to scientific practice in the search for a sustainable society is unique and may provide a major contribution to addressing one of the biggest challenges of our time.

### **Who pays the project?**

The project is organised in collaboration with the municipality of Utrecht, Utrecht University, the Utrecht Science Park Foundation, the Province of Utrecht, and the Utrecht University of Applied Sciences. The partners also contribute financially, as well as the Mondriaan Fund, The Art of Impact, the K.F. Hein Fund, the Prince Bernhard Culture Fund, and the DOEN Foundation.