

**Prof. Dr. Kristof Vaes**

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DATE  
25 February 2025

SUBJECT  
Motivational letter CUMULUS Board 2025-2028

**To the Selection Committee of the Cumulus Association,**

Dear Sir, Madam,

I am thrilled to submit my candidacy for a position on the Board of the Cumulus Association for a three-year term. With the unwavering support of my Faculty of Design Sciences, I am eager to contribute to the growth and visibility of both the Cumulus Association and our faculty and programs.

Over the last four years, my journey with Cumulus has been incredibly rewarding, particularly during my leadership of the Cumulus Antwerp Conference "Connectivity and Creativity in Times of Conflict" in April 2023. This event showcased my ability to unite diverse perspectives from our global design community and foster meaningful dialogue. I believe this conference, which came right after the COVID pandemic, significantly revived our network's collaborative spirit, and I am excited to bring this same energy and vision to the Executive Board.

To provide a brief background, I have been schooled as an industrial designer (graduated Master in Product Development in 1996) and have fifteen years of experience in industry and design agencies. Over the past 20 years, I have been deeply involved in design education, starting in 2004 when our Design institution was a University College and transitioning into a full academic 5-year master program at the University of Antwerp, Faculty of Design Sciences. Our faculty strives for a synergy between its three disciplines: architecture, conservation and restoration, and product development with five educational programs and over 2000 students. Priority is given to an interdisciplinary approach to material culture, designs, and people and their surroundings.

My journey in both industry and academia has given me firsthand experience of the transitions in the educational field, linking it to industry, education, and research. As an associate professor, I now feel I have the confidence and experience to translate this experience into actionable impact on the Cumulus Executive Board. I believe that my understanding of Cumulus's mission, my experience in managing complex international projects, and my strong educational and academic background, will be valuable assets in shaping the future direction of our association.

Cumulus's biannual conferences are a cornerstone of our community, bringing together educators, students, and researchers from around the world. I have participated in all Cumulus conferences of the last three years, and I am particularly excited about the opportunity to attend and shape the future conferences, supported by an annual allowance granted by our faculty, which will help cover the costs of participation.

Additionally, I want to express my engagement for several thematic working groups within the Cumulus Program, specifically those focused on Design Education for Social Change, FINDER - Future of Industrial Design Education and Research, and X-files (International Affairs). These groups align perfectly with my expertise in

inclusive design and my commitment to advancing industrial design education and international collaboration. I also want to contribute to the PhD network, which connects PhD coordinators, educators, and candidates, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange. The upcoming launch of the PhD networking website will further enhance this collaboration. I hope that my involvement in thematic working groups and the PhD network will contribute to the mutual benefit of all stakeholders.

As a full member of the Board, I aim to actively participate in the governance of the association and influence the strategic direction of its programs. The thematic focus during my term can be collaboratively discussed with colleagues, the secretariat, and board members to ensure it aligns with the association's goals and maximizes our collective impact.

I am committed to evaluating how well Cumulus fulfils its vision, mission, and values. I believe that my role in organizing the Antwerp Conference is a testament to my ability to set performance metrics and formulate high-level policies and equips me with the skills to assess risks and monitor financial performance effectively. I'm known as an approachable networker, adventurer, and overall design and art enthusiast. Over the last years, I have consistently communicated the vision and values of my institution to the public and represented it in key venues. As such, I am dedicated to promoting excellence and innovation in art and design, safeguarding the autonomy of educational institutions, and fostering diversity in education and research.

I am confident that my experience, enthusiasm, and dedication will make a valuable contribution to the Cumulus Association, and I look forward to working with colleagues worldwide to achieve our common goals.

Sincerely,

Yours Sincerely,

Prof. Dr. Kristof Vaes

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several fluid, overlapping strokes that form a stylized representation of the name Kristof Vaes.