“You made this program just for me.”
We hear these words from hundreds of applicants when they learn about MFA Design for Social Innovation at SVA in New York.
Can it be true for everyone?

Nope.

But it’s true for everyone who wants a career as a creative leader in business, government or any organization with a mission to contribute to a better world.

Sound like you?
is the process of design adapted to the creation of new models, products and ideas that solve the big challenges facing businesses, governments, society and humanity.

It’s creative problem solving, unbound by the confines of a traditional industry or job descriptions. It’s interaction design in the broadest sense; focusing on social infrastructure; creating healthy relationships between people, within communities and institutions. And, it can take any and every physical or visible form but it inevitably begins with the invisible dynamics and forces that drive human behavior.

DSI is the first MFA program in Design for Social Innovation, now in our fourth year.
Students learn through a cross-disciplinary curriculum of systems design and modeling, design research, making, interaction design, communication design, leadership, entrepreneurship, metrics, data visualization, ethics, and game design.
COLONIZERS

The increasing demand for coltan in the technology age

With the boon of the technology and communications age, coltan has become a commodity it is an essential part of everything, consumer electronics, medical devices, and even batteries. Coltan-based circuits are the backbone of miniature circuit boards and can hold a high electrical charge. Demand for coltan continues to grow, tech innovators and companies alike. However, the market for these new devices expands, it is predicted that the world will be more reliant on coltan.

80% of the world's reserves of coltan are in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Even though coltan is widely known as a valuable material, many large technology companies use coltan, no longer in the DRC. Coltan is not a renewable resource, making efforts to keep Central African coltan out of the market very difficult. Many electronics companies have publicly rejected the use of conflict coltan, and started relying mainly on supplies from Australia. But due to the high amount of illegal and black market coltan getting mixed into the mainstream flow, it may be too late too late.

Cobalt mining is very profitable in the DRC, causing other countries to take advantage of its resources as well. Rwanda and Zimbabwe have been major players in exploiting the coltan trade. In an 18-month period, Rwanda made $220 million as a result of exploitation of coltan in the DRC. "Cobalt mining is very well paid in Congo, even for the average Congolese worker makes $24 a month, while a coltan miner can earn anywhere from $170 to $250 a week." (UN, 2010).

GRASSROOTS

Coltan fueling conflict, oppression, and environmental degradation

Mountain and lowland gorilla populations are rapidly declining in the DRC due to the loss of their habitat. To make way for more mining grounds and to produce food for workers in the mines, since these are far from regular food distribution channels. They might be extinct in 5 to 10 years if no advance is made for their preservation.

"Civilian who attempted to resist the theft of their natural resources, or who did not collaborate with those in power, were subjected to attacks. Entire villages were displaced to make way for mineral or timber exploitation and armed groups engaged in massacres, sexual violence and cruel and inhuman treatment in the process. They also attacked and burned villages in order to seize coltan that had been mined artistically by the soldiers." (UNHCR, 2010).

More than 2 million people in the DRC work as miners, and 40% of them are children. Since the middle of the 1990s, the mining industry has claimed the lives of more than 5 million people.

Besides the Congolese extractors, Rwandan and Ugandan military groups have invaded DRC areas where coltan abundance and moved the cargos to their countries for export. All of these actors sell their minerals to foreign companies who then distribute them to electronics manufacturers.
The Natural Life film screening and Q&A with Director Tirtza Even.
Our faculty is diverse in experience and culture, each a leading practitioner in their area of expertise.
DSI is in the heart of New York city; a hot spot for industry leaders, organizations, and events (ok, maybe the hottest). We capitalize on our location by connecting students to both local and global resources.
Earning a graduate degree from MFA Design for Social Innovation at SVA is fulfilling, purposeful, transformative, hard work and fun.

But what can you do with it?
You will graduate from DSI with real-world experience working in a variety of contexts; mastery of the methodologies and tools of social innovation design; and strong, life-long bonds with a group of diverse and dynamic colleagues. You will also graduate with a network of influential people who are the change-makers in business and society around the world. Your community will be filled with people and ideas that open doors and change minds. And you will be ready for a fulfilling career with impact.

The skills we teach and the experiences we provide increase the options for the kind of work you can do rather than limiting them. Our students are running their own businesses, working at global NGOs, multinational corporations, global design consultancies and government agencies.

American Express  Huge  UNICEF
Arup  Inditex  UN Global Pulse
Dalberg Global Development  Populist  U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Diagram, LLC  Rockefeller Foundation  The World Bank
Games for Change  Smart Design  Worldstudio
How do you know if DSI is for you?

This is a program for people who want to write their own rules rather than follow them. Our students join the program because it fulfills a deep need that nothing else can – to go out and create change, disrupt the status quo and use their own powers of creativity to bring something to life that has not existed before. They are remarkable people, unpredictable and visionary.

Our students are exceptional change-makers who come together to explore, learn, and build. They come from many backgrounds other than design. We welcome all applicants who are broadly curious, committed, and interested in learning how to use design to create the change that business, the environment and society needs.
Our students have come from twenty-four countries and counting, with undergraduate degrees in design, economics, international development and anthropology, among other fields.

Tanya Bhandari, 14
Joseph Kwesiga, 14
Meghan Lazier, 15
Juno Lee, 15
If this sounds like you, then it’s true, we have made this program just for you, and you should apply.
To learn more about our graduates’ thesis projects, and watch them present their work in healthcare, education, justice, food systems and more, please visit our site.

http://dsi.sva.edu