

# Curriculum Vitae, Catherine Willems, PhD

## PERSONALIA

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Catherine Willems, PhD, Design Anthropologist  
Founding Director of Future Footwear Foundation (FFF)  
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## EDUCATION

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- 1990-1994     **Ghent University (BE)**  
Master in Comparative Cultural Studies / Anthropology
- 1994-1995     **Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (SP)**  
Certificate in Cultural Studies
- Centre d'Informació i Documentació Internacionals a Barcelona (SP)**  
International Relations
- Institut Català de la Moda/ Barcelona (SP)**  
Diseño de zapatos / design of shoes
- Brucemo Brussels (BE)**  
Degree in shoe making and repairing
- 1998            **Ars Sutoria Milano (IT)**  
Certificate in design, modelling and pattern making of shoes
- Academia Belgica (IT)**  
Research stay at atelier Pompeii, Via Merulana, Roma. Footwear development for film, opera, theatre.
- 2015            **KASK / University College Ghent / Ghent University (BE)**  
**Doctor of Arts: Visual Arts (BE)**  
Public defense, 15 September 2015.  
Design, Anthropology, Biomechanics (advisors: prof. D'Août, prof. Stassijns, dr. Van Gogh)

## EMPLOYMENT

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- 1996-1998 **Ghent University / Centre for Intercultural Education (BE)**  
Ethnographic researcher. Project: ‘art and education’
- 2000 -2001 **Shoe factory PRABEL/ Pedro (BE)**  
Design of children shoes and pattern making on CAD/CAM.
- 2003-2004 **Ambiorix/Tongeren (BE)**  
Design and pattern making of footwear. Ambiorix is a high standard brand for men shoes. <http://www.ambiorix.be/en>
- 2005-2009 **Footwear collections ‘Catherine Willems’**  
Summer 2005 till 2009: handmade high-end summer footwear collections for children in collaboration with Toehold Artisans in India. The collections were sold in several boutiques in Europe and in New York.
- 2003-present **KASK – School of Arts & Conservatorium, Hogent (BE)**  
Part-time lecturer (30%), Section Design, BA and MA programmes:
  - Fashion (2003-2015)
  - Fashion and Autonomous Design (2015-present)
- 2009-2015 **University College Ghent, KASK & Conservatorium, Hogent (BE)**  
Doctoral researcher (70%) at
  - Department of Design, KASK, School of Arts, Ghent, Belgium
  - Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, University Hospital Antwerp, Belgium, University of Antwerp, Belgium
  - Department of Musculoskeletal Biology, Institute of Ageing and Chronic Disease, University of Liverpool, UK
- 2016-2020 **KASK – School of Arts & Conservatorium, Hogent (BE)**  
Research Promotor (70%), Section Design: ‘Future Footwear 2.0’
  - Research project at the convergence of indigenous craftsmanship and modern technology. In collaboration with University of Liverpool and R sprint (Materialise).
  - Foundation of Future Footwear Foundation (2017): [www.futurefootwearfoundation.com](http://www.futurefootwearfoundation.com)
- 2019-2023 **KASK – Research project, Department of Design**  
  
On weaving migrating heritage. The impact of forced displacement on creative processes. Researcher: Sofie Vercluyte. Coordinator: Catherine Willems
- 2020-present **IoF at Hogent, KASK & Conservatorium, Hogent (BE)**  
Main coordinator of StartTT-project. An industrial research fund to valorize findings of previous research. Pilot study with 100 subjects.

## PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

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### ACADEMIC

- 2004-2005 **Fine Arts Academy Sint-Niklaas (BE)**  
Founding of Footwear Department.
- 2008- 2013 **KABK – Fine Arts Department, The Hague (NE)**  
Guest lecturer in footwear design at KABK, ca. two weeks per year.
- 2009-current **Fieldwork: Research in Action**  
Living and working (for days, weeks, or months) with cobbling artisans in India (Kolhapuri), Finland (Sami), Namibia (Ju'Hoan), USA (Navajo), and urban cases in Belgium and UK. Action research and biomechanical research into design and walking always happen together
- 2015-current **LCF – London College of Fashion (UK)**  
Guest lecturer in MA Footwear Design. Yearly collaborative ERASMUS project (ca. 8 days) between MA footwear design at LCF, Fashion design at KASK, School of Arts and the University of Liverpool, Department of Biomechanics and Gait Analysis.
- 2016-2019 **Honorary Lecturer – University of Liverpool (UK)**  
In order to facilitate supervision of PhD students and future projects dr. Willems was granted the status of Honorary Lecturer at the University of Liverpool.
- 2019-2024 **UNAM – Master of Arts in Development Studies (NA)**  
Bilateral agreement between UNAM, in Namibia and KASK, Hogent. The commitment of the agreement is to exchange staff and students between both institutions, in particular for UNAM with the Master of Arts in Development Studies at Oshakati Campus. Coordinated by Future Footwear Foundation.

### ARTISTIC

- 1999 -2000 **Atelier Pompeï – Rome (IT)**  
Design and pattern making of shoes for opera, film and theatre.
- 2005-2010 **Catherine Willems & Toehold Artisans (IN)**  
Development of sustainable footwear collections with Toehold Artisans Collaborative in Karnataka (India) for markets abroad
- 2016-2017 **Soul of Africa – London (UK)**  
Consultant for Soul of Africa: set up of production line of high quality barefoot shoes in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- 2016-2018 **Kickstarter: THE ORIGINAL SANDAL**  
Set-up of a decentralized production unit in Namibia with the Ju'Hoansi, bushmen, to re-create their traditional sandal for a city environment as consultant for Vivobarefoot. Kickstarter ended with success on June 8<sup>th</sup> 2016.  
<http://futurefootwear.org/juhoan-san-and-the-evolution-of-footwear/>

## **SERVICE**

- 2011-2016 **Education Committee (EC) at KASK, School of Arts, Hogent**  
Member of the Education Committee.
- 2014 **Scientific & Organizing committee**  
Global Fashion Conference, KASK, Gent, Belgium, November 17<sup>th</sup>
- 2015-current **VLIR – UOS**  
Member of the selection commission of Hogent. VLIR-UOS awards scholarships and grants to Flemish or European students at a Belgian university (college) for a research stay or internship in Africa, Asia and Latin America, or a PhD.
- 2016-2019 **Funding of a PhD student at the University of Liverpool (UK)**  
Influence of sole properties on the biomechanics of walking on hard and soft terrains. Funded by Future Footwear 2.0 and Vivobarefoot, UK, London.  
Primary supervisor: Dr Kris D’Août (Institute of Ageing and Chronic Disease, University of Liverpool). Co-supervisors: Dr Catherine Willems (KASK, School of Arts, Ghent, Belgium), Dr Paolo Paoletti (School of Engineering, University of Liverpool)
- 2017 **Referee for MDPI journal Societies and for Current Anthropology.**
- 2019 **COST, European Cooperation in Science and Technology**  
KASK, Hogent, representative at Action CA181136 – European Forum for Advanced Practices. COST, CA181136, is a research network platform with a focus on artistic- and practice based research.
- 2019-current **Member** of the Arts Research Council, KASK, School of Arts.

## **PROFESSIONAL OUTPUT**

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### **ACADEMIC: PUBLICATIONS**

**\* indicates peer reviewed publications**

\*VERLOT, M. & WILLEMS, C. 1997. *Urban policy in intercultural arts education*, Amsterdam, Royal Tropical Institute Dept. Publications.

\* WILLEMS, C. & D’AOÛT, K. 2013. Mobility and function of the human foot during shod and barefoot walking. *Proceedings: 80th annual meeting American Association of Physical Anthropology*.

\*WILLEMS, C. 2013. 100% bag tanned: action research generating new insights on design processes. *Critical Arts: South-North Cultural and Media Studies*, Volume 27, Issue 5, Special Issue: Revisiting the ethnographic turn in contemporary art Part 1.27.

\*WILLEMS, C. & D’AOÛT, K. 2013. Walking with Kolhapuri artisans: on the art of designing and wearing shoes. KULDOVA, T. (ed.) *Spectacular Capitalism*. Akademika Publishing.

WILLEMS, C. & PINXTEN, H. 2013. Design as a process of growth: an anthropological reflection on form and matter. *Conflict and Design*, Design Vlaanderen, Lannoo.

\*WILLEMS, C. VAN GOGH, D., AND PINXTEN, H. 2012. Beyond ethnic footwear: action research generating new educational insights on design processes. *Design education for future wellbeing, proceedings of the 14th International Conference on Engineering and Product Design Education*, ed. G. Frateur, L. Buck and W. Ion, 231–236. Glasgow: The Design Society.

WILLEMS, C. 2013. Minimaal schoeisel 'avant la lettre' in India en Lapland. Op stap met Kolhapuri-sandalen en rendierlaarzen. *Podosophia*. 6, 21, 8-21.

WILLEMS, C. 2015, Future Footwear: Creativity as a collective concept, Research Flanders, Flanders Knowledge Area vzw, Thematic papers, Innovating the Arts, pp. 9-10.

\*WILLEMS, C. 2015. Nuvttohat, perfect for feet. Shoe design as cultural heritage. *Volkskunde, driemaandelijks tijdschrift voor de studie van de volkscultuur*, (sept-dec), pp.371-382.

\* WILLEMS, C. STASSIJNS, G., CORNELIS, W., and D'AOÛT, K. Biomechanical implications of walking with indigenous footwear. *Am J Phys Anthropol*. 2016;00:1–12. doi:10.1002/ajpa.23169.

WILLEMS, C. 2018. “Feet and how to shoe them” In: “Do you want your feet back? Barefoot cobblers” Roelandt, E., and Willems, C. (eds), APE, [ISBN 9789490800994](#).

WILLEMS, C. 2020. Current Anthropology, comment on ‘Running in Tarahumara (Rarámuri) Culture: Persistence Hunting, Footracing, Dancing, Work, and The Fallacy of the Athletic Savage’ by Lieberman et al.

Do you want your feet back? Barefoot cobblers. ROELANDT, E. & WILLEMS, C (eds), 2018, APE, [ISBN 9789490800994](#), Gent.

#### IN PREPARATION

\* WILLEMS, C. SAVAGE, R., CURTIS, R. and D'AOÛT, K., ‘Plantar pressures in three types of indigenous footwear, minimal shoes, and Western shoes, compared to barefoot walking’. (Submitted, Footwear Science, 2020-05)

#### **ARTISTIC: SHOWS & EXHIBITIONS**

##### **‘Collection 100% Bag tanned’**

Summer 2013: the collection was presented at Design Affairs, School of Arts, Ghent and is shown in Oslo at the exhibition of Fashion India.

##### **Fashion India: Spectacular Capitalism - Museum of Cultural History, Oslo**

Exhibition: Catherine Willems (participant), 13-Sep-2013 → 29-Jun-2014

##### **7th Design Triennial – Conflict and Design, C-Mine Genk**

Exhibition: Catherine Willems (participant), 14-Dec-2013 → 26-Mar-2014

##### **Reindeer between buffalo**

Part of the installation 'Walking with artisans in India and Finland. On The art of Designing and wearing footwear.' by Catherine Willems, PhD Researcher, School of Arts, Gent, Belgium The installation was part of the exhibition 'Conflict & Design -

7th Design Triennial Flanders ' and ran 15.12.2013 till 09.03.2014 at C-Mine, Genk, Belgium <https://vimeo.com/108804744>

**‘Future Footwear / The Re-birth of Footwear – a moving exhibition started on September 15<sup>th</sup> 2015 (date of the PhD defense).**

A moving exhibition bringing back the knowledge and the results of the research to the participants (mainly cobblers) of the different communities. The exhibition started on September 15<sup>th</sup> in Gent at KASK, School of Arts.

**8th Design Triennial – Hands on Design**

Exhibition: Catherine Willems (participant), 19-11-2016 → 05-03-2017. Indigenous Footwear goes 3D. Design Museum Gent (BE).

<http://www.designmuseumgent.be/en/events/hands-on-design>

**State of Fashion – Arnhem**

Installation of an interactive barefoot gait scan laboratorium, 30-05-2018 till 30-07-2018.

**Why the world needs design anthropologist - Lisbon**

Installation of an interactive barefoot gait scan laboratorium, 26 & 27 October 2018.

**Book Launch & Signing**

Do You Want Your Feet Back? Barefoot Cobblers, Els Roelandt & Catherine Willems (eds.), Art Paper Editions.

- Catherine Willems and Galahad Clark at Vivobarefoot - London: January 14<sup>th</sup> 2019
- Catherine Willems and Els Roelandt at Copyright – Antwerp: January 30<sup>th</sup> 2019

***OTHER: FUTURE FOOTWEAR FOUNDATION***

My academic research and artistic activities merge in the Future Footwear Foundation ([www.futurefootwearfoundation.com](http://www.futurefootwearfoundation.com)), which I founded in 2017 at KASK, School of Arts, Hogent. Future Footwear Foundation, aims to stimulate progress in the understanding of human locomotion and sustainable footwear for body and environment by studying and working with indigenous cobblers. The foundation works on an international level with different cobbler communities around the world, institutes and organizations. Part of the working budget comes from external funding.

**CONFERENCES & WORKSHOPS (selected)** \_\_\_\_\_

**2010 Footwear Talk show:** What can we learn today from ethnic and historic footwear? GDS International Shoe Fair Düsseldorf, September 10<sup>th</sup>

**2010 Workshop,** CLRI (Central Leather Research Institute) Chennai, India.  
Workshop around dynamic design of Footwear with the students of Leather Good Design

**2010 Workshop,** NIFT (National Institute of Fashion Chennai), India.  
Workshop around dynamic design of Footwear with the students of 3th bachelor in Fashion and Shoe Design

- 2012 Invited Speaker**, International Conference on engineering and product design education, EPDE2012, MAS, Antwerp (September 6<sup>th</sup>) . Beyond ethnic footwear: action research generating new educational insights on design processes
- 2012 Keynote Speaker**, Global Fashion Conference, Complutense University of Madrid, Spain, November 17<sup>th</sup>.
- 2012 Invited speaker**, Momu Antwerp, ‘Dag van de wetenschap’, November 25<sup>th</sup>.
- 2013 Invited speaker**, Conflict&Design, Genk, C-Mine, Lecture on different ways of knowing, March 14<sup>th</sup>
- 2013 Invited speaker**, London College of Fashion, Lecture at the Summer School on sustainable design, London, July 15<sup>th</sup>
- 2013 Invited speaker**, Wardrobe Conference at Copenhagen Business School, Denmark, 13-15 November
- 2014 Poster presentation**, AAPA conference in Calgary, Alberta Canada (April 12<sup>th</sup>). Foot function during barefoot and indigenously shod walking in populations from India, Northern Scandinavia, and Western Europe
- 2015 Invited speaker**, The Empathic Turn, Design Research Seminar on Methods, University of Antwerp | Faculty of Design Sciences | Architecture, May 28<sup>th</sup>
- 2015 Invited speaker**, London College of Fashion, Lecture at the master of Footwear Design, December 11<sup>th</sup>.
- 2016 Invited speaker**, MoMu-Talk. Fashion Museum Antwerp. Future Footwear at Footprint Antwerp, February 14<sup>th</sup>.
- 2016 Invited speaker**, 6th Congress of the Portuguese Anthropological Association, June 3<sup>th</sup>.
- 2016 Invited speaker** at the ‘Hands on Design’ conference, 8<sup>th</sup> Triennial for Design, Design Museum Gent, November 18<sup>th</sup>.
- 2016 Invited speaker**, Non Western Fashion Conference, University of Antwerp, November 25<sup>th</sup>. The unfashionable foot: people – planet – feet.
- 2018 Whataboutery @ State of Fashion, Arnhem**  
Talk at the conference: What about care.
- 2018 WWNA – Why the world needs design anthropologists, Lisbon.**  
Natural feet are back in fashion. Talk at the conference on 26/10/2018
- 2019 Manchester Metropolitan University**  
Talk on research and methodology in the arts within the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, on February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2019.
- 2019 Invited speaker**, University of the Arts London, London College of Fashion, Lecture at Footwear and Wearable Tech Symposium, June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

## **PUBLICITY AND PRESS COVERAGE (selected)**

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- 2012 CHOKLAT, A. 2012. History of Footwear – interview with Footwear Anthropologist Catherine Willems. *Footwear Design*. Laurence King Publishing.
- 2018 Voetzoeker, Photovoice by Thomas Nolf on the San-dal project of FFF, in: De Standaard Magazine, 24-07-2018.
- 2019 Shoespiracy [https://youtu.be/x\\_rDFa6kZfl](https://youtu.be/x_rDFa6kZfl)  
This documentary is designed to challenge the way people think about their shoes and the effects footwear is having on their feet, the way they move, and ultimately their health.
- 2019 BBC podcast: The heel and the Sneaker, 24-01-2019  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/series/forum> or through iTunes:  
<https://itunes.apple.com/gb/podcast/forum-a-world-of-ideas/id284278990?mt=2>

## **SKILLS**

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Language (Dutch, French, English, Spanish, Italian, German, Afrikaans)

International project coordination and management

Computer skills and data analysis (including: SPSS, Nvivo, Footscan)