

The colourful world
of technology



“This is what it’s really like. This hasn’t been dreamt up by someone sitting at a desk. You can tell that someone has really been listening to what the students were saying.”

“My male colleagues just don’t listen, in particular when I’m better than them in our specialist field. And when I am right.”



“In project groups it’s often the case that the men have done nothing at all, but then at the end they stand up and give a fantastic presentation of the results. The women have done all the work in these groups and then don’t get to say anything in the presentation.”



“It’s bad news if you can’t find a group to study with. That’s important for your studies and for your social life. You just have to do it, because if you aren’t part of a study group, you’re out.”



“My male colleagues make a lot of jokes behind my back. And there is of course a lot of competition: who has done which exam first, who got what grades, who was able to do which task. That’s also how competence is defined.”



“Women tend to be like lone warriors here at the University of Technology.”



“Women are completely underestimated at the beginning.
It’s a bit of a fight, you have to fight for competence and recognition
among the boys.”



“I categorise professors into three types: first, the ignorant who say: in two months she won’t be here anymore so I don’t need to bother with her. Second, the examiners: right, let’s see what she can do. And third, the benefactors: I will be the first to get a woman through this degree course.”





“When a woman goes up to the board to do a calculation, the lecture theatre goes quieter than when a man does it. That’s why women have always made a big effort to appear competent – using particularly good handwriting, for example. We’re not allowed to take our own notes with us to the board and that puts us under a lot of pressure. In this respect women are a lot less confident than men.”



“It’s not good to ask people to explain things to you a lot because you’ll soon be written off as incompetent. Then you become somehow invisible and at best you may be given advice but you’ll never be asked anything again.”



“Because there are so few of us, we’re constantly being observed and evaluated. Everything we do is noticed. It’s like being on a stage, extremely visible.”



“Writing down notes and comments is something the men didn’t do. They only noted down what was written on the board. They made fun of any extra note-taking and at some point I felt stupid doing it and so I just stopped.”



“I hadn’t given it any thought beforehand, it would never have occurred to me that it’s not for women. It was really shocking, there were practically only men in the lecture theatre.”

“I’m used to it, I went to technical college for a year and when I arrived I was the only girl in the class. Of course the first thing I did was to find another woman somewhere and we immediately teamed up.”





“When you go the University of Technology after school, you often bring a lot of prejudices with you about technology not being a woman’s thing. You don’t feel very confident. A lot pack it in after one or two semesters. Women students in particular need encouraging to stick by what they enjoy doing. And that’s part of the professor’s job.”

“It would look odd if women made up 60 percent of technology students. I don’t really know why.”

“The few women students are the exception.”

Male technology students on female technology students



“In a study group it takes time for the hierarchy to show itself. After the first year the men have generally set themselves up as top dogs. As a woman you were, at best, somehow part of it. And women were always in mixed study groups. There were never any study groups made up only of women. Any move in that direction didn’t go down well.”



“If we could just get rid of all the prejudices and old-fashioned views,
that’d be great!”



“Sometimes I wonder why it’s so difficult to be part of it.
Whatever you do, somehow you’re always a bit different, you don’t
automatically belong.”



The colourful world of technology

What is everyday student reality in a culture mainly determined by men?

The pictures in this exhibition deal with the following issues:

- Being the minority among the majority
- Dropping out
- Dominance
- 'The power divide'
- Being different
- Hierarchy and pecking order
- Exclusion
- Assimilation
- Technology as a man's world
- Prejudice
- Discouragement and repression
- Seeking individual solutions.

The story behind it

In the course of the fFORTE WIT – Women in Technology (2008 – 2012) project, our cooperation with students at the University of Technology repeatedly gave rise to conversations with women students about their everyday life at university. They spoke about their projects, exams, the time pressure sometimes, as well as their future plans. In connection with WIT they outlined their personal experiences as women and as students. The less positive experiences and impressions in particular were sometimes not very easy to put into words.

The photo exhibition “The colourful world of technology” translates into pictures these experiences from WIT projects, together with the findings of international studies on the topic of “Women and technology”. The exhibition constitutes a contribution to better mutual understanding between men and women in the everyday reality of a technical university.

Special thanks to:

All students at the Vienna University of Technology who worked with us on this project in summer 2012 and afforded these photos a great deal of authenticity. Likewise the actors, extras and technicians, as well as the creative team, Brigitte Gradwohl, Petra Hristov-Menella, Jenny Hoffmann, Michel-Ange Lopez and Barbara Weingartshofer.

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Sabine Cirtek, WIT Project Coordinator
Brigitte Gradwohl, Photographer

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genderfair!

This project supports schoolgirls as well as women students and research staff at the Vienna University of Technology in their career orientation and development.

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