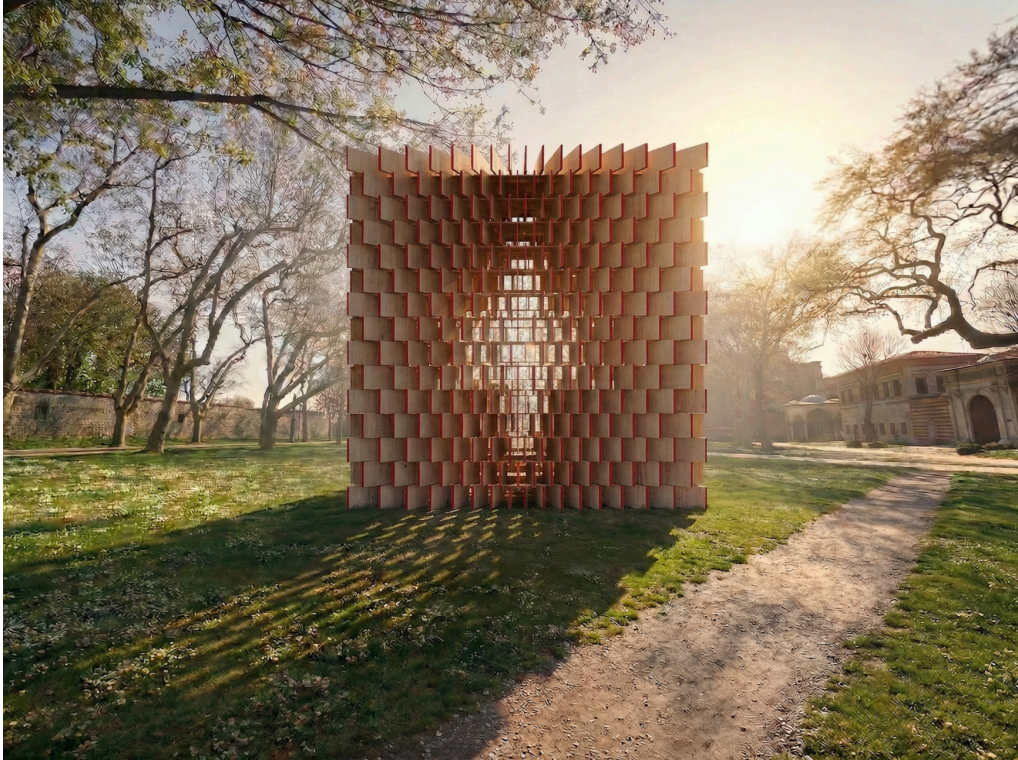


Global Design Forum İstanbul Unveils Programme:

Design and Dialogue Unite in İstanbul

The inaugural edition reveals key speakers, installations and experiences across İstanbul



Pavilion of the Moment by Waugh Thistleton Architects

- Global Design Forum İstanbul will take place 13 - 16 May 2026. The inaugural edition of Global Design Forum İstanbul, presented in collaboration with strategic creative platform People Places Ideas (PPI), spans the Forum as well as citywide programming
- Melek Zeynep Bulut serves as the Artistic Director of Global Design Forum İstanbul
- The Forum offers two days of curated keynotes, panels and in-conversations, with the curatorial theme *Worlds in Contact* by Forum Content Advisor, Beatrice Galilee
- The four-day event convenes over 30 leading international voices from the world of architecture and design

Global Design Forum, London Design Festival's flagship platform for global design discourse, announces the content programme for its İstanbul debut, Global Design Forum İstanbul presented in collaboration with People Places Ideas (PPI), with Artistic Direction from Melek Zeynep Bulut. Bulut oversees the programming and creative ideation of Global Design Forum İstanbul, ensuring each aspect celebrates design, creativity and idiosyncrasies; working alongside London Design Festival & Global Design Forum

Co-Founder and Chairman Ben Evans. The four-day event, taking place 13-16 May 2026, convenes leading international voices from the world of design and architecture – where global perspectives intersect İstanbul's cultural landscape through a series of talks, public installations and citywide experiences rooted in the city's heritage and creative dynamism.

İstanbul, Türkiye's largest metropolis, is a city spanning two continents with around 15 million inhabitants. Its rich cultural history inspires new design approaches while sustaining art and craftsmanship traditions. As a major regional design hub, İstanbul's creative economy is vital: UNESCO notes the sector employs over 140,000 professionals, generating 74.5% of Türkiye's creative turnover. The city hosts over 20 international design events annually and offers 27 university design programmes. Its extensive cultural infrastructure, including 41 congress centres and 225 art galleries, supports an active calendar of events, from biennials to international festivals. It is within this dynamic creative contact that the inaugural forum unfolds.

Global Design Forum İstanbul reestablishes the city as an important design capital, leveraging its unique position at the intersection of continents, cultures and design histories. İstanbul's monumental architectural heritage, vibrant contemporary creative ecosystem, and strong civic interest in culture and placemaking provide a rich backdrop for a Forum that strengthens international dialogue and highlights the city's role as a platform for design exchange. Global Design Forum İstanbul brings together Turkish and international designers in İstanbul, one of the world's most important metropolises, transforming design into a multi-voiced gathering, a platform for research and a celebration.

The İstanbul edition not only strengthens the Forum's international footprint but also positions İstanbul as a gateway between East and West, using design as a shared language for collaboration, soft power and long-term sector leadership.

The programme is shaped around four key principles: Placemaking, Storytelling, Discussion and Rethinking. Within this context, on 13 May, the programme will begin with the unveiling of 'Placemaking' installations presented under the curatorial theme "*Praise of Transience*". 'Storytelling' comprises a digital map called "*İstanbullar*", spotlighting 40 creative people, places and ideas of the city. Two days of 'Discussion' (14-15 May) will be held in the courtyard of Hagia Irene, within the grounds of Topkapı Palace Complex. Global Design Forum İstanbul will close with the launch of a garden design competition, "Rethinking" and reviving Yedikule district for future generations.

Over two days of 'Discussion', six sessions per day blend keynotes, panels and in-conversations, curated under the theme *Worlds in Contact* by Forum Content Advisor Beatrice Galilee. *Worlds in Contact* explores what happens when different worlds materially, politically and bodily collide. Some of the most provocative minds in design, architecture, fashion and technology gather to explore the encounters that are reshaping our discipline and our planet.

Please refer to a selection of Forum highlights below.

DAY ONE: Thursday 14 May

- Worlds in Contact

Worlds in Contact opens the Forum by making its central proposition tangible through format and voices. A rapid sequence of short provocations brings together perspectives from architecture, design, writing and landscape practice across Thailand, Mexico, Europe and beyond. Each speaker offers a different lens on what happens when design genuinely shares authorship with the world around it, with ecosystems, with communities, with nonhuman minds, with the living systems we have spent too long designing against. Together, the session expands design beyond objects, brands and buildings toward something more plural, more porous and more alive, and sets the shared vocabulary for the two days ahead.

- Liam Young's Planet City

Architect and filmmaker Liam Young presents *Planet City*, part film, part live performance, part provocation. Imagine every human being on Earth living in a single city. One hyper-dense, hyper-diverse metropolis. The rest of the planet: rewilded. A radical thought experiment that compresses questions of climate, migration and resource distribution into a singular experience.

- In Conversation: Design of Our Time — Tom Dixon and Lina Ghotmeh

Tom Dixon built one of the most recognisable design brands in the world from industrial materials, talent, instinct and a refusal to stay in one lane. In this conversation, he reflects on four decades of designing through radical change: how values shift, how industries transform, and what it takes to sustain a practice through uncertainty. He is joined by Lina Ghotmeh, an award-winning Lebanese architect whose work emphasises sustainability, history and materiality, integrating traditional techniques with contemporary design.

- Keynote: Hussein Chalayan

The closing keynote on day one is Hussein Chalayan, whose work has consistently occupied the intersection of fashion, technology, art and design with a rigour that few in any discipline can match. In this town hall, one of the most intellectually



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demanding figures in contemporary culture reflects on a practice built around the hardest questions and opens the floor. Moderated by journalist Caroline Roux.

DAY TWO: Friday 15 May

- In Conversation: Identity and Design — Lesley Lokko & Moderator (TBC)

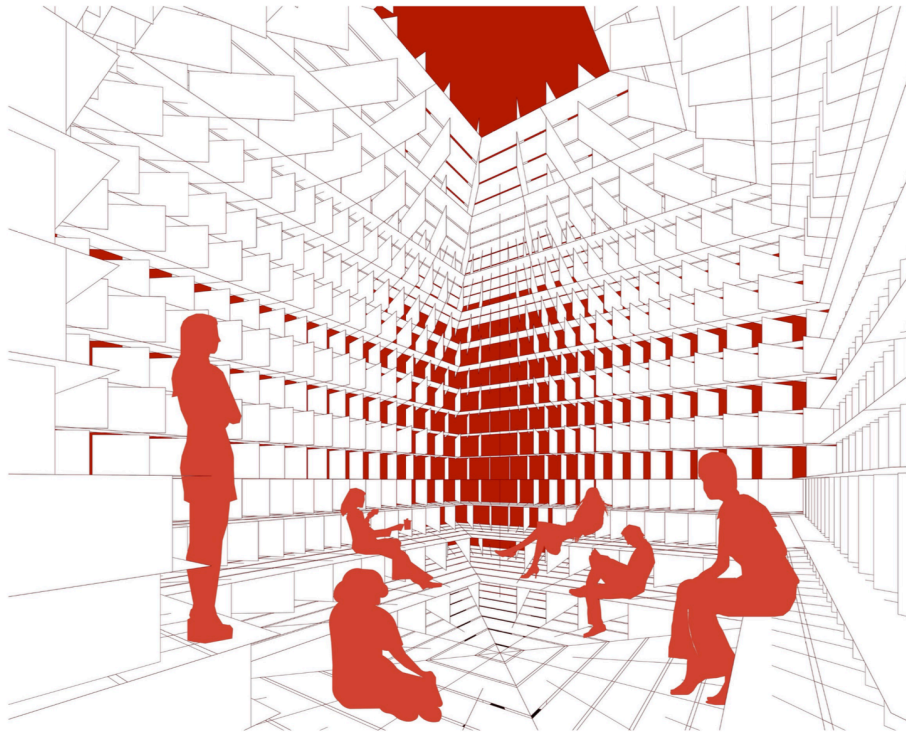
One of the most important voices in architecture today in direct conversation, not about buildings, but about what architecture has been too slow to reckon with. Lesley Lokko has spent her career interrogating the colonial structures embedded in architectural education and practice, and demanding something different. This is a conversation about what architecture owes to the people it has historically left out.

- Keynote: Marina Tabassum

Marina Tabassum works in one of the most climate-vulnerable places on Earth, the Bengal delta, and her architecture responds to that condition with extraordinary intelligence and restraint. But she is not just a builder. She is a thinker about what architecture owes to place, to climate, to the people who will actually inhabit it, and about what it means when survival itself becomes the central design brief. In this closing town hall, she asks the question that hangs over both days: what are we actually designing for?

Delegates include: Dima Srouji, Prem Krishnamurthy, Lina Ghotmeh, Ma Yansong, Liam Young, Tom Dixon, Boonserm Premthada, Florian Idenburg, Stephen Burks & Malika Leiper, Hussein Chalayan, Fernando Laposse, Olaf Grawert, Alon Schwabe & Daniel Fernández Pascual (Cooking Sections), Lesley Lokko, Suhair Khan, Beatrice Leanza, Dominique Petit Frere, Marina Tabassum, James Bridle, Caroline Roux, Alper Derinboğaz, Emine Öğün, Defne Koz, Mehmet Mehmetlioğlu, Celaleddin Çelik, Han Tümertekin, Banu Uçak, Beral Madra, Serap Ekizler Sönmez, Melike Altınışik, Selva Gürdoğan, Elif Tanrıyar, Ömer Selçuk Baz, Reem Al Thani.

A core pillar of Global Design Forum İstanbul is a series of public installations – part of the ‘Placemaking’ programme shaped by Melek Zeynep Bulut – designed under the curatorial theme of *“Praise of Transience”*. Designers and architects have been invited to reconsider the ancient relationship between the human body and architecture through the notions of transience and permanence: the installations consider the structure not as an object resistant to time, but as an organism that works with time and accompanies the body.



Sketch of Pavilion of the Moment by Waugh Thistleton Architects

Pavilion of the Moment, designed by Waugh Thistleton Architects, is a timber pavilion composed of slender pine boards, drawing on the sense of transience found in the repetition of traditional patterns. The pavilion echoes the geometry of the adjacent Hagia Irene, abstracting the relationship between cube and sphere into a meditative, centred space. Lightweight and demountable, the structure offers a deliberate contrast to the surrounding monumental architecture. Rather than asserting permanence, it proposes a public space for pause where architecture is experienced as something temporal, rhythmic, and gently dissolving. The installation has been created under a creative brief by Melek Zeynep Bulut, in collaboration with the National Wood Association and TORID (Turkish Forest Industry and Business Association).

Also part of the 'Placemaking' programme is a special experiential space in the Hagia Irene courtyard, designed by NUN Architecture, inside which the talks sessions will take place. Details of additional 'Placemaking' installations, all designed under Melek Zeynep Bulut's curatorial theme of "Praise of Transience" and in collaboration with universities, design studios and Istanbul's creatives, will also be announced separately.

Storytelling is a key principle of Melek Zeynep Bulut's artistic vision for Global Design Forum İstanbul. This is manifested in *İstanbullar: Creative Archive* – a dynamic map which gathers the city's designers and artists, contemporary architectural identities, storytellers and makers. They have contributed visual, audio and editorial content relating to 40 key design pieces and artworks as well as notable locations throughout İstanbul, turning the city into an open stage for design.

This content is collated into a map which connects global audiences with contemporary creative *people, places* and *ideas* of İstanbul such as *Barın Han*, home to the studio of *Emin Barın*, one of Türkiye's most important calligraphers, where traditional bookbinding techniques can be observed live; the artwork *Hatayi* by artist *Burçak Bingöl*, inspired by Topkapı Palace tiles and presented through a special narrative from the artist's studio; and the *Zeytinburnu Mosaic Museum*, an open-air museum that exhibits one of İstanbul's largest floor mosaics dating to the 6th century. Designed by architect *Celaleddin Çelik*, this contemporary addition to a historical Ottoman building is a hovering, floating box covering late-Roman mosaics.

Also featured on the *İstanbullar* platform is *Zeyrek Çinili Hamam*, a 500-year-old bath designed by architect Mimar Sinan, which has preserved its original function through a high-quality restoration while simultaneously hosting a purpose-built museum and a Byzantine cistern that plays host to a dynamic contemporary art program. *Şehrin Panoları* is also marked on the map – an online project which traces the search for identity in urban space by archiving the unique signboards of İstanbul.

An international design competition for a contemporary garden and lighting in Yedikule district completes the citywide programme. The initiative is developed under the key programme principle of 'Rethinking' and aims to be a revival project that actively engages future generations. More details will be announced at the closing of Global Design Forum İstanbul.

For more information and interview and feature opportunities, please contact :

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Notes to Editors

- Dates: 13-16 May 2026
- [Press Kit](#)
- [Global Design Forum Istanbul sessions](#)
- Presented in collaboration with People Places Ideas (PPI) | [@peopleplacesideas](#)

- <https://londondesignfestival.com/gdf-istanbul> | [@l_d_f_official](#)
- Artistic Direction: Melek Zeynep Bulut
- Forum Content Advisor: Beatrice Galilee
- Beral Madra: Art & Culture Advisor
- Celaleddin Çelik: Architecture Advisor: Architecture Advisor
- About Global Design Forum

Global Design Forum is a curated thought leadership programme, celebrating design and the minds shaping its future. Global Design Forum İstanbul is launching a new programme of talks, installations and citywide experiences taking place 13–16 May 2026 in İstanbul, Türkiye. Organised in collaboration with People Places Ideas (PPI), this is a new design platform where global perspectives and İstanbul's living cultural landscape meet. The Forum brings global voices into conversation with local contexts, traditions and futures - creating an innovative space for design, culture and ideas in one of the world's most layered cities.

- About People Places Ideas

People Places Ideas is a creative industries platform based in İstanbul, London and Doha. PPI designs resonance and impact. It generates Creative Strategy, Curation, Research and Art & Design & Culture Policies. In this context, it positions itself as an interdisciplinary new ecosystem of creativity, bringing together all stakeholders and creating new intellectual encounters.