

LONDON DESIGN FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES THE CURATED GLOBAL DESIGN FORUM PROGRAMME AND THE V&A X LDF AWAKENINGS INSTALLATIONS

12-20 SEPTEMBER 2026

londondesignfestival.com

#LDF26



Above: Forest of Us (2021), an installation by Es Devlin CBE at Superblue Miami. Photo by Es Devlin CBE

[London Design Festival](#) unveils its thought leadership programming at the **V&A** and the themes, talks and key speakers at the **Global Design Forum**.

The [Global Design Forum](#) will take place from 12-14 September and will return to the V&A South Kensington's Lydia and Manfred Gorvy Lecture Theatre. Across the three days, design will be celebrated, challenged and considered by thought leaders in the industry and cultural voices. The forum is guest-curated by **Rhiarna Dhaliwal** and supported by Programme Partners **Bowmore** and **Sun Media Group**. Highlights include talks from **Es Devlin CBE**, **Lakwena Maciver** and **Natalie Melton**. The curated talks programme is free to attend and tickets are now available on LDF's website.

Co-curated by **Carrie Chan** and **Kristian Volsing**, the V&A South Kensington's programme during London Design Festival, **V&A x LDF** will explore how design, craft and technology can provide platforms to explore new perspectives and practices.

The London Design Festival is proud to announce the **Mayor of London** as Principal Supporter for 2026. The London Design Festival continues to be supported by **Bloomberg**

Philanthropies, with **Bloomberg Connects** serving as the Festival's official digital guide. The free digital guide will feature content exclusive to Connects, including expert commentary, video highlights and curated routes across the city.

GLOBAL DESIGN FORUM

The theme of this year's edition is **Worlds in Motion** and the programme will explore the exchange of ideas, culture, context and expertise. Across three days, the programme will bring together speakers from a range of disciplines and geographies to discuss new practices and forms of design, those that will inform our way of living - looking at how design is a catalyst for global change.

London Design Festival is pleased to introduce **Rhiarna Dhaliwal** as the curator of this year's edition. Dhaliwal is a British-Indian architectural designer, researcher and curator whose practice explores the intersection of design, technology, ecology and geopolitics. A Design Researchers in Residence alumna at the Design Museum, co-founder of the interdisciplinary collective Xcessive Aesthetics, and having co-led Studio Digital Native at Design Academy Eindhoven for the past four years and been an Associate Lecturer at the Royal College of Art, her work spans exhibitions, research and public programmes. Her curation of the Global Design Forum brings together internationally recognised voices from across design, architecture, science, culture and business to examine the ideas shaping our future.

SATURDAY 12 SEPTEMBER | DAY ONE: Designing Futures

The first day of the Global Design Forum will discuss the role of technology, innovation and collaboration and how these mediums have evolved, along with predictions on how they will continue to shape the industry. As technology becomes increasingly embedded into our everyday lives, the six talks across the opening day of the Global Design Forum will revolve around **Designing Futures**.

A highlight on the opening day is the talk between keynote speaker **Es Devlin CBE** and **Ben Evans CBE**. Es Devlin CBE is an acclaimed designer and artist who works in a range of media to create transformative and immersive concepts and their discussion will reflect on experimentation and how technology, spatial and interactive design can unlock new creative potentials.



Above: Es Devlin CBE, keynote speaker at the Global Design Forum 2026. Image Credit: Cian Oba-Smith

Other talks on day one of the Global Design Forum include 'Shared Ecologies', in which moderator **Janice Li** and panelists across the fields of biomaterials, computational design and ecological practice **Baum and Leahy**, **Justina Alexandroff**, **Yasaman Sheri** and **Claudia Pasquero** will discuss how technology and ecology can work together to shape the way we approach design. The 'Shared Intelligence' talk will be moderated by **Pita Arreola** and panelists such as **Harry Kumar**, of MOTH Quantum and **Betty Lu** of FIELD.IO, to examine the impact that technology has had upon design. **Liam Young** will be screening his film "Planet City", alongside **Eunjo Lee's** "When Forgiving the Sunlight", bringing together cinematic video game engine technology and experimental storytelling to examine the ways we inhabit the planet.



Above: Ambie Drew, 'Soft Bodies, Cold Machines' exhibition, 2026, arebyte Digital Art Centre. Image Credit: Max Colson

SUNDAY 13 SEPTEMBER | DAY TWO: Designing Atmospheres

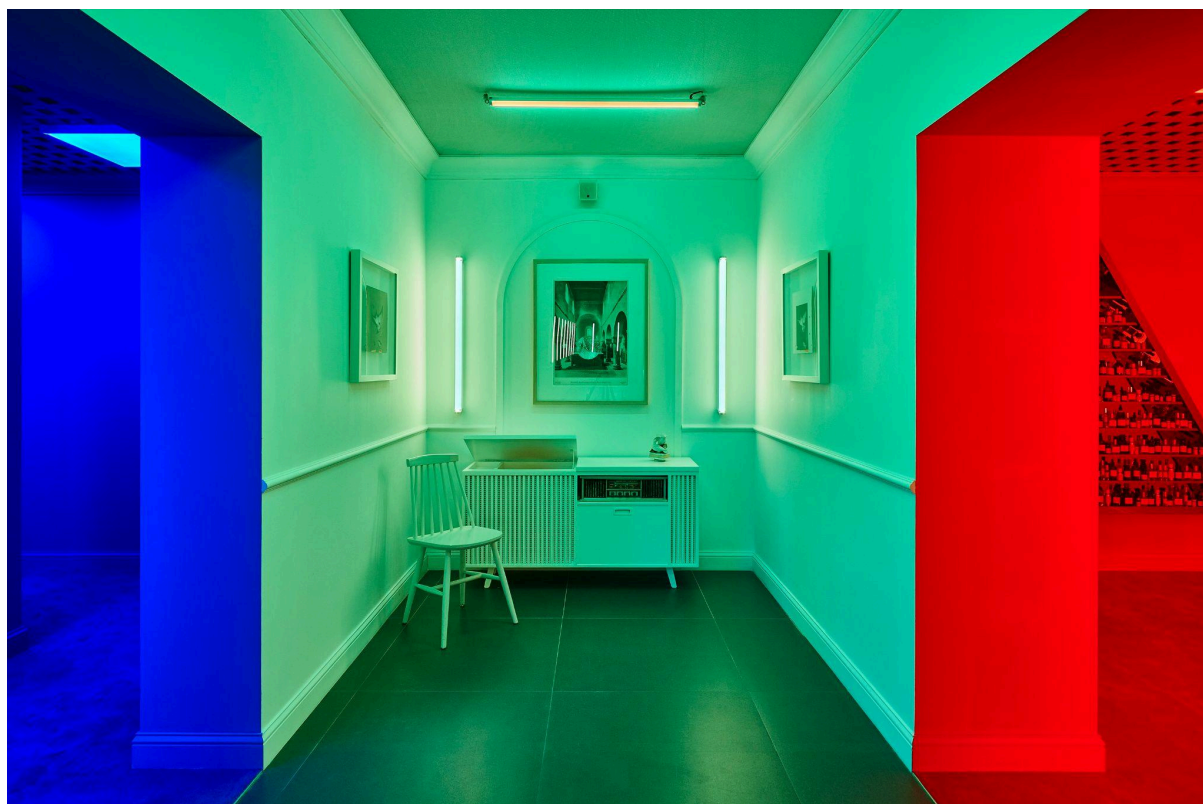
Programme Partner Bowmore

Talks throughout the second day of the Global Design Forum will centre on **Designing Atmospheres**, exploring how design extends beyond what we see to shape sensory perception, memory and embodied experience. Supported by Programme Partner **Bowmore**, a highlight will be a conversation between Bowmore Master Blender **Dr Calum Fraser** and **Snarkitecture** Co-Founder **Alex Mustonen**. Through the lens of their collaboration on the new Bowmore Captivo Collection, the pair will explore the intersection of whisky-making and architectural design, and how two distinct creative disciplines use craft, material and environment to encourage discovery and create experiences that extend beyond the physical object. The session will begin with a complimentary tasting of Bowmore Captivo Oak Voyage 20-Year-Old single malt.



Above: Left: Dr Calum Fraser, Bowmore Master Blender and Alex Mustonen, Designer and Co-founder of Snarkitecture with the Captivo Collection. Right: Early sketches by Alex Mustonen of the Captivo Collection

Other talks during this day will include discussions around the power of colour, objects and audio. Pioneering professional audio brand **L-Acoustics** will be joined by composer and sound designer **Hollie Buhagiar** and **Stephen Dobbie** to discuss 'The Power of Sound' and how it informs our collective experience with design, in layering spaces and experiences to become more memorable, deeply engaging and emotional. In 'The Shape of Colour', moderator **Kassia St Clair** will be joined by designer **Adam Nathaniel Furman**, artist **Lakwena Maciver**, professor **Anna Franklin** and design researcher **Ruth Lloyd**, to discuss how colour is a form of language and materiality.



Above: Beyond The Road, by A Right/Left Project & UNKLE. Image Credit: Sunghoon Park

In 'Activating Objects', moderator **Corinne Julius** will be joined by **Dr Hideki Yoshimoto**, Founder of Craft x Tech, alongside **Brendan Cormier** and **Sam Jacob** to explore how institutions, designers and artisans are creating new ways to engage with cultural heritage and objects.



Above: Lakwena Maciver; Basketball Court, Just Kids Commission, Emulsion On Floor

MONDAY 14 SEPTEMBER | DAY THREE: Designing Common Grounds

Programme Partner Sun Media Group

The concluding day of the Global Design Forum will present talks around the theme of **Designing Common Grounds**, examining how design is shaped by evolving culture, craft and habits. Conversations will span heritage, traditions, and cultural knowledge and will be supported by Programme Partner **Sun Media Group**.



Above: Left: Yang Lan, Co-Founder of Sun Media Group, pictured with *Bamboo Whispering - Empty Mountain* by Liu Jiang (Reviving Craft 2024). Image credit: Zhou Yi. Right: Natalie Melton, Executive Director of the Crafts Council. Image credit: Mark Cocksedge

A highlight includes an in conversation with **Yang Lan**, pioneering journalist, media entrepreneur and co-founder of Sun Media Group, and **Natalie Melton**, Executive Director of the Crafts Council, to explore how traditional craftsmanship continues to inform contemporary design. The talk will delve into the connection, cultural dialogue and reflection that the craft behind objects fosters, considering heritage as a living practice. In 'Civic Futures', moderator **Francesca Perry** will be joined by panelists such as **Marina Blake**, **Sahra Hersi**, and **Alice Meyer**, to examine how we can foster connections through shared spaces, collective experiences and civic participation. The talk 'After Extraction' by Session Partner **Ithra** will be moderated by **Samta Nadeem** alongside panelists such as **Sultan AlBadran**, Head of the Creativity & Innovation Unit at the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra), **Joel De Mowbray** and **Seetal Solanki**, to explore how we can transform our approaches to production through regenerative materials, circular economies and new practices.

V&A x LDF: AWAKENINGS

Awakenings, co-curated by **Carrie Chan** and **Kristian Volsing**, brings radical creative inquiry and diverse perspectives into the museum's galleries to explore how design, craft and technology are reshaping our experience of digital and physical worlds.

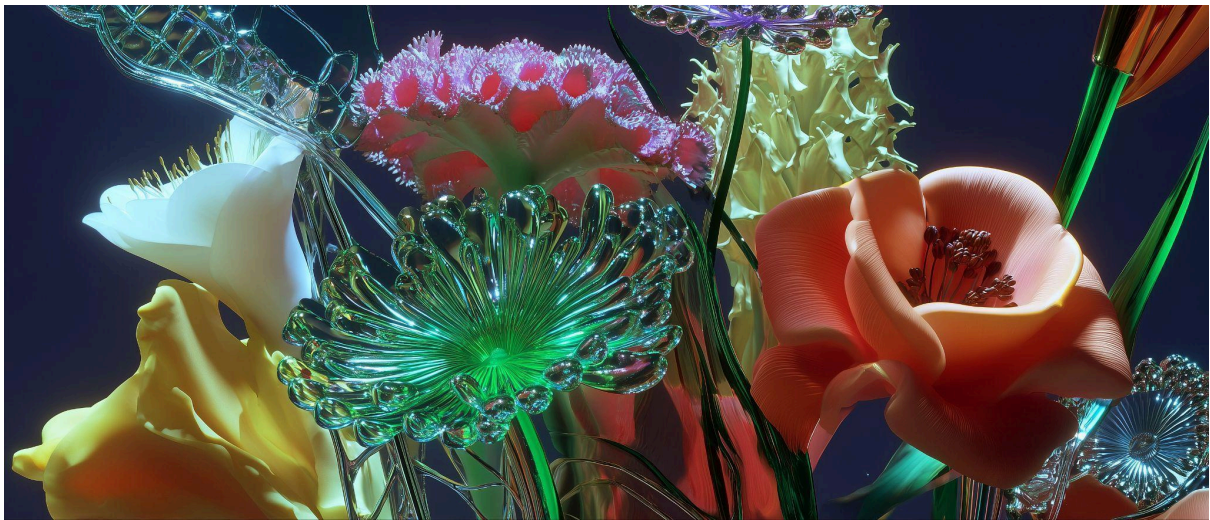


Above: *Image Syncers* (film still), Nina Davies, part of V&A x LDF26: *Awakenings*

Image Syncers presents an episode of a fictional podcast, in which a mysterious collective attempts to physically transform themselves into AI-generated figures. The multimedia installation and performance project by **Nina Davies** considers how people can adapt themselves to computational aesthetics. The installation is supported by the Beaverbrook Canadian Foundation and the High Commission of Canada in the United Kingdom and has been curated by Carrie Chan and produced by Faunsia Tucker.

The artist-design unit **Playfool** draws on the V&A's routine practice of object cleaning in *The Server* to explore systems of care amongst the rapid acceleration of AI. Co-founded by **Daniel Coppen** and **Saki Maruyama**, Playfool is the recipient of V&A's annual Emerging Design Commission and this new piece was curated by Carrie Chan and produced by Katya Spiers. Playfool explores the transforming dynamic between human agency and technology through the medium of play and presents alternative game design approaches in *The Server* that encourage visitors to explore the physical upkeep of the museum collections and the AI infrastructure, honing in on one task that has proven to resist automation: cleaning.

Lovers Hold by **Henry Svendsen** explores the plinth and the spatial politics of cruising sites, reimagining the sculptural support through a series of viscous, grotto-like forms which are suspended around stainless steel armatures. The sculptures capture fleeting moments of contact and how bodies gather through structures not originally designed to hold them, examining what it means to gather, engage and rest in public spaces. The piece is curated by Kristian Volsing and produced by Katya Spiers.



Above: *Once Upon A Garden* by Linda Dounia Rebeiz, part of V&A x LDF26: *Awakenings*. Image credit: Linda Dounia Rebeiz

Artist **Linda Dounia Rebeiz** in *Once Upon A Garden* uses AI as a tool to collect visual data on flowers that have not been prominently documented and will be on display at the John Lyons Community Gallery, Learning Centre. The installation presents 50 emergent species of speculative flora across 5 chapters, showcasing AI's ability to synthesise images based on context. The project was curated by Laura Herman and Marc Barto.

The installation of *your golf course made my GPU* by **Sam Ghantous** draws together imagery and material products that capture the travel and state changes of sand, using the second most abundant of earthly elements to explore the entanglement between earth and technology. The piece examines digital technologies and geological origins and how our digital future remains inextricably tied to the earth. The installation is supported by the Beaverbrook Canadian Foundation and the High Commission of Canada in the United Kingdom and has been curated by Kristian Volsing and produced by Katya Spiers.



Above: *your golf course made my GPU*, by Sam Ghantous, part of V&A x LDF26: Awakenings. Image credit: YveYANG Gallery

The ceramic installation *Metamorphic Modulation* by Albert Yonathan Setayawan investigates meditative experiences through repeating forms, pattern-making and the material qualities of clay. The installation comprises over 700 individual pieces hand-modelled in clay, slip-cast in red terracotta, and left unglazed to celebrate the clay's particular material qualities, centered around two forms which evoke a leaf and the other a flower. The artwork was originally commissioned in partnership with The Peninsula Hotels' 'Art in Resonance' programme and first presented in Hong Kong. The installation has been adapted for its showcase at the V&A, curated by Louis Copplestone in collaboration with Carrie Chan and produced by Katya Spiers.

When the Void Gazes Back by Eunjo Lee was inspired by the V&A's historic Buddhist art collection, fusing ancient heritage with contemporary technology. Eunjo Lee has created a digitally sculpted film to explore concepts of Zen, karma and impermanence, reframing digital, shamanistic deities as ever-changing cosmic worlds within themselves. The deities are also made into sculptures partially 3D printed from recycled clay and embedded with interactive design elements. The new commission is supported by the Ruddock Foundation for the Arts and Niru Ratnam, London and curated by Carrie Chan and produced by Faunsia Tucker.

The London-based visual artist of Uzbek origin **Aziza Kadyri** has responded to the V&A's historic suzani collection in ***Sender Unknown***. The new commission is a shifting installation exploring the intersection of AI, art and craft. It reimagines the textile tradition of Suzani, hand-embroidered textiles traditionally made for a bride's dowry and one of Uzbekistan's most significant cultural traditions. Aziza Kadyri has fused this tradition with AI and digital processes, disconnecting images of the embroideries from the lived experiences that produced them, such as women's labour and migration. Using a bespoke AI model, the artists - including Yulduz Mukhiddinova and team (suzani embroidery), Kacper Reicher (digital development) and Fabrication Facility (3D structures) - developed a new language of suzani symbols, while female artisans in Nurota, Uzbekistan, hand-embroidered these contemporary motifs. *Sender Unknown* examines information transmission and questions whether technologies that risk erasing histories can instead be reimagined as tools for preservation and reinterpretation. The display is part of the V&A's Jameel Programme, celebrating 20 years of The Jameel Gallery with Community Jameel. It was made with further support from the Sarikhani Family and with thanks to Canclini Tessile. *Sender Unknown* was curated by Carrie Chan and Fuchsia Hart, and produced by Faunsia Tucker.

Intoart artist **Andre Williams'** new commission ***Time After Time*** fuses the traditions of clockmaking and soundsystem design. A longcase clock sits on the zigzag parquet floor of the unique 18th century mirrored room in the V&A's Europe 1600-1800 galleries, accompanied by encased speakers playing mixtapes selected by Williams throughout the day. The clock is decorated with vibrant South African motifs Ndebele and geometric motifs of Bamiléké and is accompanied by an easel designed by Andre Williams, which holds a framed drawing by artist Dawn Wilson. *Time After Time* has been curated by Kristian Volsing and produced by Faunsia Tucker.

Wider events at the V&A during the London Design Festival include its Friday Late on September 18. A chance for visitors to take in London's emerging artists and designers after hours for performances, workshops, installations, music and more, including a preview of Digital Design Weekend in the Learning Centre. The Digital Design Weekend, supported by the Adobe Foundation, will run from 19-20 September and celebrates contemporary digital art, design and technology. The event will reveal new ways of sensing, making, and connecting through interactive exhibits, workshops, and talks where creatives and visitors question, play, and shape more inclusive futures.

Tickets for the Global Design Forum are now available and talks are free to attend. Don't miss out!

For further information and ticket information visit: <https://londondesignfestival.com/gdf>

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Notes to Editor:

For further information, please contact ldf@bacchus.agency | [Bacchus](#)

For all images and assets, please download [here](#)

Bowmore encourages responsible drinking. For more information and resources on responsible consumption, please visit DrinkAware. <https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/>.

About London Design Festival | <https://londondesignfestival.com/>

Established in 2003 by Sir John Sorrell CBE and Ben Evans CBE, London Design Festival celebrates and promotes London as the design capital of the world. London Design Festival has since earned the reputation as a key calendar moment of London's autumn creative season, alongside London Fashion Week, Frieze Art Fair and the London Film Festival, attracting the greatest thinkers, practitioners, retailers and educators to the capital, in a citywide celebration.

About Global Design Forum | <https://londondesignfestival.com/gdf>

Global Design Forum is a curated thought leadership programme, celebrating design and the minds shaping its future. Across three days design will be inspected, explored and unpacked through the words and works of diverse practitioners in design and beyond. Earlier this year, the Global Design Forum Istanbul 2026, a new international platform for design, launched in collaboration with People Places Ideas, took place 13–16 May 2026. New global locations to be announced for next year's edition.

About V&A South Kensington | <https://www.vam.ac.uk>

The V&A is a family of museums dedicated to the power of creativity. V&A South Kensington is a world of extraordinary global creativity, with unmissable exhibitions, experiences and educational programmes for all. One of London's most iconic buildings, it is home to national collections of art, design, fashion, photography and furniture, plus theatre, performance, architecture and ceramics, as well as the UK's National Art Library. It is a place where everyone can experience a story of creativity that spans 5,000 years and every creative discipline, which brings that story to life through programmes and activities for all ages and specialisms, and world-leading research and conservation.

About Bloomberg Philanthropies

Bloomberg Philanthropies invests in 700 cities and 150 countries around the world to ensure better, longer lives for the greatest number of people. The organization focuses on creating lasting change in five key areas: the Arts, Education, Environment, Government Innovation, and Public Health. Bloomberg Philanthropies encompasses all of Michael R. Bloomberg's giving, including his foundation, corporate, and personal philanthropy as well

as Bloomberg Associates, a philanthropic consultancy that advises cities around the world. For more information, visit [bloomberg.org](https://www.bloomberg.org), sign up for the [newsletter](#), or follow on [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), [YouTube](#), [Threads](#), [Facebook](#), and [X](#).

About Bloomberg Connects | <https://www.bloombergconnects.org/>

Bloomberg Connects is a free digital platform connecting audiences with more than 1,500 cultural organisations around the world. The platform is part of Bloomberg Philanthropies' longstanding commitment to supporting digital innovation in the arts. From world-class museums and botanical gardens to historic houses and outdoor sculpture parks, Connects makes it easier than ever to access and engage with arts and culture anytime, anywhere. Available in more than 50 languages through Google Translate, Connects helps cultural institutions reach new and diverse audiences globally.

About The Standard, London | www.standardhotels.com/london

Housed in the former Camden Town Hall Annex in London's thriving King's Cross neighbourhood, the 1974 Brutalist building has been meticulously restored and sets the perfect stage for The Standard's first hotel outside the United States. The Standard, London has 266 rooms, ranging from Standard King Interior Rooms to terraced suites with outdoor bathtubs overlooking the dramatic St Pancras Station.

On the ground floor, Double Standard, a street-facing bar and restaurant, serves a legendary selection of American diner and British pub favourites. Next door, The Library Lounge features a carefully curated collection that pays homage to the building's original use, alongside Sounds Studio, home to live radio shows and podcasts. Isla offers an approachable seasonal menu, complemented by a brand new wine and cocktail list. The 10th-floor restaurant, Decimo, showcases Chef Paola Arenas' live-fire cooking, surrounded by 360-degree views of London, accessible via the iconic exterior red pill lift.

For seasonal fun, The Rooftop is the perfect summer spot for drinks, bites, and beats.