

Announcing the Launch of Global Design Forum İstanbul

Global Design Forum İstanbul unites international voices in a programme of talks, installations and citywide experiences 13-16 May 2026



Topkapı Palace complex, İstanbul. Image credit: EBMarketa

- Global Design Forum İstanbul is launching from 13 - 16 May 2026
- Organised in collaboration with People Places Ideas, a creative, intellectual platform, based in İstanbul and London
- Artistic Direction by Melek Zeynep Bulut, Founder, People Places Ideas
- Inaugural edition of Global Design Forum İstanbul spans the Forum as well as citywide programming
- 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
- Citywide programming led by Melek Zeynep Bulut over the four days includes: *İstanbullar*: Design Route, public installations and a design competition
- Global Design Forum İstanbul is supported by Beral Madra, Art & Culture Advisor and Celâleddin Çelik, Architectural Advisor.

London, 13th February 2026 | Global Design Forum, London Design Festival's flagship thought leadership programme, announces the inception of Global Design Forum İstanbul. Created in collaboration with People Places Ideas (PPI) with Artistic Direction from artist and designer Melek Zeynep Bulut, the inaugural programme will take place from 13–16 May 2026 in İstanbul, Türkiye.

The launch of a new Global Design Forum in İstanbul signals an ambitious step in its evolution as a truly global platform for design dialogue and cultural exchange. The Forum brings together leading designers, architects, technologists, curators, academics, civic leaders, makers and cultural figures from around the world to explore how design can respond to and thrive within a world defined by interconnection, complexity and coexistence across four days of talks, installations and experiences rooted in İstanbul's unique cultural and architectural heritage. These four days will combine high-level discourse with city-facing commissions and public engagement, reflecting İstanbul's unique position where cultures, histories and ideas continuously meet and reshape one another.

"The launch of Global Design Forum İstanbul marks an exciting new chapter in our mission to create a truly international platform for design dialogue. İstanbul's unique position at the crossroads of cultures makes it an inspiring setting to explore how design can respond to global challenges while celebrating local identity. We're delighted to collaborate with People & Places & Ideas to bring the Forum's spirit of creative exchange to this remarkable city." — Ben Evans, Founder, London Design Festival & Global Design Forum

Melek Zeynep Bulut, Founder of PPI, serves as Artistic Director for Global Design Forum İstanbul, working alongside London Design Festival & Global Design Forum Founder Ben Evans. Bulut plays an integral role in the overall programming and creative ideation of Global Design Forum İstanbul, ensuring each aspect celebrates design, creativity, and idiosyncrasy within İstanbul. She is supported by Beral Madra, Art & Culture Advisor; Celâleddin Çelik, Architectural Advisor, and Beatrice Galilee, Forum Content Advisor.

"İstanbul is a city that neither begins nor ends; one that derives its singularity from the ways its fragments connect, and whose boundaries can never be fully defined. It stands as one of the most idiosyncratic cities in the world. We approached the city precisely through this special "in-between" lens and its unique juxtapositions. Our focus is on the relationships between fragments, on modes of connection, flows, and encounters."

Global Design Forum İstanbul 2026 frames creativity as an enquiry that deliberately places side-by-side systems and ideas that do not naturally belong to one another, yet can coexist, thereby revealing new attitudes and new modes of positioning. Thereby, the programme itself becomes “a performance in the city.” Here, creative practice is positioned not as the construction of a unified whole, but as “an attention that moves among singular fragments and their connections”. With placemaking, rethinking and storytelling central to our purpose, we investigate what can work with what; which unexpected contact might enable a new meaning, a new language, or a new object in İstanbul.” — Melek Zeynep Bulut, Founder, People Places Ideas & Artistic Director, Global Design Forum İstanbul

Global Design Forum İstanbul is structured around the Forum, two days of thought leadership programme within the curatorial framework *Worlds in Contact*, as well as citywide programming including *İstanbullar: Design Route*, public installations, and a new garden design competition.

The Forum will unfold in a historic venue within the grounds of Topkapı Palace, where the venue’s architectural gravitas will provide a powerful backdrop for keynotes, panels, and in-conversations. The Forum’s theme, *Worlds in Contact*, examines what it means to design in a time when inherited frameworks for understanding the world are no longer sufficient. As societies navigate overlapping crises of ecology, technology, migration, extraction, and inequality, the Forum explores design not as a search for a universal language, but as a practice that embraces multiplicity, recognising diverse ways of living, knowing, and making.

“The Forum brings together leading designers and thinkers whose work engages directly with the urgencies of our time, from climate and migration to technology and civic life. Rather than proposing a single narrative, we are foregrounding multiple perspectives and practices that operate across cultures and disciplines. İstanbul, a city defined by contact and convergence, offers a powerful context for this dialogue.” — Beatrice Galilee, Forum Content Advisor.

As Forum Content Advisor, Galilee has shaped the theme of the Forum and speaker line-up, ensuring dynamic and inclusive sessions with strong representation of Turkish voices.

Istanbul: Design Route brings together a network of Istanbul's creatives contribute visual, audio, and editorial content relating to 40 key design and art works, and notable locations throughout the city. *Istanbul* functions as a map to the city, an archive of its creativity, and a platform for storytelling.

A core pillar of the Istanbul edition will be a series of landmark public installations, designed to animate the city and engage local and international audiences alike. Priority sites include the Topkapı Palace complex, Taksim, and significant corners of the historic peninsula. All installations will be produced locally in Türkiye, with PPI and London Design Festival collaboratively overseeing artistic and curatorial alignment.

An international design competition for a contemporary garden in Yedikule region, to be announced at the closing of Global Design Forum Istanbul, completes the programme. This will be an initiative in the city that actively engages future generations. The Istanbul edition advances a strategic vision that spans cultural diplomacy, city branding and sector leadership, positioning Istanbul as a global design capital while expanding Global Design Forum's international footprint. By convening local and global voices, foregrounding Turkish talent and student participation, and commissioning high-impact public works, the Forum will create a platform for new ideas, collaborations and civic engagement around design's role in addressing contemporary challenges.

Global Design Forum Istanbul will follow a clear rhythm across its four days: an opening gala dinner on 13 May; two full days of Forum sessions, workshops and evening events on 14–15 May; and additional short-format sessions and a closing Brunch on 16 May. Further programme details, including speakers and installation commissions, will be announced soon.

For more information and coverage opportunities, please contact: gdf@bacchus.agency

Editor's notes:

- [PRESS KIT](#)
- Global Design Forum will take place 13 - 16 May 2026
- <https://londondesignfestival.com/gdf>
- Contact us:

International Media | Bacchus Agency | gdf@bacchus.agency

Turkish Media | Burcu Dimili, PR & Communication Consultant |
burcudimili@gmail.com | +90 554 458 33 13

Melek Zeynep Bulut Media Enquiries | Sameera Hanif, Sameera Hanif
Communications | sameera@sameerahanif.com | +44 7817 175 724

- About PPI

People Places Ideas (PPI) 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.