

The Programme: Selection of Additional Highlight Projects

Thematic Focus:

Shaping Living Environments Together – February, March, May

Kulturcampus Frankfurt

Dates: year-round

Location: Campus Bockenheim, Goethe University Frankfurt am Main

Vision 31 serves as a real-life lab that enables the people of Frankfurt to actively co-create the transformation of the former university campus into the *Kulturcampus* through democratic, co-productive processes.

The interim use of the former art library creates an inclusive, accessible and participatory space in which resources are shared, opening up scope for artistic and social experimentation. The lower floors provide spaces for initiatives and shared infrastructure, while the generous upper level is dedicated to large-scale, experimental uses. This is where a temporary exhibition and performance venue for dance, theatre and music is taking shape, already offering an experimental preview of the Kulturcampus's future potential. In 2026, the public environment surrounding the former university campus will evolve into a vibrant space for social encounters, open to a wide range of formats.

Willow Pavilion in Senefelder Park

Dates: from April 2026

Location: Senefelder Park, Offenbach

Institution / project partner: hada – Workshop for the Common Good

Although the site is heavily frequented due to the adjacent playground and its proximity to the Rolandpassage shopping centre, it is rarely used during the height of summer. The reason most often cited by local residents is the intense heat. The aim of the project is to make public space more liveable, climate-responsive and attuned to users' needs. The construction of a shade-providing structure made of willow allows the square to be used even during the summer heat. It thus contributes to the adaptation of urban life to the realities of climate change.

The project starts in early April 2026 with a three-day workshop, during which participants will build three circular raised beds and fill them with soil. At the end of April, the next phase follows: in a collective effort involving volunteers and local

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residents, willow rods are bundled and woven together. From these handcrafted elements, large arches are formed and planted into the raised beds. The Willow Pavilion will remain in Senefelder Park as a lasting expression of this participatory process, providing shade and cooling for local families and residents for a period of ten years.

Building Democracy! Architecture of the Post-war Modern Era and Contemporary Design in the Rhein-Main Region

Dates: throughout 2026

Location: Frankfurt

Institution / project partner: KulturRegion FrankfurtRheinMain

Where do democratic processes take place? How is democracy expressed in our built environment? In the post-war period, architecture played a central role as a manifestation of democratic values: between 1950 and the late 1960s, numerous public buildings were constructed whose design and materials – such as glass blocks and open-plan layouts – were intended to embody transparency, participation and openness. Town halls, schools and community centres were designed not only to represent democracy, but to function through their very architecture as active sites of democratic and social life, as envisioned by the *Hessen Plan*. Many of these buildings are now showing their age; their architectural concepts are no longer contemporary or sustainable.

The KulturRegion team invites initiatives, associations, institutions and engaged community groups to identify built spaces of democracy in their villages and neighbourhoods, and to question, develop or reimagine them through a critical and creative process. This initiative forms part of *Geist der Freiheit* (Spirit of Freedom), a project that explores the regional roots of democracy and freedom through various thematic strands and formats, linking historical contexts with current social challenges.

Ping Pong Park

Dates: TBC

Location: TBC

Institution / project partner: Elisabet Flascha, Laura Weigand and Marco von der Heyden

Ping Pong Park is a unique project that brings movement, fun and social interaction into the public realm. Unconventional table shapes spark curiosity and invite people to rediscover both the urban space and the game itself. All tables are designed to encourage shared play — whether between two players or many. Round tables are ideal for larger groups, enabling dynamic and

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sociable games. Narrow tables demand greater precision and technical skill, while asymmetrical designs help to balance differing levels of ability, making play accessible to everyone.

Ping Pong Park is not only a space for physical activity, but also a place to linger, chat, watch and join in. It creates a setting for spontaneous encounters and shared experiences, enriching urban life and inviting people to become active participants in public space.

VHS – Let's talk WDC!

Dates: year-round

Location: Sonnemannstrasse 13, Frankfurt

Institution / project partner: VHS Frankfurt

As a key partner in the WDC year 2026, VHS Frankfurt is dedicating its programme for the first half of the year to the guiding theme *Design for Democracy*. In doing so, it connects its wide-ranging educational offer with the themes of WDC 2026, opening up new perspectives on design, participation and social change.

Courses such as *Practising Democracy in Everyday Life*, *Family Council – Democracy Begins at Home* or *Lego Serious Game – Playfully Creating the City of Tomorrow* make democracy tangible through hands-on experience. Creative formats including *Urban Sketching – Frankfurt's Places of Memory* and *Democracy in Focus – Creative Photography and Book Design* bring together urban society and issues of design practice. TUMO Frankfurt, the VHS centre for creative technologies, is specifically aimed at young people.

Collaborations with partner institutions – such as PRIF (Peace Research Institute Frankfurt), Netzwerk Frankfurt für gemeinschaftliches Wohnen e. V. (collaborative living and co-housing), or the LOEWE research focus *Architectures of Order* – support strong thematic connections. In addition, three WDC round-table meetups jointly organised with VHS Frankfurt will foster dialogue between the diverse audiences.

Complementing this programme, the monthly discussion series *Frankfurt – City of Dreams* launches on 28 January at the Stadthaus am Markt (Markt 1), hosted by Hassan Annouri. Under the banner of *Let's Talk WDC!*, he will discuss visions for Frankfurt as World Design Capital 2026 with prominent guests from culture, sport, politics and society. The series, organised in cooperation with the Stiftung Polytechnische Gesellschaft Frankfurt am Main, invites the public to join the discussion.

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Oberursel Market Square: Lively, Open, Right at the Heart of It!

Dates: January to August 2026

Location: Oberursel Market Square

Institution / project partner: the volunteer-led *Local Action Group*

Loneliness is a growing social issue – one in six people in Germany often feels lonely. In Oberursel, too, many existing initiatives fail to reach those affected. And yet, for centuries, the market square has been a place where people come together. Today it brings together long-standing residents and newcomers, children and older people, tourists and local business people. However, the full potential of this central space has yet to be realised.

The project *Oberursel Market Square: Lively, Open, Right at the Heart of It!* seeks to change this. It makes existing initiatives visible, connects people and forges new links in everyday life. The market square is envisioned as an open hub for a vibrant, democratic urban community.

Activities such as ADFC cycling tours, youth-oriented formats and cultural evenings at Café Windrose create encounters between people, places and ideas – with impulses radiating from one market square to the next across the region.

The project is driven by a volunteer group of local residents acting as networkers. They are developing an open-source toolkit that other towns and cities can use to activate their own spaces of social encounter. Open methods, noticeboards and a growing network thus establish a lasting infrastructure that will endure well beyond WDC 2026.

Moving Business By Design – Talks & Insights

Date: 26 February 2026 and further dates

Venue: IHK Frankfurt / Frankfurt Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Institution / project partners: IHK Frankfurt and the German Design Council – Rat für Formgebung

Moving Business by Design is a four-part talk and event series aimed specifically at decision-makers who are actively shaping transformation and want to use design as a strategic lever for competitiveness, innovation and sustainable value creation. High-profile talks and keynote insights will explore key future-facing topics including circular design, the transformation of business models, regional and urban development, and the role of design in political and economic decision-making. The series opens on 26 February 2026 with *Terminal 3 – Design between Infrastructure, Identity and Experience*.

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The series is initiated and curated by the German Design Council – Rat für Formgebung, Germany’s leading authority on design since 1953. As a recognised thought leader, the Council connects design expertise with economic and political relevance. In cooperation with the Frankfurt Chamber of Commerce and Industry (IHK), *Moving Business by Design* positions the Frankfurt RheinMain metropolitan region as an international hub for business and design. In the context of World Design Capital 2026, the series also contributes to Frankfurt’s strategic positioning as a place for future-oriented economic and political decision-making.

Terminal 3 – Design between Infrastructure, Identity and Experience

Date: 26 February 2026

Under the title *Terminal 3 – Design between Infrastructure, Identity and Experience*, the opening event of the *Moving Business by Design* series on 26 February 2026 explores how large-scale public infrastructure can be meaningfully designed at an XXL scale. Using the new Terminal 3 at Frankfurt Airport as a case study, leading figures from business, architecture, design and politics will discuss questions of responsibility, creative scope and the future of public spaces as a strategic factor in regional competitiveness.

The event will be opened by Lutz Dietzold, CEO of the German Design Council – Rat für Formgebung, and Ulrich Caspar, President of the Frankfurt Chamber of Commerce and Industry (IHK Frankfurt am Main). The subsequent panel discussion will feature Stephanie Pudwitz (Chief Commercial Officer, Fraport AG), Prof. Christoph Mäckler (architect, Mäckler Architekten), Sibylle Schlaich (Managing Partner, Moniteurs, Berlin) and Kaweh Mansoori (Hessian Minister for Economic Affairs, Energy, Transport, Housing and Rural Areas). The discussion will be moderated by Carsten Knop, Publisher of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*.

Netzwerk Neue Altstadt – Public Space Exhibition

Dates: from February 2026

Location: Frankfurt, New Old Town

Institution / project partner: DomRömer GmbH

With the reconstruction of Frankfurt’s “New Old Town”, the city was given back its heart. As part of World Design Capital 2026, the area is re-presented as a vivid example of democratic urban design. A public space exhibition showcases this historically layered site, highlighting both its development through democratic processes and the key actors involved. Embedded within an urban fabric of small-scale plots, since 2018, the quarter between Frankfurt Cathedral and Römer has once again become a central hub. Through its streets, pathways and squares, the

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New Old Town connects a wide range of cultural, commercial and educational institutions within the neighborhood and beyond.

The *Netzwerk Neue Altstadt* project aims to make the Old Town accessible for everyone. A banner exhibition along the historic Coronation Route provides an overview of the development of the *New Old Town*. It presents the project as a successful example of a dynamic democratic process, shaped by strong civic engagement, public debate and protest, multiple design competitions and negotiated compromises leading to its completion.

In summer, the project will be complemented by an exhibition in the foyer of the *Stadthaus am Markt*. Artisanal processes and technical challenges will be demonstrated and illustrated at worktables, accompanied by events and workshops inviting visitors to actively participate.

Future OF City Centre. Working Together for a Livable Urban Centre

Dates: throughout 2026

Location: Offenbach

Institution / project partners: **Agentur Mitte der Wirtschaftsförderung Offenbach** in close collaboration with municipal departments and city-owned subsidiaries

Offenbach's city centre is undergoing a period of transformation. Open, green and shared spaces are emerging between familiar places and new developments. As part of World Design Capital 2026, four future-oriented projects will be given particular visibility: *Station Mitte*, *SCAPE°*, the *Town Hall Pavilion* and urban greening. Together, they demonstrate how new spaces for gathering, design and everyday use can be created.

Station Mitte is set to become the city's living room: the new public library housed in the former Galeria Kaufhof invites visitors to linger, learn and explore. Following its renovation, the *Town Hall Pavilion* will evolve into a vibrant urban hub, bringing together hospitality, local businesses and socio-cultural activities. *SCAPE° – Weather. Climate. People* makes climate and environmental issues tangible through interactive experiences. Measures to green the city centre create a continuous green corridor, promoting climate-responsive public spaces.

Some of the projects are still in development and will take shape in a variety of formats during World Design Capital 2026. They are being jointly developed by *Agentur Mitte der Wirtschaftsförderung Offenbach* in collaboration with municipal departments, initiatives, experts, artists and local residents.

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CAMPUSBAULAB – Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences

Dates: summer semester 2026

Location: Darmstadt

Institution / project partner: Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences (h_da)

BAULAB is a project of Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences, initiated by the Department of Architecture, that explores the question: *How do we want to live and how can we build and live in the future?* Conceived as a real-world laboratory, the project provides a space in which these questions can be examined.

Together with students and the wider public, BAULAB discusses and tests the role of building and design in the sustainability transition, with the aim of fostering aesthetically compelling and liveable development. Both the designed environment and the social dimension of space are central to this exploration. BAULAB positions itself as an experimental and innovative teaching tool. To promote interdisciplinary exchange, the project will be located on the h_da campus at a point of transition to the surrounding urban space. Between 2024 and 2026, the *CAMPUSBAULAB* has been developed, a place for experimentation and a temporary outdoor workshop to support both practice-oriented experiments in sustainable construction and participatory processes.

Schattengrün / Green Shade

Dates: spring 2026

Location: Frankfurt

Institution / project partner: OMC°C GmbH / Product Design

In spring, OMC°C will launch a participatory greening project in Frankfurt as part of World Design Capital 2026, transforming windows into temporary green façades in collaboration with local residents. The aim is to contribute to a climate-adapted city using simple, everyday solutions. The project employs a specially developed, minimally invasive system: natural-fibre trellis nets are mounted externally in front of windows using a bespoke bracket. The 4–8 m² nets and accompanying planters can be securely fitted into window openings without any structural modifications. Over the course of the summer, annual flowering climbers grow into the nets, forming a “green curtain” that provides shade and helps protect interiors from sun and heat.

The project follows a seasonal, circular approach. In autumn, the “green curtains” will be removed; both plants and nets can be composted, while full sunlight can enter the buildings during the winter. The brackets remain in place and the windows can be replanted each May. Interested participants can register with OMC°C from

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March. At the May launch, participants will receive materials, guidance and care instructions. The project concludes in October with a communal harvest festival, where experiences can be shared and – depending on the planting – participants can enjoy the vegetables they have grown themselves.

Mobile Gardens – Sustainable Community Spaces

Dates: from April 2026

Venue: Hanau and other sites

Institution / project partner: BGBA Hanau – University of Cooperative Education

Mobile Gardens – Sustainable Community Spaces is a student-led initiative from BGBA Hanau – University of Cooperative Education. The project introduces a series of mobile community gardens designed to be easily relocated and integrated into different urban settings. The gardens encourage people to gather, participate and engage with ideas around sustainable urban development.

The project focuses on promoting biodiversity, making sustainable design accessible and strengthening social participation.

In response to the shortage of open, green communal spaces in densely built-up cities, the *Mobile Gardens* combine environmental responsibility with collaborative, hands-on design. Local residents play an active role in workshops, planting activities and co-creative formats. The project becomes visible through pop-up gardens, public events and digital communication, and is developed in close collaboration with local initiatives, municipal partners and educational organisations, including the Hanau Environmental Centre.

DemokratieKioske with Young Urban Future Labs

Dates:

Young Urban Future Labs: March – May 2026

DemokratieKioske: May – September 2026

Location: Frankfurt and RheinMain-Region

Institution / project partner: German International University, Berlin

At a time when young people and marginalised communities are often underrepresented in public discourse, this project creates easily accessible opportunities for dialogue, participation and creative agency. Through *Young Urban Future Labs* and *DemokratieKioske*, it fosters creative engagement and democratic education in contemporary urban contexts. Across 30 creative formats hosted in youth centres and developed in collaboration with the Stiftung Polytechnische Gesellschaft, young people explore new perspectives on democracy.

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Running alongside this programme, eleven existing kiosks across Frankfurt and the wider region are transformed into *DemokratieKiosks* – lively, open platforms for around 120 events. These range from facilitated discussions and collaborative design to performances for both young people and adults.

The project is complemented by an interactive web application, the *Gute Frage* (*Good Question*) tool, which invites participants to contribute ideas on democratic themes in a simple and intuitive way.

Kiosk of Solidarity X Bahnhofsviertel

Dates: events, interventions and actions from April – October 2026

Location: Frankfurt, Bahnhofsviertel (Station District)

Institution / project partners: Moritz Ahlert & Felix Egle, Habitat Unit – International Urbanism and Design, TU Berlin

Kiosk of Solidarity × *Bahnhofsviertel* is a series of interventions across Frankfurt's Bahnhofsviertel that creates an open platform for dialogue, social encounter and knowledge exchange. Working closely with local residents, neighbourhood initiatives, community groups, street outreach workers, addiction treatment services and drug users, the project brings together diverse perspectives on public space and drug use. Potential collaborations with teaching and research projects further support exchange and knowledge production.

A central focus is harm reduction – an approach that has long shaped the Bahnhofsviertel and remains a key point of debate in Frankfurt and internationally. Often referred to as the “Frankfurt model”, this strategy has been widely recognised for providing life-saving support and healthcare to people affected by drug use, many of whom also experience homelessness, social exclusion and have migration histories. Marginalised groups such as people who use drugs are rarely included in participatory processes, and their lived expertise of social and spatial realities is largely overlooked.

This is where the Kiosk intervenes. It aims to connect different forms of knowledge and translate them into experiences that take into account – and develop – existing stakeholder interests. Key questions include: Where do conflicts arise in the urban space? How can design support the transfer of information, visibility and dialogue? What strategies underpin the work of addiction treatment services in Frankfurt? What challenges and tensions become visible?

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Saalbaustraße 37

Dates: 5 April – 7 May 2026

Location: Saalbaustraße 37, Darmstadt

Institution / project partner: das blumen e. V.

The *Saalbaustraße 37* project uses vacant spaces to promote cultural and social diversity, facilitate social encounter and participation, and strengthen local networks. The former adult shop was renovated and creatively repurposed by the association *das blumen e. V.*, with spaces for collaborative work and free cultural events. As part of WDC 2026, there will be workshops, a street festival called *Common Ground*, and a keynote speech to foster exchange, learning, and coming together in public space; the Design Build Workshop will create long-term infrastructure for the street.

Urban Living Space: The Great Good Place – A Living Room Church for Everyone

Dates: April – September 2026

Location: Frankfurt, Bahnhofsviertel (Station District)

Institution / project partner: Diakonie Frankfurt and Offenbach, Evangelische Akademie Frankfurt, BDA Hessen, Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences and Evangelische Kirche Hesse and Nassau

The *Weißfrauen Diakoniestelle* is transforming the church into an open “living room” in Frankfurt’s Bahnhofsviertel, a neighbourhood characterised by great social and economic diversity. The *Urban Living Space* invites everyone to meet, participate and contribute their needs and ideas to the design, while architects and interior designers developing new ideas based on this input. The aim is to create participatory ‘third places’ that facilitate exchange, community and joint neighbourhood design.

studio formagora – Co-Designing AdaKantine

Dates: Co-design process: April and May 2026

Construction: July – September 2026

Location: Frankfurt

Institution /project partner: studio formagora / AdaKantine

AdaKantine in Frankfurt is a solidarity kitchen based in Bockenheim. Housed in the former Akademie der Arbeit on the old university campus, it primarily serves people who rely on free or low-cost meals. The kitchen is supported by volunteers, local associations, donations, crowdfunding, prize money and municipal funding. Cooking is done with rescued food and contributions to minimise waste and actively promote sustainability. ‘We are a restaurant, not a soup kitchen’ – the

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respect that AdaKantine shows its guests is a core element of the concept. There is table service, set tables and a three-course menu made from rescued ingredients.

Because the current furniture is unsuitable for many guests' health needs, AdaKantine is working with studio formagora to design a new reception area and a furniture series crafted from repurposed materials, tailored to the users' needs. The furniture is manufactured collaboratively in public construction events, which eases the workload for volunteers and strengthens places of solidarity in public spaces; the users are central participants in the process.

Recipes for Social Cohesion

Dates: TBD

Location: Frankfurt and RheinMain-Region

Institution / project partner: **Über den Tellerrand Frankfurt e. V.**

The project aims to strengthen intercultural coexistence and integration in the Frankfurt area. It focuses on smaller towns and communities around the city, bringing people with and without migration backgrounds together through shared cooking experiences.

In 2026, seven events are planned, organised by a volunteer team of locals and migrants in collaboration with local partners. Four of the events will take place at partner venues, while three will be hosted at *WeKitchen* in Frankfurt-Bockenheim. By cooking together, participants meet on equal footing, creating new connections within the city. Through these culinary encounters, *Über den Tellerrand e. V.* seeks to enhance intercultural understanding and strengthen social cohesion between Frankfurt and its surrounding communities.

Mousonturm – How to Make a Life Focus on Aging

Dates: 10-27 September 2026

Location: Frankfurt

Institution / project partner: **Mousonturm Frankfurt**

In September 2026, Mousonturm presents *How to Make a Life*, an 18-day programme exploring ageing from international and intergenerational perspectives. Through (world) and premieres, participatory projects, and cross-disciplinary formats spanning dance, theatre and performance, the programme fosters empathy, dialogue and social cohesion, highlighting artistic practice as a powerful driver of community connection.

The programme includes Wen Hui's dance piece created with women aged 60 and over, exploring the body as a living archive; dance pioneer Deborah Hay's new solo

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performance that challenges the boundary between performer and audience; Faustin Linyekula's collaboration with a 75-year-old former dancer tracing the history of the first National Ballet in Zaire; and Samara Hersch's intergenerational project connecting young and older people around themes of sexuality and the internet. The programme responds to debates about demographic change through immersive, aesthetic experiences, questioning conventional ideas of youth, ability and productivity. Numerous projects offer both direct and indirect participation for the people of Frankfurt. *How to Make a Life* seeks to bridge generational divides and counter the marginalisation of both older and younger people.

My Healthy Wiesbaden

Dates: October 2026

Location: Wiesbaden (various neighborhoods)

Institution / project partner: IUD Institut für Universal Design, EGW – Ein gesundes Wiesbaden mbH, Gesunde Stadt.Für Alle. gGmbH, humaQ gGmbH

The health of citizens is central to society in Germany, influencing not only healthcare costs but also social cohesion. Preventive measures are widely recognised as essential – but which approaches will effectively reach the most vulnerable groups? *My Healthy Wiesbaden* addresses this question through a participatory design process, developing practical solutions from the ground up. The project begins with community dialogues in four Wiesbaden neighbourhoods, where residents discuss challenges and co-create initial project ideas. The selected neighbourhoods reflect the city's social and cultural diversity.

These ideas are then refined in design-thinking workshops with designers, students and local health-sector stakeholders, with results presented at a final conference.

Based on these findings, a comprehensive concept for preventive health initiatives in Wiesbaden will be developed, with implementation coordinated and supported over the coming years by project partner EGW – Ein gesundes Wiesbaden mbH. To reach the widest possible audience, the entire process follows the principles of universal design. Project results will be published on the websites of the partners and are intended to inform municipal staff, neighbourhood developers and managers across Germany's 10,000+ municipalities.

Museum Angewandte Kunst – Exhibition *How to Design a Revolution: The Chilean Road to Design*

Dates: from November 2026

Location: Museum Angewandte Kunst Frankfurt / Frankfurt Museum of Applied Arts

Institution / project partner: Museum Angewandte Kunst Frankfurt

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This exhibition at the Museum of Applied Arts explores the role of design during Chile's political transformation (1970–73), highlighting the intersection of graphic and industrial design with democracy.

How to Design a Revolution: The Chilean Road to Design is a comprehensive exhibition on graphic and industrial design under Salvador Allende's reign in Chile. This is an extraordinary case in the history of design, in which the unprecedented decision to bring about revolution through elections led to a nation consciously combining socialism and democracy in design as part of a broader political project for the first time.

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WDO WORLD
DESIGN
ORGANIZATION

Thematic Focus:

Rethinking Learning, Exploring Design – April, July

Discover Design – Education and Culture Initiative

Dates: throughout 2026

Location: various locations across Germany, with a focus on the RheinMain region

Institution / project partner: Stiftung Deutsches Design Museum and Hessian Ministry of Education, Culture and Opportunities

The non-profit *Stiftung Deutsches Design Museum (SDDM) / German Design Museum Foundation* champions the role of design as a transformative force for education and society, promoting design literacy as a key skill for civic participation and future-oriented action.

The foundation's own education and cultural initiative, *Discover Design*, offers a wide range of learning opportunities, including school workshops, teaching materials, and professional development for teachers. It cultivates future-relevant skills, encourages creative and solution-oriented thinking, fosters interdisciplinary and participatory approaches, and empowers young people to actively shape their own environments. Students are guided to become researchers of their own lives and designers of their own futures. The initiative emphasises hands-on learning, enabling participants to take responsibility, develop their own ideas, and bring them to life through design.

In 2026, the foundation will offer schools in the Frankfurt RheinMain region a series of free design workshops led by professional designers. Schools can apply for these workshops from autumn 2025.

Auf die PLÄTZE los – Wiesbaden Children Designing Their City of the Future

Dates: various dates throughout the year

Location: multiple locations across Wiesbaden

In specially designed Future Workshops, primary school children work alongside school social workers to develop ideas and projects that show how they envision a child-friendly city. Equipped with a backpack full of researcher tools – including an instant camera and a workbook – they explore their neighbourhoods, identify sites with potential for change, and generate new concepts for public spaces.

Through these workshops, a wide range of actions and projects emerge at different locations, actively involving children in the city's development. Children

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participation is not only a right but also an opportunity to experience democracy in action.

The project aims to raise adults' awareness of children's perspectives and to develop long-term strategies for child-centred urban planning.

'That's Design!' – Guided Tours in Plain Language

Dates: 18 April, 14 June, 16 August and 10 October 2026, at 10 a.m.

Location: Frankfurt

Institution / project partner: Lebenshilfe Frankfurt and Deutsches Architekturmuseum (DAM)

Since 2021, Lebenshilfe Frankfurt has been collaborating with an increasing number of Frankfurt museums through the project *Einfach reinkommen* (Simply Come In). People with disabilities work alongside museum educators to prepare their own guided tours, which will be presented to the public in autumn and winter. The project creates meaningful access and participation: qualification workshops for the teams take place within the museums themselves, allowing participants to explore spaces that are not always accessible in everyday life. The teams then develop their own individual tours of each institution.

This approach gives people with disabilities the opportunity to actively shape the museum or exhibition experience. The concept will be extended to tours in public spaces. In collaboration with selected museums new tours are created. A number of tours provide individual insights into the area of design. Participants themselves select which design elements in Frankfurt's urban landscape to highlight. Each team participates in one or two initial workshops after which the teams develop their guided tours. A final rehearsal allows teams to learn from one another and provide mutual support.

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Thematic Focus

Future Cycles: Design, Craft and Industry – June

Motion Creation Design / Hessian State Ballet

Dates: 7/8 March 2026

Location: Hessian State Ballet, Wiesbaden

**Institution / project partner: Hessian State Ballet / Hessian State Theatre
Wiesbaden**

How do we shape our environment – spaces, objects, images – and how, in turn, do these elements shape our perception, actions, and interactions? Dance makes the transformative power of architectural spaces tangible and reflects both their adaptation to and influence on human needs.

Motion Creation Design explores the dynamic interaction between generative AI systems and the human body in motion. In this innovative approach, artificial intelligence acts as an interface, processing past and present knowledge in real time and reinterpreting it through creative visual and informational associations. Choreography becomes a medium for communication, translating human movement into visual ideas and creatively interpreting knowledge. During the research phase, an interactive AI system is developed and introduced to the dancers through dedicated workshops. At the same time, an inclusive, interdisciplinary workshop opens the process to a wider audience: people of diverse backgrounds, ages, and physical abilities engage on equal footing. The outcomes will be presented in a series of exhibitions across museums in the RheinMain region, complemented by live performances with dancers from the Hessian State Ballet. Visitors will have the opportunity to actively participate in the creative process and experience, in real time, how their input affects the evolving visions.

Main-Light – Sustainable Urban Lighting

Dates: 6 May – 30 October 2026

Location: Weseler Werft, Frankfurt

Institution / project partner: Tobias Trübenbacher and Andreas Lang

Main-Light is an autonomous, climate-neutral lighting solution for public spaces. Developed for WDC 2026 by Tobias Trübenbacher and Andreas Lang, it features innovative solar films, an insect-friendly light spectrum, and simple installation without the need for power lines. This approach saves resources while illuminating previously dark areas. The pilot project will be installed at Weseler Werft in 2026, supporting local cycling infrastructure. *Main-Light* makes sustainable energy

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visible, enhances urban spaces aesthetically, and serves as a hub for learning and exchange on topics such as light, energy, and sustainability. With vibrant colours and contemporary patterns, the installation enriches the urban landscape. Workshops and digital formats will accompany the project as part of WDC 2026.

A Step Ahead – Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt at 125 / World Heritage Celebration

Dates: from 28 May 2026

Location: Museum Künstlerkolonie Darmstadt, Exhibition Building,
Sabaisplatz

Institution / project partner: Mathildenhöhe

Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt is a unique architectural ensemble of early modernism and has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2021. Founded as an artists' colony at the beginning of the 20th century, in 2026 it will celebrate the 125th anniversary of its groundbreaking 1901 exhibition with *A Step Ahead – Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt at 125*.

The exhibition honours the visionary design and creativity of Darmstadt's cultural pioneers, linking historical achievements with future-oriented approaches. Showcasing innovative materials and adaptive technologies, it aims to inspire visitors – based on the expanded concept of design today – to stay one step ahead of the challenges in their own lives and to imagine a better, healthier, and more just future.

Risk, Courage, Responsibility – Lecture Series

Dates: September 2025 – June 2026

Location: various venues across Frankfurt

Institution / project partner: Polytechnische Gesellschaft

For over 200 years, the Polytechnische Gesellschaft has been committed to making Frankfurt and its surrounding region a vibrant, future-ready place to live. The organisation promotes education, science, entrepreneurship, culture, and civic engagement, empowering people of all ages to develop their talents and take responsibility. As a catalyst for change, it identifies opportunities, connects stakeholders, and encourages action where it is needed. With a legacy of tradition, independence, and public trust, it actively shapes the city in a bold, thoughtful, and forward-looking way.

The present moment calls for courage and decisive action – in politics, business, and society. Under the Polytechnische Gesellschaft's long-standing banner, "*Virtue lies in action,*" the 2025/26 season focuses on risk, courage, and responsibility.

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Through lectures, talks and discussions, the series explores fearless perspectives on reality, civil courage, and the determination to actively drive change.

Superblock in Hesse

Dates: 1 May – 31 October 2026

Location: Wiesbaden, Rheingau quarter

Institution / project partner: Superblock Initiative Rheingauviertel

The Superblock Initiative Rheingauviertel in Wiesbaden is creating Hesse's first superblock in collaboration with local residents, community groups, and municipal authorities. The aim is to enhance quality of life by reducing through-traffic in public spaces while preserving greenery – supporting climate adaptation and democratic urban life.

The inner Rheingau quarter is centrally located but bordered by four main roads, which encourages shortcut traffic. The concept of a superblock was initiated three years ago by the Youth Parliament together with Wiesbaden's Environmental Office. During the project, streets are temporarily transformed into community spaces to promote sustainable mobility, climate resilience, and community engagement. Insights gained from this temporary experiment will inform the long-term redesign of the neighbourhood.

KulturErben – Zeichenakademie Hanau and Goldschmiedehaus Hanau

Dates: 8 – 26 June 2026

Location: Hanau

Institution / project partner: Staatliche Zeichenakademie Hanau

The Staatliche Zeichenakademie Hanau combines traditional craftsmanship with contemporary design, new technologies, and democratic education. As part of WDC 2026, the *KulturErben* project presents the Academy as an open platform for exchange, participation, and the transmission of intangible cultural heritage. In June, special exhibitions, interactive workshops, and discussion sessions will showcase how ethically sourced materials, sustainable techniques, and timeless design are applied in craft. Citizens, students, and professionals will have the opportunity to collaborate on creating new objects while preserving the values of cultural heritage.

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Circular Citizens of Wiesbaden

Dates: June 2026

Location: Heimathafen, Wiesbaden

Institution / project partner: Circular-Experience.org c/o Studio Peter Post × Petra Esveld eGbR

The *Circular Citizens of Wiesbaden* project fosters sustainability in Wiesbaden by encouraging people to use things longer, save resources, and strengthen the local circular economy. Waste is reduced as products find new life through second-hand shops, repair cafés, or swap boxes. A digital platform and city map make circular offerings easy to find. The initiative creates a visible urban ecosystem that actively involves citizens in the city's sustainable transformation while supporting the local economy.

KreativBund

Dates: summer 2026

Location: Frankfurt

Institution / project partner: KreativBund, Federal Centre for Culture and Creative Industries

KreativBund – the Federal Centre for Culture and Creative Industries, run by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy in collaboration with the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and Media – will be visiting Frankfurt in summer as part of WDC 2026.

The focus will be on *SMEs x Design x Policy*, the development of entrepreneurial strategies through the creative economy's design potential, and *Creative Finance*, a curated exchange on policy, creativity, capital, and technology.

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Thematic Focus:

Engaging All the Senses – August, September

WDC-Party Series at Tokonoma Club Frankfurt

Dates: 24 January, 12-14 June and 14 November 2026

Location: Tokonoma Club, Frankfurt

Institution / project partner: WDC and Tokonoma Club

Three major WDC parties will mark the year – for the opening, the *Open*, and the *Convocation* – bringing the creative community together.

Amid a nationwide wave of club closures, a young team took on the challenge of founding a new club in Frankfurt. Over 1,000 m² of floorspace of a former Deutsche Bahn warehouse were transformed into a vibrant venue for club nights, cultural events, and corporate gatherings.

The WDC parties aim to showcase artists to an international audience and celebrate together.

On 24 January 2026, from 11:00 pm, the Tokonoma Club will open its spacious rooms for the WDC 2026 launch. Electronic music from a line-up of DJs, drinks, and snacks await guests. Those arriving before midnight will enjoy free entry.

LeiseLounge at the Central Library

Dates: redesign starts in summer semester 2026; opening in autumn 2026

Location: Frankfurt Central Library

Institution / project partner: Frankfurt Central Library in collaboration with TU Darmstadt

The *LeiseLounge* at Frankfurt Central Library is a newly conceived retreat in the heart of the bustling city. In a participatory process, master's students in interior architecture at TU Darmstadt will work with library users to develop a sustainable, multifunctional space. The lounge will provide a calm environment that complements the lively library, offering new ways to stay and do focused work. The project combines community-led design with mindful use of space.

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Club of the Future: Bodies in Soundscapes

Dates: 5 September 2026

Location: Centralstation Darmstadt

Institution / project partner: Centralstation Veranstaltungs-GmbH

Club of the Future is an interactive, immersive sound installation at Centralstation Darmstadt, celebrating sustainability, community, and participation. Visitors first encounter contemplative soundscapes of natural and environmental sounds, which gradually evolve into a danceable audiovisual environment as they move through the space. Sensors and generative composition techniques transform movement into rhythm, dynamics, and sound, allowing each visitor to actively shape the sonic experience. The live event, *Club of the Future*, will be the project's main highlight – a night of performance and a rave, taking place in September 2026.

Mishpocha: The Art of Collaboration

Dates: 17 April – 27 September 2026

Location: Frankfurt, Jewish Museum, Museum Judengasse, Museum Angewandte Kunst, Opelvillen Rüsselsheim, Kunsthaus Wiesbaden

What happens when people create something new together, forming connections that become like a chosen family? *Mishpocha*, *Mischpoche*, or *Mischpacha* means “family” in Yiddish and Hebrew. The exhibition invites visitors to expand traditional ideas of family and origin to include communities that embrace diversity as a creative force – a form of lived democracy through collaboration and solidarity.

In addition to the main exhibition at the Jewish Museum Frankfurt, there will be further art presentations across the region, including at Kunsthaus Wiesbaden and the Opelvillen Rüsselsheim. A multifaceted fringe programme of concerts, performances, and workshops will complement the exhibition, bringing together art, music, and community engagement.

Programme Highlight of *Mishpocha*:

Under the Skin. Focus on Tattoos

Dates: 30 April – 13 September 2026

Location: Rüsselsheim, Kunst- und Kulturstiftung Opelvillen

Institution / project partner: Kunst- und Kulturstiftung Opelvillen Rüsselsheim

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Under the Skin at the Opelvillen Rüsselsheim is part of the *Mishpocha: The Art of Collaboration* project for World Design Capital 2026. The exhibition explores tattoos as a form of self-expression and identity.

Through interdisciplinary talks, activities, and a digital “picture book,” the project examines the aesthetic, cultural, and social dimensions of tattooing, highlighting personal stories and fostering an open, design-focused discussion.

Dance Festival RheinMain 2026 – Moving Democracy

Dates: 29 October – 15 November 2026 (tbc)

Locations: Darmstadt, Frankfurt, Offenbach and Wiesbaden

Institution / project partner: Collaboration with the Hessian State Ballet and Mousonturm Artists' House

For its 11th edition, the *Dance Festival RheinMain 2026*, presented by Mousonturm in partnership with the Hessian State Ballet, will explore how democracy can be experienced as a living, embodied practice. At the heart of the programme is, among others, Brazilian choreographer Lia Rodrigues, whose work fuses artistic excellence with social responsibility. Rodrigues' pieces *Encantados* and *Borda*, alongside a festival-specific exhibition project she has created, reveal how moving bodies can open spaces for solidarity, participation, and new alliances.

In addition, around twelve further works by choreographers such as Ali Charhour, Cherish Menzo, and others will be presented. These performances approach societal negotiation processes from the margins, exploring themes of hope, resistance, community, but also the relationship between body shaping, normativity, and power.

While the body is often overlooked in contemporary debates, the festival repositions it as a central agent of societal and political processes. Through a combination of high-calibre international performances and participatory events, audiences of all ages and backgrounds are invited to experience how fears can be transformed and how a spirit of community emerges that is constantly changing and thus eludes codification by institutional forces or authoritarian politics.

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Thematic Focus:

Design in Dialogue – in Politics and Society – October, November,
Dezember

Stadtstempel Project – Imprints of History

Dates: January – May 2026

Location: Antifascist sites in Offenbach

Institution / project partner: studio pari–pari, HfG Offenbach

In 1933, the Nazis carried out a book burning on Offenbach's Schlossplatz, supported by students and teachers from the *Technische Lehranstalten* (technical schools), the predecessor of HfG Offenbach. To ensure this dark chapter is not forgotten and to engage critically with contemporary reactionary, right-wing, and fascist tendencies, HfG's Politics Day working group is taking action. The *Stadtstempel* Project, developed with studio pari–pari, will trace historical echoes through an *Antifascist City Tour* organised by the Geschichtswerkstatt Offenbach. These "imprints of history" will be recorded and interpreted artistically throughout the urban space. The project will be accompanied by an exhibition, a lecture series, and a publication.

Schader Foundation

Dates: throughout 2026

Location: Darmstadt

The Schader Foundation in Darmstadt is a non-profit organisation that has supported the social sciences since 1988, fostering dialogue between academia, civil society, business, public administration, and politics. Drawing on its expertise in interdisciplinary formats, the foundation strengthens democratic culture and social cohesion. As part of the WDC 2026 programme, the Schader Foundation will bring its extensive experience to bear, integrating design perspectives into contemporary societal debates and promoting exchange on topics such as the common good, democracy, sustainable development, urban development, and social diversity.

As part of WDC 2026 the *Schader-Festival* will be combining musical, artistic, and humanities-based dialogue events. The foundation's *GroßeKonvent 2026* will carry the theme "Shaping Democracy", in line with the WDC 2026 focus. The conference will explore how participatory and democratic processes can be designed, and is expected to welcome 120–150 experts from sociology, geography, design disciplines, and applied fields.

World Design Capital
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Design FRM gGmbH

Geschäftsführerin /
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A Summer School on the Schader campus will bring together students, doctoral researchers, and young professionals to work with experts and in partnership with the Canopus Foundation and the Hochschule für Gesellschaftsgestaltung. Participants will develop innovative economic models aimed at creating a fairer society and economy, guided by the principle of *Design for Democracy*.

Frankfurt – City of WOW!

Dates: from March 2026

Location: Gutleutstraße 324, Frankfurt

Institution / project partner: Nordisk Büro, satis&fy AG, Messe Frankfurt Exhibition GmbH, City of Frankfurt

Frankfurt – City of WOW! brings some 800 years of Frankfurt's economic history and development to life in an immersive experience. As part of WDC 2026, a former file storage facility at Gutleutstraße 324 will be transformed into a space where visitors can explore Frankfurt's role as a centre of trade fairs, commerce, finance, and innovation – from its medieval market privileges to the present day.

Through exploratory elements and large-scale immersive presentations – including ten-metre-high projections on 1,200 sqm of screens – the project weaves historical narratives with future perspectives. *Frankfurt – City of WOW!* reveals the economic, logistical, and societal forces that have shaped the city and continue to do so. Developed to remain beyond the 2026 design year, the experience also has the potential to contribute to the sustainable development of the Gutleutstraße district.

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