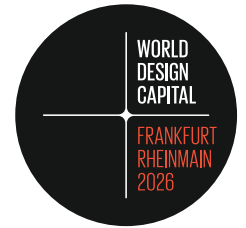


Press Release  
02 June 2026

## World premiere of a film about design pioneer Patrick Whitney at Open – Design Week Frankfurt RheinMain



World film premiere in Frankfurt as part of World Design Capital 2026: On 6 June, director Gary Hustwit will present “What Are People For”, a film about design theorist Patrick Whitney. As part of Open – Design Week Frankfurt RheinMain, the new documentary will celebrate its world premiere at Massif E in the former E-Kinos cinema in Frankfurt. The film is directed by the internationally renowned filmmaker Gary Hustwit (Helvetica, Rams, Eno) and produced by Ashley Lukasik and Murmur Ring. Patrick Whitney and Gary Hustwit will be in attendance at the premiere in Frankfurt. The event is being held in collaboration with the German Design Council.

The 20-minute documentary explores the work and lasting influence of **Patrick Whitney**, one of the leading pioneers of user-centered and systems design, which views design as a tool for social and organisational change. Whitney was the long-standing Dean of the Institute of Design (ID) at the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago, which emerged from the New Bauhaus founded by Bauhaus artist and visionary László Moholy-Nagy, through which the ideas of the Bauhaus were carried forward in the USA. There, he made a significant contribution to the international development of design thinking and to establishing design as a strategic tool for business, civic and social change. His work had a particular impact on how complex challenges in healthcare, education and public administration are addressed. Through research, advising, mentoring, and teaching multiple generations of designers, Whitney changed how design is understood, used, and taught around the world.

Director **Gary Hustwit** is one of the world’s leading documentary filmmakers in the field of design and creative processes. With films such as \*Helvetica\*, \*Objectified\*, \*Urbanized\*, \*Rams\* and \*Eno\*, he has set new standards for the cinematic exploration of design, architecture and creative processes, and has made design accessible to a wide audience. The approximately 20-minute film paints a personal portrait of Patrick Whitney and offers an insight into his philosophy of life and his working methods. In the style of *cinéma vérité*, which relies on direct documentary observation, the film combines archival footage, photographs and interviews with those who have accompanied him on his journey. As with his film *Eno*, Gary Hustwit has once again employed a generative editing technique of his

World Design Capital  
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own devising for this film, which ensures that every screening is slightly different. It was filmed at various locations, including the IIT Institute of Design in Chicago, Harvard University in Boston, his home on Cortes Island (British Columbia), as well as in India, China and Hong Kong, where Whitney carried out much of his work.

The film directly embodies the theme of World Design Capital Frankfurt RheinMain 2026 by demonstrating how democracy is shaped through participation, access and shared decision-making, and how these principles influence the design of systems. Whitney's work is based on participation, transparency and the capacity for collective action. His teachings have enabled leaders worldwide to design complex systems that better respond to actual human needs – fundamental principles of democratic societies. Featured participants include Ashish Jha (President Biden's COVID-19 adviser), Sam Pitroda, Jim Hackett and others.

Following the screening, there will be a discussion with Patrick Whitney, director Gary Hustwit and producer Ashley Lukasik at Massif E. Prof. Mike Richter, President of the German Design Council, will give a welcoming address. The premiere will take place at Massif E, one of the four "Spaces" in Frankfurt hosting Open Design Week and the former E-Kino cinema.

The film is being screened at events around the world and is expected to be available to stream from 2027.

On Sunday, 7 June 2026, there will be a double bill featuring "What Are People For: Design Philosophy by Patrick Whitney" and Hustwit's cinematic portrait of the designer Dieter Rams.

Accompanying the film is a forthcoming publication, designed by Rick Valicenti (Smithsonian National Design Award), which explores the film's central ideas in greater depth and broadens the discourse on design as a force for social change.

**Date:** 6 June 2026, doors open at 7.30 pm

**Venue:** Massif E, Frankfurt am Main

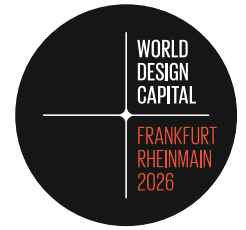
**Tickets:** Free admission link to reserve tickets: <https://www.whatarepeoplefor.com/wdc-premiere-rsvp>

**Event:** Open – Design Week Frankfurt RheinMain 2026 as part of World Design Capital 2026

**Website:** <https://wdc2026.org/de/frames/what-are-people-for-design-philosophy-by-patrick-whitney>

Further information and accreditation: [press@wdc2026.org](mailto:press@wdc2026.org)

The event is being held in collaboration with the German Design Council. The German Design Council is one of the leading international organisations for design, branding and innovation. It works to promote the transformative power of design in business, society



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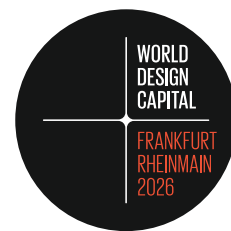
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and the environment. Founded in 1953 on the initiative of the German Bundestag, the foundation supports companies and institutions in using design as a strategic resource for sustainable innovation and long-term success.



## What is WDC 2026?

The World Design Capital® (WDC) is an initiative of the globally recognised, non-governmental World Design Organization (WDO)® that honours cities using design as a driver for economic, social, cultural and environmental progress. Frankfurt RheinMain (Germany) has been awarded the title for the year 2026 under the theme Design for Democracy. Atmospheres for a Better Life. In previous years, the title has been awarded every two years to the following cities: Turin (Italy), Seoul (South Korea), Helsinki (Finland), Cape Town (South Africa), Taipei (Chinese Taipei), Mexico City (Mexico), Lille Métropole (France) and Valencia (Spain), as well as most recently San Diego (USA) and Tijuana (Mexico) as the first binational designation, and Busan (South Korea), selected as World Design Capital® 2028.

More information at [WDO.org](http://WDO.org).

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