

Press Release

22. June 2026



The Future in Prototype Status: Major WDC Campus Exhibitions: *dreams, ideas & prototypes*

In the summer of 2026, the Museum Angewandte Kunst in Frankfurt and the adjacent Metzlerpark will become a showcase for a new generation of designers and researchers. From July 3 to August 9, the exhibition titled *dreams, ideas & prototypes: young talents at work* will present around 120 projects by students, faculty, and start-ups from design, artistic, and scientific disciplines. As a key proprietary initiative of World Design Capital Frankfurt RheinMain 2026, the WDC Campus directly links the research of young visionaries with societal practice; guided by the WDC 2026 theme "Design for Democracy. Atmospheres for a better life," it addresses the pressing ecological and social issues of our time. The exhibition will be opened by Timon Gremmels, the Hessian Minister for Science and Research, Art and Culture, as part of the three-day Campus Festival running from July 3 to 5.

Spanning a total area of over 1,200 m², young talents demonstrate the pivotal shift from purely human-centric to planet-centric design. This principle is also reflected in the exhibition's layout: conceived as an interactive social experience and a project rooted in circular economy principles, the exhibition largely eschews new materials and ensures that all resources used are fully returned to material cycles once the event concludes. Many of the approximately 120 interdisciplinary projects were specifically developed starting in the 2025/26 winter semester as part of the *WDC-Campus* initiative at partner universities—both domestic and international—including HfG Offenbach, Mainz University of Applied Sciences, and Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences from the WDC region. These works are complemented by contributions from institutions such as the Berlin University of the Arts and international schools like Design Academy Eindhoven, Kookmin University Seoul, and Hunan University China, as well as by award-winning designs from renowned platforms such as the *RIMOWA Design Prize*, *Hessen Design*, the *DDC Award*, and the *Red Dot Design Award*. All the exhibits present concrete approaches to a democratic future worth living.

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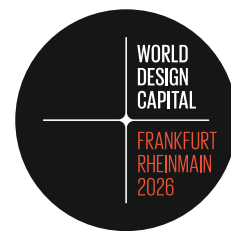
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Roland Lambrette, a partner at Design FRM gGmbH, views this format as a core element of the WDC program year, as young designers today naturally employ design as a transformative tool for society, turning the Frankfurt RheinMain region into a living lab for issues of global relevance. The exhibition is structured around five essential themes of everyday life: the *Exchange and Togetherness* section explores how social cohesion, equality, and democratic participation can be experienced; the *Health and Care* field examines self-determined care rooted in social consciousness; and the *Sustainability and Environment* segment addresses responsible resource management and a future-proof circular economy. New forms of communal living and social interaction are discussed in the *Spaces and Participation* area, while the *Movement and Mobility* theme highlights the infrastructure of the future as a social issue.



What is there to see?.

A look at the exhibited graduation projects reveals the diverse approaches graduates from German and international design schools take in responding to societal, ecological, and technological challenges. Many projects focus on forward-looking solutions to sustainability issues. For instance, *Holobiont* (Kunsthochschule Kassel) demonstrates how microalgae could help improve soil and plant quality in urban areas in the future; the self-sufficient station produces this sustainable raw material on-site and makes biological cycles visible. The *PALUDI Harvesters* (Magdeburg-Stendal University of Applied Sciences) enable the economic use of re-wetted peatlands, thereby linking climate protection with new opportunities for agriculture. *Offen-bach* (HfG Offenbach) illustrates how uncovering hidden urban waterways can contribute to climate adaptation and enhance quality of life. Finally, *Flössern – in fluent* (Design Academy Eindhoven) offers fresh perspectives on the Rhine, allowing the river to be experienced as an ecological, cultural, and social habitat. Designs fostering an inclusive and livable society are exemplified by projects such as *NURA* (HfG Schwäbisch Gmünd)—which translates between sign language and spoken language in real time and won this year's RIMOWA Design Prize—and the semester project *WandelBar* (Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences), which addresses desolate urban spaces by transforming a modular box into an inviting *Wasserhäuschen* (traditional local kiosk) that serves as a social hub.

Many of the exhibited works also reflect a critical engagement with established systems, consumption patterns, and new technologies; *The Algorithm Times* (Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences), for example, examines the impact of artificial intelligence on information and the formation of public opinion. The diploma project *2025* (University of Applied Arts Vienna) offers a counterpoint to the fast-paced world of consumerism with a durable, modularly expandable shoe collection. Finally, *Aerodomestics* (HFBK Hamburg) explores new approaches to materials and production through ultra-lightweight furniture inspired by the structural logic of kites.

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Campus Festival and Dialogue Workshops

The accompanying three-day Campus Festival (July 3–5) fosters direct dialogue between emerging talent, the business sector, and the political sphere. Centered around the daily themes of *dreams*, *ideas*, and *prototypes*, the event offers the public a packed program of music, performances, panel discussions, workshops, film screenings, and short presentations combining science and art at the Museum Angewandte Kunst and Metzlerpark.

The festival will officially open on the evening of **July 3 with contributions from Timon Gremmels (Hesse's Minister for Science and Research, Art and Culture), Dr. Ina Hartwig (Frankfurt's Head of Department for Culture and Science), Prof. Roland Lambrette (WDC Campus), and Dorothee Bolade (World Design Organization)**. Detailed information regarding the schedule and the full list of speakers can be found on the official website at wdc2026.org.

At the same time, the Campus Festival brings together ideas generated during the weekly dialogue workshops held as part of the *WDC Campus* project. These workshops have been running at the *WDC Hub* since April 2026 and will continue throughout the entire exhibition period. The complete Campus Festival program is available at <https://wdc2026.org/de/constellations/wdc-campus>

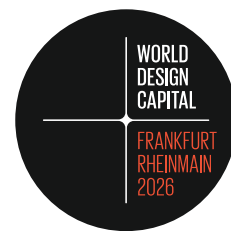
The WDC Campus and its goals

As a multifaceted, interdisciplinary initiative of *World Design Capital 2026*, the *WDC Campus* specifically focuses on the next generation of designers. The platform connects around 25 renowned institutions from Germany and Europe—such as HfG Offenbach, UdK Berlin, and Design Academy Eindhoven—with students, international partners, and prestigious design awards like the Red Dot and DDC Award. Aligned with the WDC's guiding theme, "Design for Democracy. Atmospheres for a better life," the *WDC Campus* aims to strengthen design as a powerful tool for addressing ecological and societal challenges. To this end, the initiative drives a fundamental paradigm shift from *human-centric* to *planet-centric* design, highlighting topics such as the circular economy, social inclusion, and new forms of communal living.

At the same time, the WDC Campus links the creative and entrepreneurial potential of some 250,000 students across more than 40 higher education institutions in the Rhine-Main region with the business world and society at large. It creates a space for exchange, collaboration, and startup ideas, thereby contributing to the development of innovations and the sustainable strengthening of the region as a hub for design.

The WDC Campus Team

A diverse team drives the WDC Campus: designers Julia Klass and Corinna Gratzl form the curatorial team. Jonathan Kuhlmann serves as Creative Producer, Joshua



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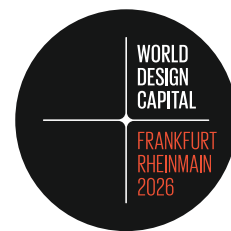
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Moos is the Design Project Assistant, and Lynn Witzel is the Social Media Manager, sharing responsibility for external communications. She is supported by Greta Roters, who serves as Junior Art Director and Junior Social Media Manager. Angela Schmitt-Gläser handles contact management and curates the campus film. Georg-Christoph Bertsch serves as Director of Content & Program, while Prof. Roland Lambrette—Founder & Partner of Design FRM—is one of the initiators of World Design Capital Frankfurt RheinMain 2026 and the WDC Campus.



The exhibition design was developed in collaboration with Studio Jonathan Radetz.

What is WDC 2026?

World Design Capital® (WDC) is an initiative of the globally recognized, non-governmental World Design Organization (WDO)® that honors cities using design as a driver for economic, social, cultural, and environmental progress. Frankfurt Rhein-Main (Germany) has been awarded the title for 2026 with the theme "Design for Democracy: Atmospheres for a better life." In previous years, the following cities have received the biennial designation: Turin (Italy), Seoul (South Korea), Helsinki (Finland), Cape Town (South Africa), Taipei (Taiwan, Chinese Taipei), Mexico City (Mexico), Lille Métropole (France), Valencia (Spain), San Diego (USA) and Tijuana (Mexico)—marking the first binational award—and most recently Busan (South Korea) for 2028.

More information at WDO.org

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