

Design Museum Gent redesigns itself

On 3 October 2026, Design Museum Gent will reopen its doors to the general public. With a new wing and a renewed museum concept, it invites visitors to look at the world with a critical eye. What's the central idea? Everything is designed. That means everything can be redesigned; from the objects we use every day and the cities we live in, to the written and unwritten rules of our society.

A critical eye

As Belgium's largest design museum, we actively contribute to societal debate. After all, design is so much more than just creating beautiful objects. It offers a unique perspective on the major challenges of today and tomorrow; what still works in our society, and what needs to be redesigned urgently? How can we live more sustainably? How can we keep technology human? And how should we build cities where everyone feels at home? Is Design Museum Gent a museum that simply preserves answers? No, it shows how designers continuously question systems, objects, and everyday habits. In this respect, design is presented not merely as form or aesthetics, but as a way of thinking; a mindset that visitors take with them on leaving the museum. Inspired. More receptive. More critical.

"This expansion and renovation are not about creating more museum, but about creating more than a museum: a community sense-making museum with real social relevance, right at the heart of a diverse and complex society."

Katrien Laporte,
director Design Museum Gent

More than a museum

This perspective has been given physical form through the renovation and expansion of the museum into a barrier-free meeting place. The museum's new wing will be an informal and freely accessible space, offering room for a fast-changing programme. We decided to create a smart, future-proof building on a compact footprint, with generous openings at ground level. It forms the final piece of the museum site, connecting the existing buildings and offering visitors a new route through the galleries.

Facts & Figures

- The renewed museum spans approximately 6,500 m² in total, including no less than 3,700 m² of exhibition space. This means we not only hold the largest collection, but are now the largest design museum in Belgium.
- At least **10 special projects** bring design into every corner of the museum, from the reception desk and the garden to the toilets.
- Our new collection display presents around **500 absolute highlights** from our vast collection of **24,000 objects**. Especially noteworthy: **40% of this selection** has never been shown to the public before.
- We are preparing for a record year with 125,000 visitors. Half of these (65,000) are expected during the grand reopening alone.

From reflection to action

Within the walls of our exhibition spaces, design truly comes to life through a dialogue between looking and acting. In Wing 1992, we observe and understand design, drawing inspiration from creations of yesterday and today. While the new collection display and the opening exhibition on design and democracy tell a story and provoke reflection, the projects in Hotel de Coninck go a step further; they transform ideas into action and dialogue.

The *Democracy Fitness Trail* lets you train your democratic muscles. In *Searcher*, you can explore the collection yourself using AI, while *CO-LAB* is an open meeting space where designers, students, and citizens collaboratively seek answers to today's societal questions.

The power of togetherness

Design Museum Gent will be an open house for everyone. After all, the best ideas emerge when different worlds engage in conversation. Design becomes truly meaningful when it connects to everyday life. By opening its doors wide, the museum creates a place where designers meet citizens, and where every visitor is encouraged to look at the world with fresh eyes. A perspective visitors take with them, reshaping the world every day after a visit.

A new wing and a new story are never built alone. Design Museum Gent is therefore deeply grateful to the many partners who have helped make all of this possible. We are organising the reopening with the support of Event Flanders.

Sogent supervised the construction works as contracting authority, while the design team consists of Carmody-Groarke (UK), ATAMA (BE), and the RE-ST association of architects (BE). The project is supported by Flanders – Department of Culture, Youth and Media, ERDF Flanders, Flanders Heritage Agency, and Circular Flanders.



sogent



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VRT

De Standaard

MUSEUM
PASS
MUSÉES

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The new wing: the final piece that connects everything

After four years of intensive renovation and expansion, Design Museum Gent will reopen its doors on October 3, 2026 — right in the heart of the UNESCO World Heritage city of Ghent. What was once a charming but fragmented ensemble of buildings has been transformed into a renewed, forward-looking museum that brings together history, innovation, and sustainability. The metamorphosis includes both the restoration of monumental buildings dating from the 16th to the 20th century and the addition of a striking new wing, giving the museum a fresh, contemporary look.

designmuseumgent.be
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Drabstraat 10 - 9000 Ghent



The new wing, designed by Carmody Groarke (UK) and ATAMA (BE), forms the final piece of the museum site, alongside the restoration of the historic buildings by RE-ST (BE). It ensures that the museum connects with the 21st century, both in terms of visitor experience and its social role. Visitors can do more than just view collection items; they can engage with them, debate them, reflect, and enjoy. By adding generous spaces for lectures, workshops, exhibitions, events, and nature, the museum opens its doors to the city and the world.

But the new wing does more than that. It removes barriers and serves as a freely accessible space featuring a 'Stadskamer' (city room) where you can unwind, and where local communities and neighborhoods can find their place and showcase their creations. It is a place for celebration, creation, and discovery — a space where connections are made.

Project Details new wing, Design Museum Gent

- Client

Sogent is the delegated contracting authority commissioned by the City of Ghent. Project Manager: Brenda Schotte
- Location

Ghent, België
- Area (new wing)

2,200 m²
- Area (historic buildings)

6,400 m²
- Opening

3 October 2026
- Architects

Carmody Groarke, ATAMA, RE-ST
- Structural Engineer

Ney & Partners
- Building Services

Boydens Engineering
- Acoustics

Daidalos Peutz
- Gent Waste Brick

BC Materials

The Historic Courtyard as the Heart of the Museum

The historic Hotel de Coninck has always been organised around its inner courtyard. Behind its impressive façade, however, there was a neglected southern passage and an unused plot at the centre of the site. With the addition of the new wing, the courtyard can now fully function as a garden — the heart of the museum and a clear point of orientation.

Views towards the courtyard run through the building, guiding movement through the museum and connecting its various parts. The new wing links the existing museum buildings into a coherent whole, completing the visitor loop.

The new wing introduces six zones, organised around three core principles: welcoming, open and adaptable. At basement level, the art-handling area offers a glimpse into the museum's daily work. From there, visitors move through the Stadskamer (reception and shop), the Forum (lecture space), the Atelier (workshops) and the Vitrine (temporary exhibitions), before arriving at the Loft on the fourth floor — a generous event space with panoramic views over the city of Ghent.

Circular by Design

The new wing is built in timber and white brick, drawing on Ghent's building traditions in a contemporary way. The façade is made from Gent Waste Brick — a lime-cured brick produced from locally sourced municipal waste. Instead of being fired in kilns, the bricks harden through a low-energy lime-curing process, significantly reducing their environmental impact. More than 82,000 bricks were produced locally at Het Arsenaal in Ghent, a process the people of Ghent could follow live.

The façade reflects the city's material history while also looking towards its future. The brick dimensions match those of the 18th-century Hotel de Coninck, helping old and new sit comfortably together. Their white colour relates to the historic houses along Drabstraat, while the overall composition draws on the scale and rhythm of Ghent's guild houses and merchant houses. Deep window reveals, pronounced copings and careful detailing give the building a clear civic presence and a strong architectural identity.

A Museum that Retains, Reuses and Reinvents

The overall masterplan of the museum respects the past while clearly looking ahead. Historic interiors have been carefully restored, while later additions have been optimised to create more space and better climatic conditions. Wherever possible, materials have been reused and sustainable solutions adopted. The result is a museum capable of hosting internationally significant collections under optimal conservation conditions while at the same time considerably reducing its ecological impact.

A Museum for Everyone

The renewed museum is conceived as a third space in the public realm: an open and welcoming environment where people can meet, learn, create and discover. From the very start of the design process, one central question guided the project: "Is this a museum for me?"

In 2025, forty residents of Ghent came together in the citizens' panel DE40 to discuss the question in its more defined form: How can Design Museum Gent make design accessible and relevant to a broad audience, regardless of background or prior knowledge? Their insights served as a guiding framework in the transformation from building to museum.

A design museum does not only display design; it uses and embodies design. Special Design Projects are integrated throughout the building, ranging from furniture by Casimir and Bram Vanderbeke & Wendy Andreu and a pocket garden by Bureau Bas Smets to acoustic curtains by Chevalier-Masson and the 3D-printed aluminium entrance gate Freeze Frame 82.2 by Unfold. The museum thus becomes not only a place where design is exhibited, but also a place where design is experienced and shared. The new wing is not conceived as a neutral container, but as a clearly articulated framework that can evolve flexibly alongside the museum and its audiences.



Collectie. Models from the Past for the Future

In a world in need of new models and imagination, we aim to demonstrate the potential of a design collection. In *Collection. Models from the Past for the Future*, objects from the collection are viewed through a contemporary lens. This is not a nostalgic look back, but a current investigation that tells both the story of the past and the future.

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How can a design collection continue to inspire in 2026?

This was the fundamental question for curator Evelien Bracke in developing the new collection display. At a time when we are more than ever searching for alternative systems and models, the past can prove surprisingly relevant. The presentation explores how materials, techniques, and design attitudes of yesterday can be meaningful for tomorrow's designers, while also showing how our perspective inevitably shifts. What once seemed the ultimate solution can now be viewed more critically.

Back to our roots

Design Museum Gent was founded in 1903 as a "model museum", with the aim of collecting exemplary objects to inform and inspire craftspeople and visitors alike. With the new collection display, we return to that starting point. Visitors can view around 500 objects that were once considered leading examples. Some now call for nuance or even criticism, while others prove unexpectedly relevant. By grouping the collection around five contemporary themes (**copy, comfort, migration, folds, connections**), the exhibition poses a key question; what still inspires, and what needs to be fundamentally rethought?

The focus lies less on who designed an object and more on the different ways it can be approached from a contemporary perspective. As such, visitors discover and rediscover national and international design icons alongside lesser-known talents. A selection of the featured designers: Alvar Aalto, Pieter De Bruyne, Charles & Ray Eames, Mabel Elwes, Paul Hankar, Joseph Hoffmann, Victor Horta, Huib Hoste, David Huycke, Arne Jacobsen, Yvette Lauwaert, Alessandro Mendini, OpenStructures, Gaetano Pesce, Gustave Serrurier-Bovy, Yvonne Serruys, Bořek Šípek, Ettore Sottsass, Pieter Stockmans, Henry van de Velde, Albert Van Huffel, Elza Van Huffel-Gallet, Maarten Van Severen, Tapio Wirkkala, Philippe Wolfers and Eva Zeisel.

Collectie. Models from the Past for the Future Start: 03.10.2026

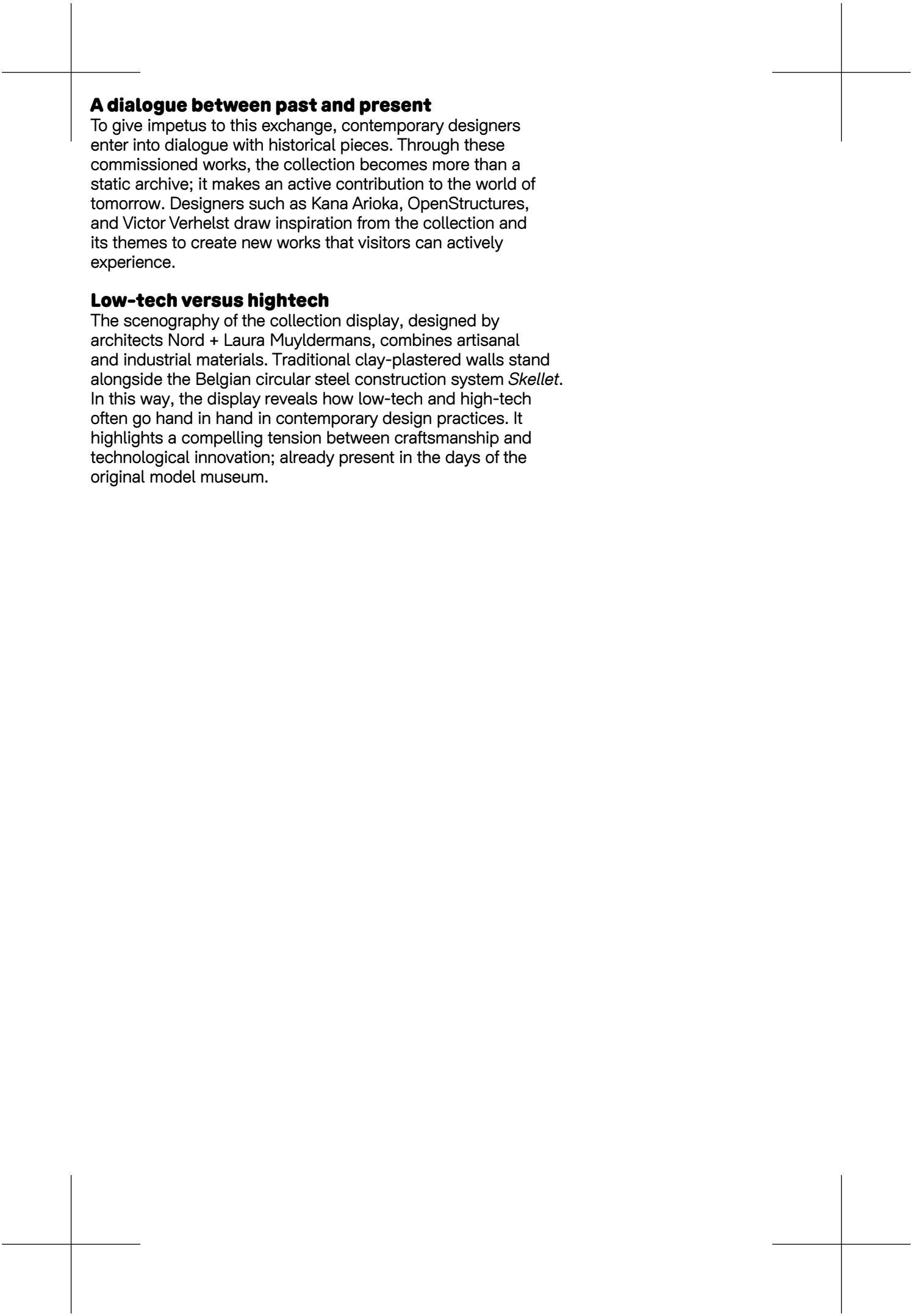
↳ Curator
Evelien Bracke

↳ Research
Benoît Vandevort
Marie Becuwe
Sam Meirlaen
Eva Van Regenmortel
Nina Serulus

↳ Scenography
Nord +
Laura Muyldermans

↳ Graphic Design
Studio Grafisch Ontwerp

A publication has been made for *Collection. Models from the Past for the Future* (publisher Lannoo), edited by Eva Van Regenmortel.



A dialogue between past and present

To give impetus to this exchange, contemporary designers enter into dialogue with historical pieces. Through these commissioned works, the collection becomes more than a static archive; it makes an active contribution to the world of tomorrow. Designers such as Kana Arioka, OpenStructures, and Victor Verhelst draw inspiration from the collection and its themes to create new works that visitors can actively experience.

Low-tech versus hightech

The scenography of the collection display, designed by architects Nord + Laura Muyldermans, combines artisanal and industrial materials. Traditional clay-plastered walls stand alongside the Belgian circular steel construction system *Skellet*. In this way, the display reveals how low-tech and high-tech often go hand in hand in contemporary design practices. It highlights a compelling tension between craftsmanship and technological innovation; already present in the days of the original model museum.

Public Matter(s): Design and Democracy

Is the way we live together and make decisions actually well designed? Our opening exhibition shows that everything within our democratic system is the result of deliberate design choices. From ballot papers and parliamentary buildings, to the system and processes themselves, such as party representation and the way we vote. Yet, a fundamental characteristic of complex systems is that their design is never truly “finished”. That realisation changes everything; we are not merely users of democracy, we are its co-designers.

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More than beautiful objects

Anyone who associates design solely with chairs or lamps (or, in a democratic context, with ballot papers) will find their perspective challenged by this exhibition. *Public Matter(s): Design and Democracy* demonstrates that design goes far beyond this framework. How do the homeless gain access to elections? Or people with visual impairments? How does the system determine who is heard, and who is ignored? In an ideal world, design connects people to their environment, whether through objects, ideas, concepts, processes, or systems.

The exhibition looks at the past and present, but also dares to imagine the future. Curators Amelie Klein and Vera Sacchetti explore new forms of democratic coexistence, such as “ecocracy”, in which nature is granted legal and constitutional rights.

Inclusion and exclusion

Democracy promises to serve everyone, but does it? The exhibition candidly reveals who has often been overlooked, both in the past and today. Visitors are taken through the struggle for women’s suffrage and civil rights, while also discovering why people today can feel disillusioned with the system. The museum shows how protest and activism can be powerful forms of design for driving change.

Train your ‘democratic muscles’

This exhibition is more than a passive viewing experience. It is a call to action. Inspired by Ghent’s rich democratic tradition and the recent citizens’ panel DE40, the museum invites visitors to strengthen their own “democratic reflex”.

At its heart is the *Democracy Fitness Trail*, an interactive route through and around the museum where visitors can train their democratic muscles.

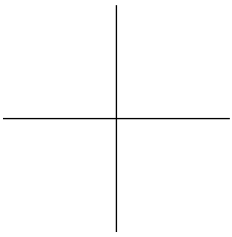
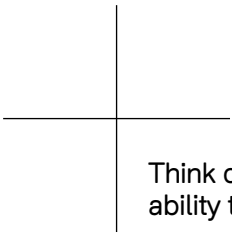
**Public Matter(s):
Design and Democracy**
03.10.2026
→ 11.04.2027

↳ Curators
Amelie Klein &
Vera Sacchetti

↳ Assistant curator
Stefanie Heyvaert

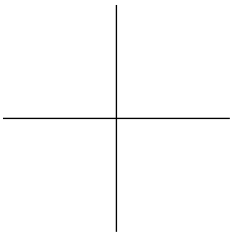
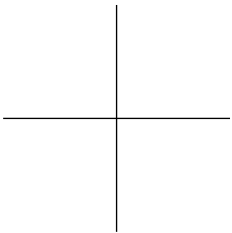
↳ Scenography
Elmēs

↳ Graphic design
Sara De Bondt



Think of skills such as active listening, compromise, and the ability to engage with constructive conflict.

The foundations for this approach were laid in spring 2025 during DE40. In this citizens' panel, 40 representative residents of Ghent explored how the museum can make design accessible and relevant to everyone, regardless of background or prior knowledge. Their insights not only form the core of this exhibition, but are also structurally embedded in the wider operations of Design Museum Gent.



Searcher

With the reopening of the museum, we place a strong emphasis on the relationship between digital culture and design. The first major project in this strand is *Searcher*, an innovative installation that explores how AI can enable us to view the collection in entirely new ways.

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Discover the invisible

As Design Museum Gent's collection contains more than 24,000 objects, it is impossible to display everything physically. *Searcher* offers a digital solution. The installation uses AI to reveal unexpected connections that would otherwise remain hidden. Rather than searching via fixed categories such as maker, period, or material, visitors can navigate the collection through similarities in form, colour, and text.

Wandering as a method

Searcher shows that a museum collection is not a fixed narrative, but a network full of new connections. By simply wandering and allowing yourself to be surprised, visitors discover the collection from a whole new perspective each time.

Searcher was developed in close collaboration with Design Museum Gent. The installation forms part of a broader programme on digital culture and design, curated by Olivier Van D'huynslager.

Searcher Vanaf 03.10.2026

A project by Jon Stam, Valentin Vogelmann & Boris Smeenk.

↳ Curator
Olivier Van D'huynslager

↳ Scenography
Olivier Goethals

CO-LAB

Collective laboratory for design and democracy

What happens when you bring together Belgian and international designers and invite them to reflect on design and social engagement? How can we shape a better future together? And can this thinking process be advanced through a collective making process? Curator Siegrid Demyttenaere posed these questions. The results will be presented across eight historic period rooms in the eighteenth-century Hotel de Coninck.

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From drawing board to street

The projects show what happens when we truly collaborate. From building sustainable energy solutions and documenting queer archives, to designing with nature and sharing open-source tools. Designers, researchers, and local communities demonstrate how collaboration can create new ways of living together, imagining, and shaping space. In *CO-LAB*, design is not presented as a finished product, but as a shared process; a space where knowledge is built collectively and where diverse voices help shape the future of the city.

CO-LAB
03.10.2026
→ 11.04.2027

↳ Participating designers:

Marijs Kempynck (BE)
and Sadie Williams (UK)

Yufei Gao (CN/NL)
and Victor Verhelst (BE)

Biobased Creations (NL/BE)
and Jaron Vandeveld (BE)

Queer Collective Workers'
Union (BE)

Marie Verdeil (FR/BE) and
Maxence Duterne (BE) in
collaboration with Open
Design Lab KASK

Studio d-o-t-s and Structure
Bâtons (FR) together with
dach&zephir (FR)

Josef Jakob Rieper (IT)
and Egon Watteuw (BE)

↳ Curator Siegrid Demyttenaere

CO-LAB is a project by Design
Museum Gent in collaboration
with Design Fest Gent.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

VISITOR INFORMATION

IMPORTANT DATES

Wednesday 30 September 2026

- ↳ National press conference (10:30 am – 2:00 pm)*
- ↳ Pre-opening for invited guests (10:30 pm – 11:00 pm)*

Thursday 1 October 2026

- ↳ International press conference (11:00 am – 2:00 pm)* Programme in the museum, followed by visits to various Design Fest Gent locations across the city.
- ↳ VIP opening (7:00 pm – 11:00 pm)*

Friday 2 October 2026

- ↳ Lunch for designers (11:30 am – 2:00 pm, invitation only)*
- ↳ Opening party (6:00 pm – 1:00 am) public evening

Saturday 3 October to Sunday 4 October 2026

- ↳ Opening weekend (10:00 am – 8:00 pm)

Saturday 3 – Sunday 11 October 2026

- ↳ Grand Reopening

GRAND REOPENING

03.10.2026 → 11.10.2026

On 3 October 2026, Design Museum Gent will reopen its doors to the general public. Expect a festive opening weekend full of surprises throughout the building: music, performances or talks, workshops, a design market in the streets around the museum, a brunch in the green inner courtyard, and much more. Afterwards, under the banner of Design Fest Gent, the programme expands into the city. A route will guide visitors to various locations across Ghent, including design shops, vacant buildings, design schools, and socially engaged art projects. The programme responds to today's societal and ecological challenges, offering an inclusive experience and inviting everyone to take part.

During the opening weekend, the entire museum will be free to visit, including the exhibitions: *Collection*, *Models from the Past for the Future*, *Public Matter(s): Design and Democracy*, *CO-LAB* and *Searcher*.

The full Grand Reopening programme will be announced in August.

NEW ADDRESS

Drabstraat 10 - 9000 Ghent

TICKET PRICES

↳ From Monday 5 October 2026, access to exhibitions requires a paid ticket.

Standard tickets → €15

Group tickets → €13

Tickets will go on sale on 11 May 2026.

↳ All information and ticket prices will be available from 11 May 2026 at www.designmuseumgent.be.

OPENING HOURS

Monday — Friday

9:30 am — 5:30 pm

Saturday, Sunday & school holidays

10:00 am — 6:00 pm

Closed on Wednesdays (except during school holidays, public holidays, and the Ghent Festivities)

Late Thursday

Open until 10:00 pm on the first Thursday of each month (except July, August, and September)

Opening hours during the reopening period (3–11 October 2026) may vary.

PRESS INFO**CONTACTS****PRESS KIT**

The online press kit can be requested via email. It contains press texts in Word and PDF format (ready to copy and paste), high-resolution images with captions and credits, logos of Design Museum Gent and its partners, background information on the exhibitions, programme details, credits, and more. The press kit is regularly updated and expanded.

PRESS CONTACTS

We work closely with Club Paradis, VISITFLANDERS, and VisitGent for press relations. Design Museum Gent is the primary point of contact for all press enquiries. Journalists are kindly asked to always contact Bie Luyssaert first.

Design Museum Gent

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