SCHOOL OF DESIGN

INTERDEPENDENCE:
past, present, future

Call for student projects for the international exhibition at Milan Design Week - Fuorisalone 2026

17-26 April 2026 @ Fabbrica del Vapore - Milano

In many fields today, we witness tensions between nostalgia and innovation, tradition and disruption, memory and speculation. These tensions do not exist in isolation; rather, they are interdependent forces that define the identities, systems, and values we design for. Understanding how things endure, transform, or disappear becomes essential to imagining worlds that are equitable, resilient, and meaningful.

The past carries knowledge, practices, materials, and stories that can serve as a foundation or as a warning. The present situates us in complexity, demanding critical awareness and responsible action. Imagination, anticipation, and care are fundamental to guide us through all the possibilities the future opens - sometimes hopeful, sometimes uncertain.

Design constantly unfolds across time and operates at the intersection of these three temporalities. Every project is shaped by what came before, responding to the urgencies of the present, and anticipating what may come next. Through its actions, design negotiates continuity and change, inheritance and projection, memory and foresight.

Within this framework, Interdependence 2026 asks:
> **How does design relate to the past to address present and future challenges?**
> **How can design shape futures that foster or challenge our current world views?**
> **How do different temporal layers coexist, collide, or reinforce one another in design processes and outcomes?**

The following 10 domains form together a broad map of *"forces"* that evolve through time, influencing and being influenced by design. Projects may address any of the them.

The 10 Domains:

1. Capabilities

How do human capabilities and skills change over time?

Capabilities heavily influence the way humans live their lives, posing an emphasis on the connection between what people can do (their skills) and possibilities offered to them by their conditions (their capabilities). How does design reinterpret traditional crafts, revive forgotten abilities, and build capabilities with the help of technologies, new forms of collaboration or interaction?

Projects in this category may explore learning, unlearning, empowering, and the transmission of expertise across generations.

2. Emotions

How do we experience and express emotions across eras?

Design draws from the rituals of the past, builds upon memories and dreams, addresses present anxieties or desires and envisions the sensibilities of future societies.
How does design engage with emotions to help us understand, express and process them and see the world around us in a more comprehensive way?

Project in this category may examine affect, memory, and emotional interdependence over time.

3. Places

How do spaces and places evolve over time?

Past, present and future happen in "places" that accumulate layers of history while continuously adapting. How might new and future environments reinterpret past identities, respond to new pressures or transform?

Projects in this category may look at spatial memory, territorial change, and the temporal and relational life of environments.

4. Paradigms

How do scientific models, cultural traditions, and belief systems endure, evolve, or disappear?

These paradigms anchor communities to culture. How can design acknowledge roots, while also pushing boundaries or challenging belief systems to foster dialogue and coexistence?

Projects in this category may explore how design fosters, navigates or challenges inherited knowledge, cultural continuity, innovation, and the coexistence of multiple epistemologies.

5. Communities

How do communities, networks, and relations develop and evolve?

Forms of kinship and community shift with social, economic, and cultural evolution. How do past models of togetherness inform present needs? What might design do to shape relationships that define future societies?

Projects in this category may explore relational networks, family structures, and collective identities.

6. Institutions

How do institutions change to sustain and accommodate the transformation of societies?

Institutions—political, educational, economic, cultural—are shaped by historical legacies yet face pressures to reform. How can design critically address their continuity or transformation?

Projects in this category may explore institutional memory, future governance, or new models of civic responsibility.

7. Infrastructures

How do existing systems and structures constrain or enable choices?

Infrastructures are physical, digital, or social structures needed for the operation of a society, a complex, or an enterprise. They evolve slowly but define much of everyday life. How can designers envision resilient, equitable, or speculative infrastructures from both a technical and social perspective?

Projects in this category may explore new possibilities for technical infrastructures, service systems, or business models.

8. Care

How does the very concept of care manifest in different societal systems and in their transformation?

Care is a fundamental aspect of human nature. The concept of caring, as well as care practices, tools, and systems transform with cultural values and technological progress. How can design

support the evolution of care, learning from past forms of caregiving while addressing contemporary inequalities or imagining future modalities of care?

Projects in this category may span across health, mutual aid, emotional support, stewardship and ownership for commons, and ethics.

9. Justice

How does the idea of fairness/justice transform and influence people's behaviours over time?

Ideas of fairness and justice evolve in time, shaped by shifting socio-cultural norms, legal rights, and power structures. How can design engage with historical injustices, respond to current inequities, foster peace and repair mistakes, or propose more just futures?

Projects in this category may focus on inclusion, access, rights, and socio-political transformation.

10. Tools

How do the tools we use shape the way we work, relate, and socialize?

Tools have accompanied humans on earth since prehistorical times. They represent extensions of ourselves, enabling us to achieve our goals and intents, while also being vessels of practices and habits that characterize eras. How might design reimagine objects, interfaces, or systems to reflect evolving ways of working, connecting, and collaborating?

Projects in this category may explore different ways of making things and how things are made.