



Press Release

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International Design Conference at Tempelhof Airport

FORM/FUTURE – Transformation by Design

How can design strategically drive transformation in business, society and politics? This question is at the heart of the international design conference FORM/FUTURE – Transformation by Design, taking place at Tempelhof Airport on September 10, 2026. Under the theme “Process & Principles,” the conference brings together designers, companies, institutions and other stakeholders working to shape and advance processes of change.

Berlin has been part of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network since 2006. Marking the 20th anniversary of Berlin’s designation as a UNESCO City of Design, FORM/FUTURE will highlight the transformative power of design and its role in shaping the city’s development. At the same time, the conference will look to Berlin’s future and explore how design can contribute to making Berlin more livable and resilient while driving lasting, sustainable transformation. Discussions will also examine the role design plays in shaping a city’s identity and international profile as well as in driving economic and social transformation.

Design as a Strategic Asset for Berlin

Michael Biel, State Secretary for Economic Affairs, will open the conference with a look at the importance of design to Berlin as a business location. International design critic and author Alice Rawsthorn of Design Emergency will discuss the role of design in society, while Dr. Nicole Zabel-Wasmuth of Planet

Narratives will explore how environmental law, storytelling and narratives about the future can support strategic transformation.

The role of major international events in shaping and positioning cities is also on the agenda. The City Branding panel will explore design, identity and how major international events can leave a lasting mark on cities. Panelists include Anaïs Guillemané Mootoosamy of W Conran Design, who was involved in developing the visual identity for Paris 2024.

Michael Biel, State Secretary for Economic Affairs: “FORM/FUTURE demonstrates how design can turn ideas and technological advances into solutions that people and businesses genuinely want to use in their everyday lives. Innovative products and services cannot succeed on technical quality alone. They also need to be intuitive, accessible and consistently designed around the needs of their users. With more than 9,500 companies and around 29,000 employees, the design industry is an important part of Berlin’s economy. For 20 years, Berlin’s status as a UNESCO City of Design has reflected the city’s creative excellence, international outlook and ability to bring together design, innovation and economic development. Berlin’s international reach is an important competitive advantage, and design continues to help bring Berlin innovations to global audiences, open up new markets and strengthen our city’s competitiveness as a business location.”

Dr. Stefan Franzke, CEO of Berlin Partner: “The challenges of our time call for new perspectives, interdisciplinary collaboration and a willingness to actively shape change. Design has a central role to play because it connects technological development with the needs of people and businesses. FORM/FUTURE brings international experts to Berlin to demonstrate how design can help transform businesses, institutions and society. The ideas and perspectives generated here strengthen Berlin’s position as a leading hub for innovation and creativity and as a place where the future is being shaped.”

Three Perspectives on Transformation

Across three tracks – Design Business, Design for Planet and Design, Policy & Society – FORM/FUTURE will explore the role of design in business, the environment and society. Topics on the agenda include spatial and multisensory design, resilience and the circular economy as well as design as a tool for crisis management and communication. Highlights include the Resilience & Circular Economy panel with Susanna Minato-Torkler (BDI), Christian Harbeke (NOSE) and Marius Pohl (Cofinity-X), along with the keynote Designed for Crises? by Thomas Rütting (Stromnetz Berlin).

Design in a Historic Setting

For the conference, the landmark Tempelhof Airport will become a space for exchanging ideas, making connections and discovering new perspectives. Alongside the main stage program, specially designed spaces for conversation and reflection will give participants opportunities to connect away from the formal sessions. An exhibition featuring associations, communities and institutions will complement the program, offering further opportunities to engage with stakeholders from Berlin's design community and beyond.

FORM/FUTURE demonstrates how design can go beyond shaping individual products to serve as a strategic tool for innovation and transformation. The conference provides a platform for dialogue between the creative industries, business, politics and civil society while highlighting the role of design in shaping the future of Berlin as a center for business and innovation.

For more information about FORM/FUTURE, visit formfuture.berlin

Berlin Partner for Business and Technology - Driving Innovation and Growth

Berlin Partner for Business and Technology is the capital's economic development agency for growth and innovation. The organization supports companies and investors as they relocate to Berlin and expand their presence in the city. Its experts provide guidance on financing opportunities, advise on finding suitable space and qualified staff, and help build networks with partners from the research community. Berlin Partner is backed by the State of Berlin and 250 companies committed to promoting their city, making it a strong public-private partnership. Berlin Partner is also responsible for marketing the German capital worldwide. www.berlin-partner.de