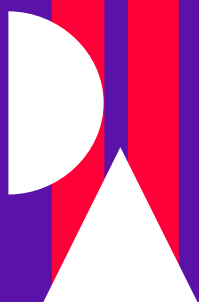


MILANO
DESIGN
WEEK

UNFOLD

2027



DOMUS ACADEMY
MILANO

Creating Ripples: Design for Amplifying Impact

Call for Participation - Milan Design Week 2027

This call for projects explores how design can engage with conditions that are not yet fully recognised, respond to change over time, and produce effects that extend beyond the project's most evident boundaries. It considers design not only in terms of its immediate outcome, but also in terms of the wider changes it can initiate, extend, and multiply.

Every design project has the potential to produce effects beyond its primary function. Its initial outcomes may influence behaviours, transform relationships, activate new forms of participation, redirect resources, inspire further initiatives, or contribute to wider social, cultural, institutional, and environmental change.

Domus Academy invites all Cumulus Member Institutions and their design students to develop projects for the UNFOLD project competition centred around the theme ***Creating Ripples: Design for Amplifying Impact***.

While the competition is primarily open to Cumulus members, other design institutions are warmly encouraged to engage with this theme and seize the opportunity to contribute.

Now in its fourth edition, the UNFOLD competition will feature a one-day conference and exhibition during Milan Design Week 2027 – a globally renowned event that offers a unique opportunity for selected institutions and their students to engage with the vibrant design scene. Participants will showcase prototypes and present their projects in dedicated presentation sessions. More information about past editions can be found [here](#).

ABOUT THE TOPIC

Creating Ripples invites design institutions and students to explore how design can intentionally create the conditions for these further effects. Projects should not stop at addressing a defined need or delivering a single outcome. They should consider what an intervention makes possible, how it can evolve through interaction with its context, and how its influence may spread across people, organisations, communities, and systems.

The call encourages projects that:

- activate overlooked capacities, relationships, or resources;
- generate further actions beyond the initial intervention;
- enable ideas, practices, or resources to circulate across contexts;
- strengthen the capacity of communities and organisations to act;
- connect local initiatives to wider systems and concerns;
- produce effects that accumulate, multiply, or evolve over time;
- transform a direct outcome into a broader process of change.

Projects may take the form of products, services, spaces, systems, experiences, speculative propositions, or collaborative processes. They should demonstrate how design can operate across different temporal, social, and spatial scales, linking present action to wider and more enduring consequences.

The call welcomes proposals that explore three interconnected dimensions:

Latency – what is already present but remains hidden, inactive, marginal, or not yet fully articulated. Projects may uncover dormant knowledge, overlooked capacities, emerging behaviours, unresolved tensions, or possibilities that have not yet found a form.

Modulation – the capacity to adjust, reconfigure, and evolve in response to changing circumstances. Projects should move beyond fixed solutions, proposing adaptable systems, services, environments, processes, or relationships that can be recalibrated over time.

Resonance – the ability of design to create recognition, connection, and wider consequences. Projects may amplify shared concerns, connect different actors and contexts, or generate effects that continue beyond the original intervention, influencing practices, communities, institutions, or territories.

Together, these dimensions position design not simply as the production of solutions, but as a way of sensing what is emerging, shaping conditions for change, and enabling new possibilities to circulate, develop, and gain collective relevance.

REQUIRED MATERIALS AND DEADLINES

Step 1 – EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

Schools should complete [this form](#) to express their interest in taking part into the competition by **25th September 2026**. A Zoom webinar will be held in early October to provide practical information and answer any further questions.

By 12th October 2026, Domus Academy will inform the schools whether they have been selected to proceed to the second phase of the process (**Project Submission**). The committee will consider the accuracy and completeness of the information submitted when making its selection.

Please note: being invited to the second phase (Project Submission) does not guarantee participation in the final exhibition and one-day conference. Domus Academy will select the finalist schools based on the projects submitted.

Step 2 – PROJECT SUBMISSION

Selected schools are required to organise an a dedicated initiative (e.g. workshop, design sprint, curricular course) with their design students, divided in groups, to develop projects to respond to the main topic of the competition.

By 8th January 2027, each selected school must submit the two or three best projects they have developed during its dedicated initiative. A **submission link** will be provided to the selected schools.

Schools are kindly requested to submit the following information and materials for each project:

- **Project Title**
- **Project Authors** (names of the students)
- **Project Mentors** (names of professors or any collaborators involved in the development of the project)
- **Project Abstract** – maximum 900 characters, including spaces
- **Project Overview** – between 2,500 and 3,500 characters, including spaces. The overview should explain the background and context of the project, how it aligns with the Unfold 2026 theme, its aims and objectives, the concept and design, key features or innovations, as well as any relevant methods, materials, or processes used.
- **A text outlining the format of the academic activity in which the project was developed** (e.g. workshop, design sprint, curricular activity, etc.), and describing how the project responds to the proposed workshop brief – approximately 1,300 characters, including spaces.
- **5 to 10 high-resolution images** showcasing the object/project intended for exhibition.

Each object/project will be allocated an ideal display space of 60 x 60 x 60 cm. The images should clearly highlight the project's features and materials, as well as demonstrate its suitability for the assigned space.

- **Optional:** A project presentation deck (PDF or PowerPoint format, maximum 15 slides)

Step 3 – FINAL SELECTION AND AGREEMENT SIGNING

Domus Academy will select the final schools and projects by **22nd January 2027**, with up to two projects chosen from each selected school. An agreement will then be sent to the selected schools and must be signed and returned **by 31st January 2027**.

Step 4 – START PROTOTYPING AND PREPARING FOR EXHIBITION AND CONFERENCE

Each selected school and its students will produce prototypes of the projects selected by Domus Academy. Students, supported by faculty, will also prepare a 10–15-minute presentation about their projects to be delivered during the one-day conference. The presentation may be delivered by an individual student or by a group of students.

- **High-resolution images / renders of the prototype** (photos showing the prototype's development process are recommended but not mandatory).
- **Detailed information on how the prototype will be displayed during the exhibition.** Please specify any special requirements (e. g. electricity, Wi-Fi).
- Both **PowerPoint and PDF versions of the project presentation deck** to support the 10–15-minute presentation during the one-day conference.
- **A video scenario** that clearly illustrates and explains the concept behind the project, highlighting its key features and characteristics. The video should include explanatory text, keyword overlays and / or subtitles to ensure that the content is easily understood and effectively communicated, even when viewed without sound. Format and duration: approximately 1 minute, with a resolution of 3840 × 2160 pixels (4K).
- **Communication materials** to promote their participation in the event and to support the exhibition (such as prototype descriptions and exhibition captions).

Prototypes must be delivered to Milan **by and no later than 19th March 2027**.

If a school prefers to have a representative personally transport the prototype (by plane, train, or other means), it must arrive in Milan **no later than 9th April**.

NOTES

Expressions of Interest and project submissions are **free of charge**.

Please note: participation in the UNFOLD 2027 competition is open exclusively to design schools and institutions. It is the institutions themselves that formally participate by engaging their students in the development of project proposals. Submissions made directly by individual students or student groups, without institutional endorsement and coordination, will not be considered. Given the nature and scope of the competition's theme, participation is particularly suited to postgraduate students. However, institutions may also choose to involve bachelor's students, especially where there is a strong motivation and a clear alignment between their academic profile and the thematic focus of the competition.

Domus Academy will cover all costs related to the **UNFOLD 2027 exhibition**, including the conference venue, set-up, event planning and promotional activities.

The following expenses will not be covered by Domus Academy and will be the responsibility of UNFOLD 2027 exhibitors:

- The production of prototypes for the selected projects, including their delivery to Milan and return shipping.
- Travel and accommodation expenses for school staff and selected students attending the exhibition opening and the one-day conference.

Please note that attendance at the one-day conference is mandatory for at least one professor and one student for each selected project.

Copyright in all materials submitted at the time of entry remains with the authors. Domus Academy reserves the right to use the submitted work for event promotion.

Submitted projects must not have been previously published or entered into other competitions. For projects developed in collaboration with companies, the organiser will not provide recognition or visibility to those brands or companies.

KEY DEADLINES AND MILESTONES

25th September 2026 – Deadline to submit the [Expression of Interest form](#).

By 12th October 2026 – Domus Academy will inform schools whether they have been selected to proceed to the second phase (Project Submission)

Until 12th January 2027 – Selected schools organise dedicated initiative (e.g. workshop, design sprint, curricular course, etc.)

By 12th January 2027 – Selected schools must submit two or three of their best projects developed during internal workshops.

By 22nd January 2027 – Domus Academy will select the final projects and notify the participating schools by sending an agreement.

By 31st January 2027 – Deadline to return the signed agreement

14th March 2027 – Selected schools must submit all materials for the exhibition and the one-day conference

19th March 2027 – Domus Academy must receive the physical prototypes by this date at the latest

10th April 2027 – Final deadline to deliver prototypes in person, if transported by a school representative to Milan

12-18 April 2027 – Exhibition and one-day conference in Milan

Contacts: Please feel free to contact unfold@domusacademy.it with any enquiries.



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