

Meet the Design Museum's new Design Researchers in Residence

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- **The Design Museum announces the 2024/25 cohort of Design Researchers in Residence**
- **This year's residents will respond to the theme of 'Artificial'**
- **Their projects will span urban parakeets, national planning, domestic appliances and the colonisation of plants**

The Design Museum today announces a new cohort of Design Researchers in Residence, who will spend the next year at the museum developing innovative projects that respond to the climate emergency.

The flagship residency was established to support emerging design thinkers whose research responds to the climate emergency, building upon the museum's Designers in Residence programme that ran from 2007 to 2020.

The residency forms part of the Design Museum's Future Observatory, delivered in partnership with the UKRI Arts and Humanities Research Council.

The 2024/2025 residents will respond to the theme of 'Artificial', and they will investigate ways in which design can explore the limits of human-centred design in a more-than-human climate crisis.

The history of design is often read through the lens of anthropocentrism, where products and services are conceived and manufactured to support human flourishing without concern for other species. Yet today we know well that this approach is part of a broader set of planetary crises which find their root in the artificial separation of the 'human' from the 'natural'.

This year's Design Researchers in Residence are Christie Swallow, Hani Salhi, Laura Lebeau and Neba Sere.

The cohort come from a variety of design backgrounds and specialisms, which is reflected in the diversity of their approach to the brief. The residents will look at a broad range of topics including the phenomenon of urban parakeets, logic systems in national planning, the materiality of domestic appliances and the colonisation of plant species.

The programme will culminate in a publication and free public display at the Design Museum in June 2025, through which visitors will learn about a range of impactful new thinking that centres design in the green transition.

Designer Biographies:

Christie Swallow is an artist, researcher and maker who crafts new stories from old ideas. Their work engages with how the Anthropocene's entanglement of humans and non-humans has produced our present planetary crisis. With a background in architecture, their practice engages with topics of ecology, technoscience and heterodoxy through textiles, collaborative drawing and archival research. Christie has previously undertaken residencies at the European Commission, The University of Birmingham and Hangar CIA. They were the 2020 recipient of the RIBA Boyd Auger Award and previously studied at The University of Cambridge and the Royal College of Art.

Christie's research will look to the phenomenon of the urban parakeet, now common in many European cities, to understand how we might redefine "natural" in an age of climate crisis. Walking and talking through the parks, cemeteries and streetscapes that parakeets call home, Christie will explore the Anthropocene's queer landscape(s), sketching out alternative human/nature relationships. Through engagement and co-creation the project will support worldbuilding and collective imaginaries, allowing us to move beyond outdated and exhausted landscape concepts of the picturesque, towards a theory of artificial ecology. Through the travails of the parakeet, Christie hopes to better understand how we might coexist on this damaged planet.

Hani Salih is a researcher, writer and curator who connects the dots across disciplines, practices and ideas. Hani's interests are informed by a foundation in critical spatial thinking through his background in architecture, further refined by his studies at the London School of Economics. This led to his interest in systems and the infrastructure that shape our lives. Hani aims to bridge gaps between different contexts through his research, curation, and programming to establish connections that underpin the importance of collective alliances to bring about positive social change. Before joining the Design Museum, Hani was a Senior Researcher at The Quality of Life Foundation and was an associate co-curator for the International Architecture Biennial in Rotterdam (2024). Currently, he is also a curator and moderator at DeDependance in Rotterdam.

Working between rigorous planning procedures and cultural critique, Hani's research looks to challenge the ways in which we conceive political and economic systems and infrastructures by learning from naturally occurring complexity. He challenges the systems-thinking that led to the creation of frameworks used to rationalise the exploitation of nature. By mapping the mechanisms for national decision-making in the United Kingdom, taking a particular focus on built environment planning and housing bodies, he looks to develop a strategic understanding for areas for influence — through design.

Laura Lebeau is an industrial designer working across objects, technology and speculative design. Her work focuses on imagining radical sustainability

strategies to define the future of consumer electronics, as well as experimenting beyond the expected aesthetic codes of technology. Laura has gained experience in product manufacturing and design strategies working as a senior designer for Map Project Office, where she has collaborated with some of the most innovative and well-known companies in the world. She graduated with a master's in industrial design from the Strate School of Design, Paris where she was selected as a James Dyson Award finalist with her diploma project Ecco, a study around the reparability of common house appliances.

Combining her experience in industrial design and manufacturing with research on obsolescence and waste, Laura is interested in experimenting with the apparent clash between synthetic and raw natural materials, especially in the context of mass-produced appliances and everyday objects. Confronted with the limits of recycling and repair of home appliances, she wants to push the boundaries of their materiality to imagine harmless devices and invite users to reflect on the cost of modern convenience in the context of the climate emergency.

Neba Sere is a spatial practitioner advocating for diversity and inclusion in the architecture profession. She is an associate professor at The Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL, where her research focuses on decolonisation and decarbonisation and learns from indigenous and vernacular construction techniques. Neba is also the director of Black Females in Architecture, who exhibited at the 2023 Venice Architecture Biennale and she co-leads the decosm collective, which recently collaborated with Arup on the report 'Racial Equity and the City', examining the experiences of People of Colour in London. Her previous roles include Senior Project Officer with the Greater London Authority's Regeneration Team and leading youth projects at Build Up Foundation, where she is now a Trustee.

As a Design Researcher in Residence, Neba will look at the parallels between anthropocentrism and colonisation, where European settlers exploited people and natural resources alike. Her research considers how plant species were colonised through genocide, extraction, 'enslavement', selective breeding and more recently genetic manipulation. Throughout the residency, Neba will trace the routes of colonised ecologies, creating an archive of lost historical and contemporary plant knowledge. These materials will serve as the basis for public conversations exploring the artificialisation of nature by centering plant voices.

Abbie Adams, Future Observatory Curator, said, "Artificial relationships exist at the tip of each root of the climate crisis. Studying archives, analysing political systems, waste streams, and co-creating within local communities and ecologies - each project looks to disrupt passive assumptions and imagine futures that de-centralise human perspectives and re-establish solidarity across ecosystems."

Justin McGuirk, Director of Future Observatory, said, "It's always exciting to welcome a new cohort of residents to the Design Museum and to see the critical tools and frameworks they bring with them. Artificial

Intelligence consumes so much attention and yet there are many other forms of artifice that we have yet to understand – so much of what we think of as “natural” is in fact a construct created by human and non-human relations, and delving into those relational knots is part of what it means to address the climate crisis.”

The Design Researchers in Residence programme supports emerging design thinkers at the start of their careers to spend a year developing a new research project in response to a theme. It builds upon the Design Museum’s flagship designers’ residence which has supported emerging designers since 2007. Former residents include Asif Khan, Adam Nathaniel Furman, Jade Folawiyo and Lawrence Lek. Previous themes for the programme were ‘Restore’ and ‘Islands’. Design Researchers in Residence is part of the museum’s Future Observatory, a national design research programme based at and coordinated by the Design Museum and supported by the UKRI Arts and Humanities Research Council.

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Notes to Editor

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About Future Observatory:

Future Observatory is the Design Museum’s national research programme for the green transition coordinated in partnership with the UKRI Arts and Humanities Research Council.

Acting as both a coordinating hub for a nationwide programme, as well as a research department within the museum, Future Observatory curates exhibitions, programmes events and funds and publishes new research, all with the aim of championing new design thinking on environmental issues.

futureobservatory.org

#futureobservatory

About The Arts and Humanities Research Council:

The UKRI Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), part of UK Research and Innovation, funds internationally outstanding independent researchers across the whole range of the arts and humanities: history, archaeology, digital content, philosophy, languages and literature, design, heritage, area studies, the creative and performing arts, and much more. The quality and range of research supported by AHRC works for the good of UK society and culture and contributes both to UK economic success and to the culture and welfare of societies across the globe.



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About the Design Museum:

The Design Museum is a multifaceted museum, an ever-changing space for the public, industry and education to come together and explore new ideas. A registered charity, the museum's innovative exhibitions, partnerships, research and learning programmes evidence how design can enable this planet and its inhabitants to thrive. Our landmark building in Kensington is the centre of our national network and a global hub for the transformative potential of design.



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