

## Don't Miss a Design Thing



### How DesignTO Festival fills Toronto with art & design

**[January 2026, Toronto]** The 16th annual [DesignTO Festival](#) returns January 23 to February 1, 2026, bringing more than 100 events, exhibitions, and installations to venues across Toronto. Now in its 16th year, the Festival continues to spotlight design as something that lives in everyday spaces, from studios and streets to the broader conversations shaping cities around the world.

DesignTO's 2026 program spans industrial design, technology, craft, and visual culture, with a strong focus on architecture, the built environment, and identity. While rooted in Toronto, the Festival reflects concerns shared across cities globally, including how we build, who design serves, how materials carry meaning, and how designers respond to social and environmental change. Local projects are placed in dialogue with ideas and practices circulating far beyond the city.

Curated projects anchor the Festival with a mix of talks, tours, and immersive experiences. Highlights include the '[DesignTO Launch Party](#)' at MOCA Toronto and '[Design Hustle: What Masters and New Voices Teach Each Other](#)', a cross-generational conversation on contemporary design practice. '[Ideas Forum: Advocating for a Better City](#)' brings together

design-led initiatives addressing urban issues, while at '[DesignTO Tours: hollis+morris](#)' an A&D Breakfast offers a closer look at a Toronto-based studio known for material experimentation and local production.



*'Jeff Wall Photographs 1984–2023' public preview. Photo by Dean Tomlinson.*

The exhibition program adds a more tactile layer to the Festival, exploring how design ideas take physical form. Featured projects include '[Soft Grid](#)', a meditative textile installation by Shao-Chi Lin; '[S.A.D.](#)', Steven Beckly's photographic exploration of winter light; and '[Traces](#)', a multidisciplinary exhibition reflecting on migration, memory, and cultural landscapes. Together, these works consider how place, whether local or distant, shapes the way we design and experience space.

With so many projects unfolding across the city, the Festival can be experienced in countless ways. What follows is DesignTO's 2026 Hit List, an edited selection of standout exhibitions, events, and installations offering an entry point into the broader program.

Editors seeking a particular angle, whether architecture, the built environment, material innovation, identity, or emerging practices, are encouraged to reach out. We're happy to help point you toward projects and programming aligned with your interests. Contact us [here](#).

## The 2026 Hit List



*'Ensemble presents Pot-au-feu', Jean-Michel Gadoua, Xavier Ouellet, Séjour, Small Medium Large, D'Armes.*

### Ensemble presents Pot-au-feu

Jan 23 - Jan 28, 2026

The Plumb

1655 Dufferin Street, Basement

The Ensemble collective returns to the plumb gallery with a new group exhibition. This edition features expansive scenography that radically transforms the space, offering a bold setting that reimagines how design pieces and artworks can be experienced.

### Exploring Biomaterials in Textile Applications

Jan 23 - Feb 1, 2026

DESIGNwith

220 Yonge Street

This showcase features experimentation with innovative plant and bacterial cellulose biomaterials as regenerative design. Exhibitors show the material's versatility through real-life applications while asking: "What if we could simply bury our products in the garden at the end of their life?"

### Design in Canada Now

Jan 28, 2026

hollis+morris

501 Alliance Avenue, Suite 4

Moderated by *The Globe and Mail*, a group of notable designers and design boosters discuss how approaches to living with local design have evolved to meet a growing, “elbows up” enthusiasm, and where homegrown architecture, interiors and housewares are headed next.

**HSPLUS x giraffe – Takeover at The Adelaide Project**

Jan 30, 2026

The Adelaide Project

509 Adelaide Street West

Giraffe and HSPLUS present a curated takeover of The Adelaide Project by TPL Lighting, featuring live 3-D printing and a composed mix of lighting, furniture, and textiles. Two events invite designers and partners to explore how these elements integrate to shape contemporary interiors.



*'La Dolce Design: Celebrating Italian Design, from Vintage Icons to Modern Masters', Vintage 1980s Marble Top Hourglass Base Dining Table and Set of 4 Sling Chairs by Ibisco, topped with a selection of Bitossi Ceramics by famed Italian Designer Ettore Sottsass.*

**La Dolce Design: Celebrating Italian Design, from Vintage Icons to Modern Masters**

Jan 23 - Jan 31, 2026

Bonne Choice Showroom

53 Judson Street, Etobicoke

Celebrate Italy's rich design heritage with vintage icons and contemporary masterpieces, highlighting the dialogue between tradition and innovation. This exhibition showcases Italy's ongoing influence on global design through a curated collection of timeless and modern works.

Additionally on January 29, [The Collected Home: How to live with the best of design](#) brings together Bonne Choice's Carlo Colacci, designer Clarisa Llaneza, Absolutely Fabrics founder Kaelen Haworth, and The Globe and Mail style and art contributor Odessa Paloma Parker to discuss how to assemble a collection of housewares that reflects your personal style and share their perspectives on contemporary pieces poised to become future icons.

### **Light Gathering in the Yuàn** 光聚院心

Jan 26 - Jan 31, 2026  
Mason Studio Cultural Hub  
91 Pelham Avenue

'Light Gathering in the Yuàn' inaugurates The Light Room, where a contemporary reinterpretation of the traditional Chinese courtyard is activated through shifting light and flavour. This ticketed dining experience unfolds as a living, sensory narrative shaped by design and a modern raw seafood bar.

### **Slow Furniture: Recent work from the Studio of Heidi Earnshaw**

Jan 14 - Feb 28, 2026  
Craft Ontario Gallery  
401 Richmond Street West, Suite 108

Heidi Earnshaw's furniture merges craftsmanship and contemporary design, emphasizing sustainability and mindful living. This solo exhibition features works that invite viewers to slow down and find meaning in everyday life.

### **TAPE**

Jan 23 - Feb 21, 2026  
8x7  
1A - 32 Cawthra Ave

8x7 presents 'TAPE', an exhibition of adhesive tape as seen by nine design studios. Instant, easy, and usually good enough, tape allows designers to think with their hands, providing a window into why and how these designers are connecting things.

*In addition to 'TAPE', the talk [Studio Session: Jamie Wolfond](#) on January 30 sees designer Jamie Wolfond sit down with Haley Steinberg, Senior Style Editor at The Globe and Mail, to discuss how his Junction studio facilitates experimentation and shapes the way he approaches making and design.*



'The Flax Project', Flax bundles drying at TMU's Urban Farm.

### [The Flax Project](#)

Jan 21 - Feb 1, 2026

Grays

1514 Dundas Street West

'The Flax Project' is an ongoing collaboration between Toronto Metropolitan University's Urban Farm and its Fashion Program and suggests the design potential for locally grown linen. This demonstration project showcases linen fibres raised, processed, and woven in downtown Toronto.

### [TO ·BE·LONGING Portraits of Queer Living](#)

Jan 23 - Feb 1, 2026

Ace Hotel

51 Camden Street

What makes your home queer? 'TO ·BE·LONGING' challenges heteronormative domesticity. The exhibition engages 40 queer community-submitted artifacts to showcase the nuances of home, inviting visitors to re-shape and reflect on intimacy, identity, and possibilities of queer living beyond the norm.

### [Tracing Symmetries](#)

Jan 14 - Feb 14, 2026

Urbanspace Gallery  
401 Richmond Street West

'Tracing Symmetries' is a photographic exhibition by artist and architect Safoura Zahedi, inviting you into the living world of Islamic geometry: its history, migration, and imagined futures in contemporary art and architecture.

**Transforming Scadding Court Community Centre Through Collaborative Design**

Jan 23 - Feb 1, 2026  
Scadding Court Community Centre  
707 Dundas Street West

This exhibition highlights three exciting design projects that have transformed Scadding Court Community Centre. Breathing new life into this community space, students from Sheridan College's Furniture program, St. Clements School, and OCAD U's Participatory Design class collaborated with the Scadding Court community and Codesign to create new lobby furniture, an art installation, and accessible wayfinding.

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**About DesignTO**

As a charitable arts organization, DesignTO continues to expand its mission to advance the public's appreciation of design, create accessible cultural programming, and nurture community connections through design. DesignTO acknowledges funding support for the 2026 DesignTO Festival from the Government of Ontario, City of Toronto, the Ontario Arts Council, and many sponsors and partners.

Each year, the DesignTO Festival brings over 100 free events across Toronto, showcasing hundreds of artists and designers. As Canada's largest annual design festival, DesignTO has welcomed over 1 million attendees, reached 2.6 billion people through media, supported 7,000+ artists, and generated \$159 million in tourism impact.

"DesignTO isn't just a festival; it's an anti-loneliness machine," co-founder Christina Zeidler remarked, underscoring the organization's power to foster a sense of belonging and spark vital conversations about design's role in shaping a better world.

[DesignTO.org](http://DesignTO.org) | [INSTAGRAM](#) | [FACEBOOK](#) | [LINKEDIN](#)

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