



Belfast Design Week 2026

Impact Report

**BELFAST
DESIGN
WEEK**

May 01 - 07

Introduction

Belfast Design Week is an annual multidisciplinary design festival celebrating design in Northern Ireland and beyond. We began BDW in 2015 with our first festival as part of the Year of Irish Design and have since gone on to deliver hundreds of events such as talks, workshops, conferences, pop ups, tours, exhibitions & more.

BDW Aims

-Champion emerging designers (primary audience), giving them visibility, opportunities, and learning.

- Engage the broader design industry and related businesses as collaborators, mentors, and audiences.

- Help the general public understand that design is everywhere and extends far beyond “just visuals”.

- Use design to tell a richer story of Belfast: its places, people, and possibilities—without falling back on clichés.

100+

Emerging Designers Supported

BDW 2026

1st - 7th May

In 2026 from 1st to 7th May 2026 Belfast Design Week returned to Belfast city. To celebrate design in Belfast and to explore the impact of design in our city and community.

Festival Partners included:

- Belfast City Council
- Belfast School of Art
- Craft NI
- Illustrators North
- Queen's University Belfast
- HALT Weavers Cross

With over 5300 event and exhibition attendees

30

Events & Initiatives

75

Festival Partners

5386

Event & Exhibition Attendees

Events during BDW26

1

Season A Visual Interpretation Poster Exhibition

‘Season A Visual Interpretation’ was a poster exhibition by Belfast School of Art’s Foundation Year Art & Design students Anna Clarke, Ash Kerr, Eve Monaghan, Richie Power, Louay Sharfo, Meadow Toye and Tilly Walker. They each created their own unique visual responses to the BDW26 theme of "Season."

2

Design Stories Poster Exhibition

Poster Design Exhibition by Belfast School of Art Year 2 Graphic Design Students which engaged local design students in a placemaking and communication project. The project focused on exploring Belfast and uncovering stories connected to its architecture, people, history, events, language, and distinctive motifs.

3

CineArch Exhibition

This exhibition by Queen’s University students centred on the proposal of a Peace Museum in Belfast, addressing the absence of a space dedicated to the city’s history of conflict and its continuous process of reconciliation. The site was located within the Cathedral Quarter, adjacent to the historic Assembly Rooms. This exhibition brought together drawings exploring how cinematic thinking can shape architecture as an experiential space.

4

Northern Threads Exhibition

Titanic Belfast Curated Northern Threads exhibition, a celebration of style, creativity and contemporary fashion design in Northern Ireland. At the heart of Northern Threads were four designers working in Northern Ireland today:
Gráinne Maher
Hope Macaulay
Kindred of Ireland by Amy Anderson
Eadach by Sara O’Neill

5

Avant Gardner Exhibition

The Avant Gardner exhibition at the Naughton Gallery at Queen's brought together local and international artists to explore how creative practices cultivated new forms of connection, care, and resistance. At the intersection of art, activism, and sustainability, the exhibition considered how meaning and pleasure might still be found in our relationships with the living world.

6

Bealtaine North Block Night Market

Inside Belfast's historic Crumlin Road Gaol Little Fox Events organised this late-night market series. With 40+ stalls of vintage, art, handmade goods, and street food.

As night fell the Gaol's stunning architecture set the scene, with DJs, live entertainment, and the Gaol bar's throughout.

7

Illustrators North Illustration Fair

As part of Belfast Design Week, Illustrators North presented their very first Illustration Fair at the Belfast School of Art Shop.

This one-day event brought together 20 talented illustrators from across Northern Ireland, each showcasing and selling their own work, including prints, art and books.



8

Work in Progress: Process, Pause & Possibility with Graft Collective

“Work in Progress: Process, Pause & Possibility” celebrated the process behind interdisciplinary creative work, offering a space where unfinished ideas are valued as an essential part of the creative journey. Responding to the theme of Season, the showcase highlighted the evolving, cyclical nature of creativity — where ideas emerge, shift, pause, and grow over time.

9

Homework Project: Belfast By Design

As part of Belfast Design Week, this Homework Project offered a guided creative adventure where participants were each assigned a unique building or place to explore in Belfast city. Armed with a set of thoughtful research prompts, they explored and responded to the unique design details and hidden histories that shape Belfast’s streets

10

B Corp T Meetup with Hundred Studio & Suki Tea

A morning of free tea and coffee at Hundred Studio in partnership with Suki Tea. Two B Corp companies working together to do better, they wear their certifications as a badge of honour. A way to show measurable social and environmental progress, and a way to stay accountable.

They spoke about sustainability in design and how they are striving to make real change in their work and communities.



11

Designed To Learn Design Talks

Designed to Learn: Creating environmental board games with children. This talk, delivered by two Ulster University academics, Jenny Jackson-Smyth and Dr Susann Power showcased the Future Island-Island project and explained their delivery of hands-on creative workshops to children aged 9-11 years old (Key Stage 2).

12

Seasons of Career

Seasons of Career hosted in the MAC was an opportunity for designers at all stages in their career to come together to talk about their 'season'. From the challenges and joys of starting out, to pivoting your career, reigniting your passion and intergenerational learning. We had 4 speakers talk about their season, with an open floor discussion at end.

13

Crown Creative Open Studio

Crown Creative hosted an open studio giving people the opportunity to drop in, have a look around and get a feel for how they work across design, interiors and hospitality. They shared a selection of recent projects, talking through ideas and opening up some of the thinking behind what they do.



14

Blick Creative Talk – Maureen Lavery Product and Fashion Designer

Belfast Design Week co-founder Blick Shared Studios hosted a Creative Talk with Maureen Lavery. Maureen is a product and fashion designer, and inclusive design researcher. She works on a variety of design meets disability projects. At the heart of her practice is the relationships that she builds with people's diverse lived experiences.

15

Mural Masterclass

This was a morning of human-centered collaboration, hosted by Caroline Gilliland, Principal Consultant at Mural and Certified LUMA Instructor. Including a mix of conversation, collaboration, and creativity as participants learnt practical ways to make collaboration more participatory, engaging, and human-centered. All enjoyed over breakfast pastries and coffee!

16

Rapid Feedback for Makers

This event gave 8 emerging makers and designers the opportunity to meet with and get feedback from independent design and retail professionals. Participants each had a 20 minute one-on-one session with our panel getting rapid feedback, constructive critique and guidance on products or works in progress.



17

Packaging: Design For All Seasons

For BDW “Season”, Belfast based creative agency krow explored, with best-in-class examples – globally grown and krow grown – how packaging gets itself seen, felt, and bought by being in the moment and in the season. The key is understanding that season, gaining insight into why consumers will respond when, and what packaging signatures will trigger the sale.

18

Womenfolk X Kitsch Sisters Creative Practice Commitment Workshop

This was a collaboration between Womenfolk by Blick Shared Studios and Kitsch Sisters. With participants creating a personal declaration of permission and commitment to their creative practice. Then bringing it to life by printing or embroidering it onto a tote bag, as their own wearable reminder of the promise they made to their creativity and future ambitions.

19

Designing Death Rituals Workshop

Ritualisation is an ancient response to change, loss and death and offers powerful opportunities to creatively interpret and ascribe meaning to our unique human journeys. This was an experiential design workshop where participants met, connected and explored the ways in which they might design death rituals which are rooted in curiosity, care and human connection.



20

Illustrators North x AOI: InDepth with Fiona McDonnell

Illustrators North hosted a live talk featuring illustrator Fiona McDonnell. Their conversation explores Fiona's career, from commercial illustration to self-initiated projects, looking at how she has built a distinctive visual style and sustained a creative practice across advertising, branding, editorial and heritage work. They will also talk about the role of DIY art movements and community in shaping a creative career.

22

Designing a Life Studio for Enrichment

The Life Enrichment Model was presented by Associate Professor and art therapist Dr. Lisa Hinz, founder of the model and advocate for dynamic balancing as a life strategy. The Life Enrichment Model applies creativity to a design of life that produces. It is about being a maker within life as a studio practice and strategy of vigour. This workshop was hosted in Belfast School of Art Shop by Dr. Pamela Whitaker a lecturer in art psychotherapy at the Belfast School of Art.

21

Greening the City

Join the Graduate School Design Team at Queen's University Belfast and Dr Neil Galway (Programme Director and Senior Lecturer, School of Natural and Built Environment) for a fun, hands-on session all about reimagining a greener Belfast. Together, they explored exciting urban greening work already happening across the city and shared inspiring case studies. There was a lively mini design sprint and hackathon-style workshop.



23

Future Island-Island Imaginarium Installation

The Imaginarium showcased imaginative responses to global challenges from young people across Northern Ireland. The exhibition built on the successful collaboration of researchers (Ulster University), educators (Education Authority, youth groups and schools) and designers (The BIG Idea, Big Motive).

24

A Hand In Nature

Through use of materials, design aesthetic, function or underlying narrative, the works featured in this Craft NI exhibition told a story about the ecological and cultural impact of their development. Featuring work by Silversmith Eva Lynch, Stuart Cairns, Eimear Conyard, Clodagh Molloy, Cecilia Moore, Cara Murphy, C  il  n    Dubhghaill, Angela O Kelly and Sandra Wilson.

25

Platforming the Home by Dave Loder

This exhibition at Digital Arts Studios was Informed by findings from semi-structured interviews and discourse analysis, the visual speculations were developed via GenAI techniques that give critical focus to the algorithmic condition of interiors on STR platforms. Leveraging the intersecting patterns of homogeneity and novelty that exemplify image-based GenAI, the speculations prototype new ideals and practices to manifest dis/connections with the algorithmic condition of STR interiors.



26

Belfast Design Meetup

Belfast Design Meetup is a free after-work event for designers to learn, connect, and grow together. Starting at 5:30 PM, we'll have talks, discussions, and real-world experience sharing in Belfast City Centre at the stunning MCS Group event space, hosted by Dima Kiselev.

27

Belfast City Council Tools For Togetherness

Tools for Togetherness is a new initiative led by Belfast City Council, grounded in the principles of the sharing economy. The project explores new approaches to commissioning public art.

At this event the artists each spoke about their design process, featuring a short presentation and discussion.

28

Design Stories: Motion Graphics Showcase

Design Stories was a collaborative project with Belfast School of Art Graphic Design students and Blick Shared Studios with support from Golden Studio which engaged local design students in a placemaking and communication project.

This event featured an exhibition of printed posters from the Design Stories project, alongside a motion design piece projected within the Belfast Stories Building a historic venue that will become the future home of the Belfast Stories museum in the coming years.



Beneficiaries

A summary of some of the people who benefitted from being involved in Belfast Design Week 2026 events and exhibitions



62

Students given
exhibition opportunities

97

Students benefitted in
total from direct
opportunities



5386

Event & Exhibitions
attendees

Some Sample Events And Beneficiaries



Students

The Graduate School at Queen's





About

The Graduate School Design Team at Queen's University Belfast and Dr Neil Galway (Programme Director and Senior Lecturer, School of Natural and Built Environment) hosted a fun, hands-on session all about reimagining a greener Belfast.

Together, they explored exciting urban greening work already happening across the city, sharing inspiring case studies, and sparking fresh thinking about what Belfast could become. Through a lively mini design sprint and hackathon-style workshop, they worked together to generate bold, creative ideas to help make our city greener, healthier, and more connected.



Open to all, this session welcomed a group of 35 students who took part, shared their perspective, and were part of the conversation. They wrapped up with lunch and networking, giving attending students time to continue conversations, make connections, and grow new ideas together.





30

Attendees

Imaginarium Installation

Young Voices Reimagining The Future





About

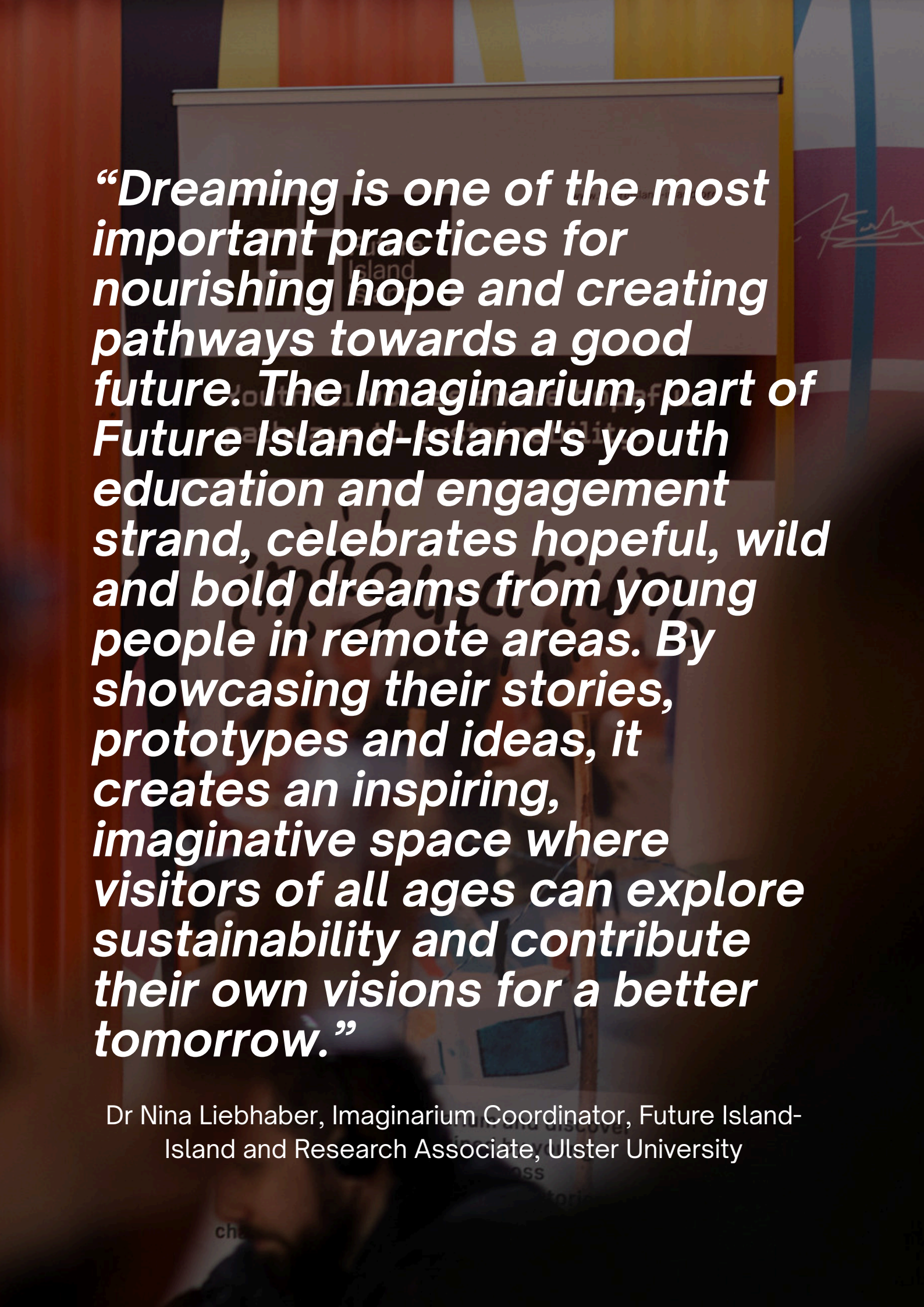
The Imaginarium showcased imaginative responses to global challenges from young people across Northern Ireland. The exhibition built on the successful collaboration of researchers ([Ulster University](#)), educators (Education Authority, youth groups and schools) and designers (The B!G Idea, [Big Motive](#)). The creative design education programme guided the participants through a process of understanding place-based issues and coming up with creative visions. In short videos, the participants from remote mountain, rural and coastal communities talk about how issues such as littering, textile waste and loneliness affect them and their local areas.



The programme's open-ended, and creative approach enabled the young people to consider the challenges and potential solutions with joy and hope. For the Imaginarium exhibition, professional designers brought their ideas to life with drawings and animations. The Imaginarium showcase featured a digital exhibition, multimedia storytelling and interactive design pieces. Inspired by the presented visions and hopeful stories of young people, visitors will be invited to sit down, start dreaming and leave their own wishes for better futures. The Installation was hosted in HALT on Thursday 07 May as part of Late Night Art.







“Dreaming is one of the most important practices for nourishing hope and creating pathways towards a good future. The Imaginarium, part of Future Island-Island's youth education and engagement strand, celebrates hopeful, wild and bold dreams from young people in remote areas. By showcasing their stories, prototypes and ideas, it creates an inspiring, imaginative space where visitors of all ages can explore sustainability and contribute their own visions for a better tomorrow.”

Dr Nina Liebhaber, Imaginarium Coordinator, Future Island-Island and Research Associate, Ulster University

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Students

Design Stories Exhibition

Belfast School of Art Graphic Design Students





About

Poster Design Exhibition by Belfast School of Art Year 2 Graphic Design Students which engaged local design students in a placemaking and communication project. The project focused on exploring Belfast and uncovering stories connected to its architecture, people, history, events, language, and distinctive motifs. This research inspired students to experiment with visual storytelling and develop concepts for “place branding” creating identities through typography and imagery to help wider audiences connect with the stories they have created. Their work was showcased in HALT throughout Belfast Design Week from 01 - 07 May 2026. On the evening of 07 May the students and their friends and family alongside members of the public had a celebration of the exhibition in HALT as part of Late Night Art.





“It was very enjoyable and rewarding for the students, and also for me.”

Terry Quigley Course Lecturer Graphic Design Belfast
School of Art

6

Students

Season A Visual Interpretation

Belfast School of Art Foundation Students





About

‘Season A Visual Interpretation’ was a poster exhibition by Belfast School of Art's Foundation Year Art & Design students Anna Clarke, Ash Kerr, Eve Monaghan, Richie Power, Louay Sharfo, Meadow Toye and Tilly Walker. They each created their own unique visual responses to the BDW26 theme of "Season." Their work was showcased in HALT throughout Belfast Design Week from 01 - 07 May 2026. Supported by Ulster University's Belfast School of Art lecturers Pauline Clancy, Silvia Mandic and Ronan Lunney. On the evening of 07 May the students and their friends and family alongside members of the public had a celebration of the exhibition in HALT as part of Late Night Art.

ireland
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WEAVE
CROSS



18

Students

CineArch Exhibition

Queen's University Architecture Students





About

The CineArch design studio explores Architecture through a cinematic approach, blending film and design as integrated tools for spatial thinking. At its core, architecture is about designing spaces for people to inhabit. The cinematic approach enables an inside-out design method, producing immersive atmospheres, enhancing spatial quality and shaping each area according to its intended use. Film explores space through movement, framing, and sequence. This logic can be applied to design, emphasizing the sequencing of spaces, as well as the movement through them. By drawing from these techniques, CineArch investigates how storytelling can inform architectural design and create purpose-driven spatial journeys.



This year's project centred on the proposal of a Peace Museum in Belfast, addressing the absence of a space dedicated to the city's history of conflict and its continuous process of reconciliation. The site was located within the Cathedral Quarter, adjacent to the historic Assembly Rooms. Each of these design proposals explored the adaptive reuse of the listed building, and a new intervention, focusing on creating a space for the public in the city centre. This exhibition brought together drawings exploring how cinematic thinking can shape architecture as an experiential space. The work was showcased in HALT throughout Belfast Design Week from 01 - 07 May 2026. On the evening of 07 May the students and their friends and family alongside members of the public had a celebration of the exhibition in HALT as part of Late Night Art.







The background is a blurred photograph of a gallery or exhibition space. Several framed artworks are visible on the wall. One poster at the top left mentions 'Veronica Tighonart Stage 2 Checkin'. Another poster on the right features a colorful, abstract pattern. In the foreground, a wooden railing is partially visible. The overall lighting is soft and the focus is on the text overlay.

"Belfast Design Week was a great opportunity for us as students to have a space where we could showcase our work. It was a valuable experience to see our projects be displayed beyond the classroom setting and to celebrate the work we've developed throughout the semester."

Holly Desmond Fujita
CineArch Student Queen's University Belfast

BDW26 Social Media

Instagram

6697

Interactions

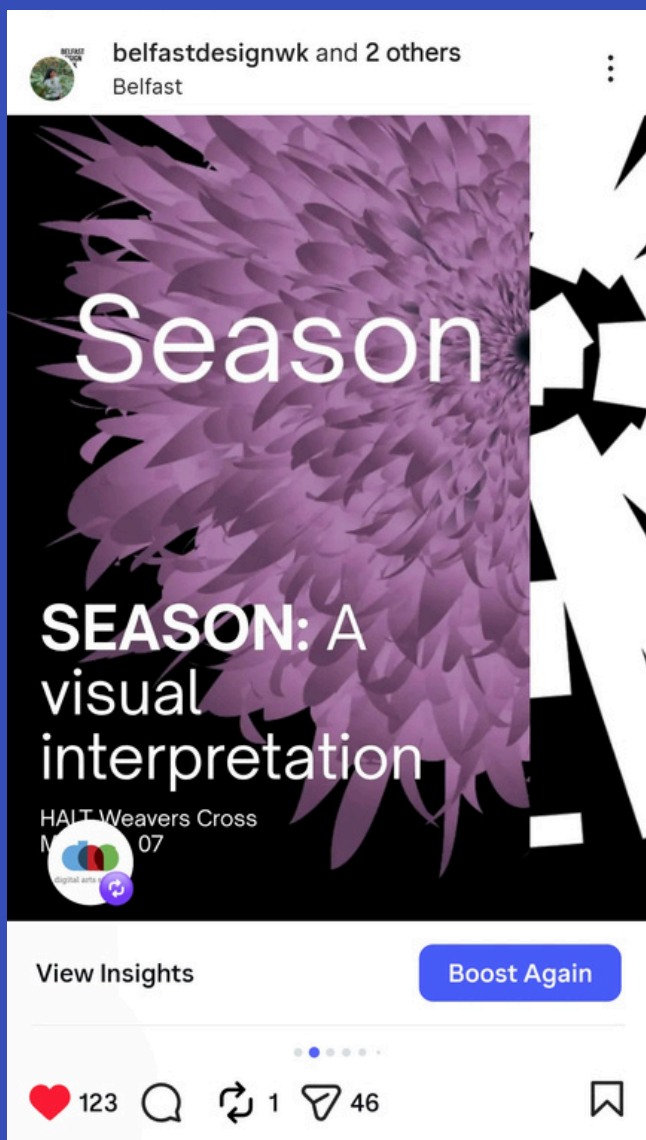
30133

Accounts Reached

241123

Viewers





LinkedIn

Belfast Design Week reposted this

 **Susann Power** ✓ • 1st
Senior Lecturer / Researcher: Entrepreneurship, Sustainability, Tourism & Ho...
1mo •

Education for Sustainable Development - sounds ominous and not particularly fun. However, [Jenny Jackson-Smyth](#) and I have created a learning method for school children using game design principles to better learn, explore and understand environmental topics. Building on our [Future Island-Island](#) work with Beach Clean 2.0, we have tried and tested fun and creative ways with children to tackle the topic of marine plastics. Join us for the [Belfast Design Week](#) talk on 5th May at Weavers Cross to learn more about it.

-  look into how beach cleaning can support environmental learning
-  explore how board games provide creative learning tools
-  find the fun, adventure and creativity in environmental education

Details in link below with booking like - event is free!
<https://lnkd.in/eNpvAxjq>



Designed to Learn: Creating environmental board games with children — Belfast Design Week
belfastdesignweek.com

 Karishma Kusurkar and 19 others 4 reposts

38,994

Impressions

49

Reposts

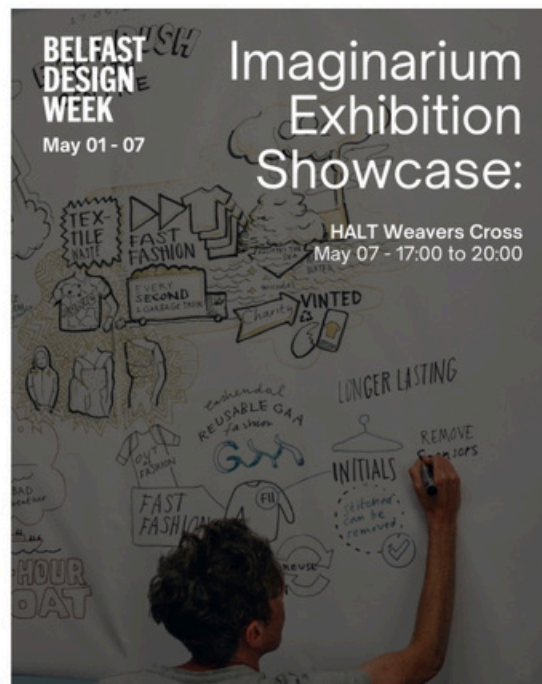
57

Comments

933

Reactions

Newsletter Marketing



The Imaginarium Showcase
17.00 to 20.00, HALT (Weaver's Cross)

The Imaginarium showcases imaginative responses to global challenges from young people across Northern Ireland. The exhibition builds on the successful collaboration of researchers ([Ulster University](#)), educators (Education Authority, youth groups and schools) and designers (The BIG Idea, [Big Motive](#)).

The Imaginarium showcase will feature a digital exhibition, multimedia storytelling and interactive design pieces. Inspired by the presented visions and hopeful stories of young people, visitors will be invited to sit down, start dreaming and leave their own wishes for better futures.

Call into [HALT](#) to see the exhibition - no booking required.

[Find out more](#)

BELFAST Design

How to Be Creative, Brian O'Neill, Web Entrepreneur and
Writer Building Multi Brand Design System, Venkateswaralu

16,007

Newsletters Sent

BELFAST DESIGN WEEK

May 01 - 07

We thank
you for all
your help
and support
for **Belfast
Design
Week 2026**
and hope we
can work
together in
the future!

For questions of further
information please contact
christine@blickstudios.org

