

Programme Overview & Speaker Lineup

(updated 18 August 2026)



Pan afrikan design week.26

Day 1: Afrika in Relation to Itself and the World

Wednesday 21 October 2026

Day 1 opens the continental and global conversation by asking how Afrika sees itself, how the world sees Afrika, and how design can help reframe identity, trust, dignity, cultural memory and value.

Key themes: Afrikan futures, trust, identity, dignity, Indigenous wisdom, cultural value, visual languages, design codes, and community-rooted innovation and regenerative tourism.

Speaker line-up includes:

- **Opening Keynote: Njeri Mwagiru (Kenya / South Africa)** - Senior Researcher at the Futures Programme, South African Institute of International Affairs; Co-Lead at IMPACT Coalition for Future Generations.
- **Keynote: Dominic Wilhelm (South Africa)** - International trust advisor, speaker and Executive Director of The Global Trust Project.
- **Dialogue Session 1: Indigenous Wisdom, Cultural Memory, Dignity and Design Value**
 - Featuring:
 - **Saki Mafundikwa (Zimbabwe)** - Designer, educator, scholar, author of Afrikan Alphabets, founder of the Zimbabwe Institute of Vigital Arts and TED speaker.
 - **Dr Russell Kennedy (Australia)** - Associate Head of School of Communication and Creative Arts, Deakin University; Co-Director of Design Mind; co-author of the Australian Indigenous Design Charter and International Indigenous Design Charter.
 - **Juliet Kavishe (Tanzania & Namibia)** - Founder of FORMALL Design Lab and advocate for African design futures.
- **Dialogue Session 2: Community-Rooted Innovation, Responsible Tourism and Place-Based Impact**
 - Featuring:
 - **Henry Mathys (South Africa)** - Programme Manager, Office of the CEO, V&A Waterfront, with a focus on social inclusion, placemaking and economic development.
 - **James Fernie (South Africa)** - Founder of Uthando South Africa.
 - **Thulani Nxumalo (South Africa)** - Langa-based guide, documentary filmmaker and community voice.
- **Special Session – DISA–PADI Imbizo: Designing to Thrive in South Africa**

A participatory conversation exploring what “**How do we design to thrive?**” means within the South African context, hosted by the Design Institute South Africa (DISA) and the Pan Afrikan Design Institute (PADI), with contributions from their board members, speakers and the audience.

Other:

- **Afternoon Workshop: 16:00–18:00**

Day 2: Designing for Thriving Across Sectors and Ecosystems

Thursday 22 October 2026

Day 2 focuses on the power of design, creativity and collaboration to create ripple effects across sectors, systems and communities - showing how local ideas, public platforms, creative economies and social-impact initiatives can unlock wider value.

Key themes: Food systems, community development, urban thinking, women-led craft, creative collaboration, social-impact innovation, public platforms, market access and ripple effects across sectors and ecosystems.

Speaker line-up includes:

- **Opening Keynote: Nthakoana Maema (South Africa)** - Social-impact entrepreneur and founder of Future Proof Collective, an impact venture studio supporting flourishing economies through feminist and social-ecological innovation across Africa.
- **Featured Session: Tiisetso Mofokeng (South Africa)** - Architect, urban research practitioner and Interior Design lecturer at Emeris Cape Town-City, Vega School; PhD candidate at Stellenbosch University.
- **Dialogue Session 3: Women-Led Enterprise, Place, Pride and Social Impact**
 - Featuring:
 - **Onika Lekuntwane (Botswana)** - Visual storyteller, educator and social-impact designer using creativity, heritage and health communication to inspire learning, empowerment and change.
 - **Lucinda Evans (South Africa)** - Founder and Director of Philisa Abafazi Bethu, a Steenberg-based organisation working to prevent gender-based violence and strengthen women's empowerment, child protection, community safety and support for vulnerable groups.
- **Case Study Dialogue: Creative Collaboration, Social Impact and Early Book Access**
 - Featuring the Book Dash team (South Africa):
 - **Thembaletu Shangase** - Executive Director, Book Dash.
 - **Arthur Atwell** - Founder and Board Member, Book Dash; Managing Director, Electric Book Works.
 - **Diane Awerbuck** - Award-winning writer and Book Dash creative volunteer.
 - **Subi Bosa** - South African author-illustrator of picture books, graphic novels and comics.
 - **Mmamuso Makhanya** - Executive Director, Wordworks.

Other:

- **Afternoon Workshop: 16:00–18:00**

Day 3: Future-Fit Education and Human Development

Friday 23 October 2026

Day 3 asks: What kind of humans do we need to develop for a society of future-builders who can confidently shape a thriving future for people and planet across Afrika?

This day treats education as a full ecosystem - from early childhood development and play, through school, tertiary education, community learning and lifelong learning.

Key themes: Future-fit education, Creative Intelligence, STEAM education, play, curiosity, ethical learning, empathy, AI, biomimicry, ecological intelligence, lifelong learning and future-building skills.

Speaker line-up includes:

- **Opening Keynote: Dr Rael Futerman (South Africa)** - Design researcher, educator and co-founder of Cartedo; Senior Researcher: Learning & Discovery Lab, d-school Afrika at UCT.
- **Featured Session: Suné Stassen (South Africa)** - CEO of Open Design Afrika; social-impact entrepreneur, educator, STEAM and Creative Intelligence practitioner, and futurist.
- **Featured Session: Robin Turner (South Africa)** - Graphic and multimedia designer, educator and Head of Department specialising in interactive design and human computing.
- **Closing Keynote: Jess Berliner (South Africa)** - Founder of Learn Biomimicry; biomimicry educator and communication designer.

Other:

- **Afternoon Workshop:** 15:30–17:45
- **Evening Networking Event:** 18:00 - 21:00

More programme details, final session topics and additional contributors will be announced closer to the event.

Afternoon Workshops

Each conference day includes a practical afternoon workshop linked to that day's theme.

The workshops are designed as high-value learning experiences and can also be booked separately. **You do not need to attend the full conference** in order to participate fully in a workshop.

The workshops are for anyone who wants to make a real difference through their work and contribute meaningfully to Afrika's future - including teachers, students, policymakers, designers, entrepreneurs, innovators, future-builders and change-makers.

Each conference day includes a practical afternoon workshop linked to that day's theme.

The workshops are designed as high-value learning experiences and can also be booked separately. You do not need to attend the full conference in order to participate fully in a workshop.

Workshop Focus Areas

Wednesday 21 October 2026

Designing a Shared Brief for a Thriving Afrika

This workshop invites participants to explore what a thriving Afrika could look and feel like, and what we need to understand, protect, challenge, reimagine and activate to help shape it. Participants will begin working with the idea of a shared design brief for a more responsible, relevant and thriving future.

Thursday 22 October 2026

Designing for Ripple Effects and Systems Change

This workshop helps participants look beyond the immediate user, customer, product or solution, and explore the wider systems and ecosystems affected by design decisions. It introduces practical ways to think about meaning, emotional connection, ripple effects and long-term impact.

Friday 23 October 2026

Developing Future-Builders for a Thriving Afrika

This workshop focuses on future-fit learning, Creative Intelligence, human agency and the development of future-builders and change-makers. Participants will explore the skills, mindsets and learning conditions needed to help people navigate uncertainty, think creatively, act responsibly and contribute meaningfully to society, communities and nature.

Workshop spaces are limited and must be booked in advance.

Please note: access to all three workshops is already included in the Full Experience Pass. Full Experience Pass holders do not need to purchase separate workshop tickets, but workshop seats **MUST still be reserved** in advance because capacity is limited.

Dates and times

Wednesday 21 October 2026: **16:00–18:00**

Thursday 22 October 2026: **16:00–18:00**

Friday 23 October 2026: **15:30–17:45**

Workshop spaces are limited and must be booked in advance.

Friday Evening Networking Event

The Friday evening Networking Event creates **space** for delegates, partners, speakers, creatives, entrepreneurs, students and wider members of the public **to connect in a more informal setting**.

The evening includes a welcome drink, entertainment and canapés. A **cash bar** will be available on site.

Please note: access to the Networking Event is **already included in all 3-Day Conference Passes and Full Experience Passes**.

Saturday Community / Cultural Learning Experience with Uthando South Africa

Saturday 24 October 2026

On Saturday 24 October 2026, Uthando South Africa will host **a curated community-based cultural learning experience** for a **limited group of delegates**.

This **hands-on experience extends** the main **conference theme** - "How Do We Design to Thrive?" - into **real community contexts**. It offers delegates the opportunity to **see and feel how local entrepreneurs, community leaders and social-impact projects** are already designing for thriving with creativity, resilience and limited resources.

Through this experience, **participants will connect more meaningfully** with **Cape Town's local lived realities** and **witness how community-rooted innovation is helping to improve lives**, strengthen dignity, support opportunity and care for people, place and nature.

The fee for this experience functions as **a meaningful contribution**, with **funds supporting the community projects visited** through Uthando South Africa's model.

Spaces are limited and advance booking is required.