Cumulus Design Declaration 2025

Reaffirming design's commitment to inclusivity, collaboration and planet-centred innovation amidst global challenges.

The present Cumulus Design Declaration has as its precedent the Kyoto Design Declaration of 2008, which was proposed to express the responsibility of design in an era marked by the challenges of sustainability and globalization. The Cumulus Association has been the platform for this, and over the years the values of the Declaration have been adopted by its members and partner institutions, such as international companies, governments and sister organizations. Given the pace of change and the contemporary challenges we face as a society, the association set out to revisit the Kyoto Design Declaration and reaffirm design's commitment to society and the planet. This has been done in an open and collaborative way by means of a two-year process involving surveys, workshops and discussion forums for the participation of associates representing 400 educational institutions and more than 40 institutional partners worldwide, all accompanied by semantic and data analysis to co-create an evolved version of the original Design Declaration.

From Human-Centered to Planet-Centered

We are in need of a paradigm shift from human-driven development to planet-centred design as the basis for an interdependent coexistence between humans and non-humans. The history of how we have impacted our planet leads us through the current Anthropocene epoch, which significantly questions how we can design with meaning and consciousness. Every design action has an impact on the entire system of life we call Earth, our only home. As humans, we recognize symbiotic conditions with other living systems to promote healthy interactions and regenerative efforts. The position of a forward-looking collective society shapes a way in which lifecycles, patterns and the rhythm of nature resonate with our consumption, health and development.

Rethinking Sustainability

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have led to massive changes in policy and production with the aim of achieving a better future. These goals make it clear that the role of design is critical to creating a more inclusive, connected and resilient society. Universal access to resources, food, places and information requires a wide range of design strategies and tools, but also a paradigm shift towards a new contract with nature. Climate emergencies, economic fluctuations and natural disasters reveal challenges that require alliances across institutions, disciplines, civil society and governments together with the design community to promote regenerative cultures. Design can redefine itself and take on new roles, from creating responsible products, services and systems to leading creative action towards the necessary transitions.

Inclusiveness and Togetherness

Unity is about diversity, respect and openness to different cultures and traditions. Conviviality must be redesigned to promote social justice and to strengthen trust. Ongoing collaboration across borders, sectors, disciplines and cultures is needed to expand the value of design. Interconnected communities of designers in future societies will face the next challenges, such as mass migration, gender issues and inequality. Design needs a permanent agenda promoting empathy and care as drivers for peace.

Design in Plural

We are experiencing a global citizenship promoted by an interconnected economy, with constant cultural exchanges and information flows that mainly go from dominant regions to the global south. Every region of the planet has its own uniqueness and values; decolonizing design needs to happen thus ensuring that innovation benefit localities. More than ever, we need to reconnect with diverse knowledge, from indigenous wisdom to science, to thrive as a multitude of species, and increase the impact of design in urban and rural environments, learning from every culture and tradition. A pluriversal approach is needed, represented by a deep responsibility to each community and the different ways of being in the world.

Disruption with Rapidly Changing Technologies

Emergent technologies are changing geopolitical and social conditions rapidly. More than ever, art and design universities, creative youth, designers and other professionals should offer their ability to understand and engage with change as a resource for our society. Artificial intelligence, synthetic biology and cognitive sciences are transforming our way of living and what we understand as humans. Information surveillance and related augmented technologies are post-human realities. Designers are well positioned to seize the opportunities offered for this disruption by envisioning possible futures and working in transdisciplinary teams that enable creativity in preferred directions and thus promote critical thinking as well as design action.

We hereby promote this declaration in accordance with our mission: we are a dynamic forum for the exchange of knowledge and best practices, and a committed advocate for the positive role of designers and artists in shaping a better world.