

29th Biennial
of Design

BIO 29

Soft

Fields

OPEN

CALL

for

Designers

Open until

26 FEB

2026

The 29th Biennial of Design BIO 29

The 29th Biennial of Design—[BIO 29 ↗](#)—will take place between 19.11.2026 and 4.4.2027. It is organised by the Museum of Architecture and Design [MAO ↗](#) in collaboration with the Centre for Creativity [CzK ↗](#), and invites designers, collectives and multidisciplinary practitioners to engage in a shared exploration of the pressing challenges of the contemporary world, through interaction with knowledge that exists but remains largely inaccessible to the public.

Under the title *Soft Fields*, curated by Martina Muzi, with Ro Pérez Gayo, associate research curator, BIO 29 examines how knowledge enclosed within research, industrial and infrastructural environments can be opened, redirected and redistributed through design practice. The curatorial concept asks how design operates not only inside structured systems, but also along their edges, where access is partial, information is uneven, and responsibilities are shared. How does industrial or scientific knowledge circulate beyond laboratories, factories and technical documents? How can it enter public, social and spatial experience? And how might design function as a collective agency rather than an individual solution?

A soft field is not a site, object, or category. It is a condition where intentions meet constraints, where knowledge is applied differently, and where values and relations are reorganised. As such, soft fields are spaces of negotiation rather than control. They emerge from the tension between globally exported design strategies and the urgency of local social, ecological and economic realities. In response, *Soft Fields* asks how design can engage these conditions without reinforcing them. Design is understood as a situated, multidisciplinary practice that takes position within friction, asymmetry, and structural opacity. Rather than resolving complexity, design operates within it, revealing hidden processes, translating specialised knowledge, and reshaping relations between institutions, environments, objects, and everyday life.

[READ MORE ↗](#)

[ABOUT](#)

[CURATORIAL](#)

[FRAMEWORK](#)

Production Platform OPEN CALL



The Production Platform supports new design-research projects developed in Slovenia in collaboration with local expertise, institutional partners, industry actors, and communities. It offers a flexible structure for collaboration, site visits and knowledge sharing, emphasizing situated experimentation and collective learning. Within BIO 29, the Production Platform supports projects developed across three of the Biennale's four frameworks: Experimental Practices, Extended Transmissions, and Afterclass.

We invite local and regional designers and interdisciplinary practitioners, working individually or collectively, to apply. Selected projects may involve online collaboration as well as on-site participation at the Museum of Architecture and Design (MAO), Ljubljana, between March and November 2026. The platform offers a flexible structure for collaboration, site visits, project and product development, prototyping, and knowledge exchange, emphasizing situated experimentation and collective learning.

APPLICATIONS
ARE OPEN UNTIL
26 FEBRUARY
2026.

Points of Departure

Applicants are invited to select a specific case in Slovenia as the point of departure for their application proposal. To support this process, the curatorial frame introduces five Fields as points of departure and sources of inspiration for exploring the potential of design practices within Soft Fields. Engage with one of the following fields: Eco-technical Entanglements, Industrial Cycles, Bordered Infrastructures, Maintenance, or Experience Regimes.

ECO-TECHNICAL
ENGLEMENTS

We invite designers who are especially interested in working with [mis]translations: where living systems and technical systems co-develop through data, tools and management practices, and where ecological processes and technical measurements diverge, overlap, or are reshaped through design.

Eco-technical Entanglements invites designers to explore how ecological and technical systems shape conditions through observation, measurement, modelling and material intervention. This includes environmental monitoring, sensors, satellite images, data

platforms, or tools used in forestry, agriculture, cities and climate research. Design engages with how living environments become data, services, tools and decisions, and how those shape environments, bodies and materials in return. In Slovenia, this can relate to forests and wood production, rivers and karst systems, biodiversity monitoring, smart urban and rural projects, and climate or energy infrastructures.

INDUSTRIAL CYCLES

We invite designers who are especially interested in working with [mis]alignments: where natural cycles, local and global processes, and industrial timing and design practices fall out of sync, come into sync, or are deliberately re-aligned, and where new design lines are made possible.

Industrial Cycles invites designers to work with the rhythms, repetitions and patterns of production. It looks at how materials, energy and labour move through cycles of extraction, manufacturing, circulation, use and disposal. Design engages with industrial fragmentation, factories, machines and standards, and with the tensions between local values and global supply chains. In Slovenia, this can relate to local factories and production lines, manufacturing or design outsourcing phenomena, post-industrial towns' futures, growing service-based industries, AI, alternative materials development, recycled materials applications or industrial heritage.

BORDERED INFRASTRUCTURES

We invite designers who are especially interested in working with [mis]configurations: where flows of bodies, goods and data are blocked, filtered or channelled through borders, black boxes and thresholds, and where these controls are reinforced, bypassed or re-designed through technical, legal and spatial interventions.

Bordered Infrastructures invites designers to navigate physical borders and trade routes, encrypted devices, proprietary technologies, patents and other forms of enclosure. Design engages with infrastructures of mobility, control and access across political, ecological and industrial landscapes. In Slovenia, this can relate to Schengen borders and trade corridors, the Port of Koper, and logistics zones, markets, data facilities, communication networks, energy and transport infrastructures, as well as closed industrial processes or technological black boxes. Designers are invited to work with these systems as material: their rules, restrictions, interfaces and points of friction.

MAINTENANCE

We invite designers who are especially interested in working with [mis]continuities: where systems, tools, knowledge, practices and values are sustained, allowed to decay, and where design can help shape, question or redirect what continues, what is discontinued and what is reintroduced through practices of care, upkeep and ethical responsibility.

Maintenance invites designers to focus on repair and ongoing work as design practices that support ways of living and continuation. It looks at how systems continue to function through upkeep, stewardship and collective agency. Design engages with public services, environmental protection, toxicity, human rights, workers memory, heritage or everyday infrastructures. In Slovenia, this can relate to caves and fragile ecosystems, forests and water systems, archives and heritage sites, transport, housing or public space. Designers are invited to work with these systems as material: their routines, protocols, forms of ownership and living labour, and the tensions between preservation, use and change.

EXPERIENCE REGIMES

We invite designers who are especially interested in working with [mis]framings: where emotions, perception, attention and identity are shaped, measured and monetised through platforms and media systems, and where these regimes are reinforced, redirected or disrupted through design.

Experience Regimes invites designers to explore branding, advertising, simulation & slop, vibe engineering, touristic hot spots, world-building and digital services that shape how places, products and identities are perceived and engaged with. Design navigates interfaces, bots, images, and narratives that organise attention and turn perception into value. In Slovenia, this can relate to tourism, short-term rental and place branding, digital services, gaming and CGI industries, social media, and cultural or commercial platforms. Designers are invited to work with these systems as material: their languages, visual communications, algorithms and automated feedback loops, emotional scripts, and the frictions between physical and virtual expressions.

DESIGNER'S
PROPOSALS
SHOULD BE:

- ✓ Strongly grounded in a real case in Slovenia as a context for research, collaboration, design experimentation, production, and/or activation.
- ✓ Reflective of an interest in working across disciplines, institutions, and forms of expertise, and in fostering decentralised and plural modes of practice.
- ✓ Interdisciplinary in methodology, drawing on techniques and languages from journalism, image-making, industrial design, coding, scenography, interaction design, and/or other fields.
- ✓ Explorative and experimental, driven by the applicant's ambition, vision and practice.

THE PRODUCTION
PLATFORM
WILL SUPPORT
DESIGNERS

- With access to specific forms of knowledge, communities, and actors connected to their case of enquiry.
- In developing their research-based project through operational resources, curatorial guidance, and coordinated collaboration with local contexts, institutions and experts, while self-organising their working process within the BIO 29 framework.
- To meet the key milestones (outlined below) within the overall timeline of the biennial.

Applications
are open
until
26 February
2026 ↗

Terms & Conditions of BIO 29 — Production Platform

PURPOSE

In line with principles of transparency, equality and fairness, this open call aims to select up to a maximum of six [6] participants to take part in the Production Platform of BIO 29.

The programme seeks to:

- Promote research, reflection, and experimentation with configurations of actors that position design as a driver for new social, cultural and institutional visions.
- Encourage the inclusion of design practices in the negotiation, development and implementation of initiatives responding to contemporary crises.
- Facilitate connections between actors from different disciplines and contexts through collaborative, situated practices.
- Foster exchange between projects and participants across locations.
- Provide participants with theoretical, creative and relational support throughout the process.
- Enable complex, collective and multi-voiced forms of creation.

ELIGIBILITY & TARGET PARTICIPANTS

The BIO 29 Soft Fields Production Platform is open to local and international designers and interdisciplinary practitioners who wish to participate either individually or as part of a collective or project group. Applications may be submitted by established professionals, collectives or teams, as well as newly formed project groups. The selection will give particular consideration to applicants based in Slovenia, who are expected to constitute at least one third of the participants.

Participation is subject to the following eligibility requirements:

- Applicants must be at least 18 years of age at the time of application.
- Applicants must demonstrate sufficient proficiency in English to effectively communicate, collaborate, and participate in all programme activities.
- Applicants must operate through a registered company or recognised legal entity capable of entering into contractual agreements.
- Team or group applicants must appoint a team leader responsible for workflow, timelines, budget oversight, spending, and reporting, if selected.
- Selected participants must be able to engage with the Production Platform both online and on-site at the Museum of Architecture and Design (MAO) in Ljubljana during the programme period, which runs from March to November 2026.

By submitting an application, participants confirm that they meet the above criteria and agree to comply with the Terms and Conditions of the BIO 29 Production Platform.

SELECTION PROCES

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS & SUBMISSION METHOD

All individuals or groups interested in participating in the BIO 29 Soft Fields Production Platform, and who meet the established eligibility requirements, must submit an application to the open call by the 26th of February at 23:59 (CET) via [[PLATFORM / LINK ↗](#)]. Only complete applications that fulfil all requirements will be considered. Applications must be submitted exclusively through the official open call platform. Applications sent via email or other channels will not be considered unless explicitly stated otherwise by the organisers.

Applications must be submitted in English and consist of basic personal information and a single PDF file (maximum 15 MB) structured as follows:

- | | |
|------------|---|
| Page 1 | Personal introduction, short biography and selected CV. |
| Pages 2–3 | Description of the chosen case of enquiry, including text and images, with a critical reflection on its relevance, urgency, and underlying motivations. |
| Pages 4–5 | Description of potential methodology, strategy, design tools, or media that could be applied in the chosen case of enquiry. |
| Pages 6–10 | Portfolio with selected projects that present the applicant's research methods, design approach and practice. |

SELECTION
PROCESS STAGES

The selection process consist of two stages:

-PRE-
SELECTION

– All submitted applications will be reviewed by the Jury. Applications that do not meet the formal requirements will be excluded. From the remaining applications, a shortlist of candidates will be selected for online interviews. All applicants will be notified of the outcome by email by 2nd of March. Shortlisted candidates will receive an invitation to an interview.

-FINAL
SELECTION

– following the interviews, which are expected to take place between the 4th and 6th of March, the Jury will select the final participants based on the established evaluation criteria. Selected candidates will be notified by email on the 10th of March, and asked to confirm their participation by the 13th of March. If a selected candidate does not confirm their participation within the given timeframe, the Jury reserves the right to select an alternative candidate.

The planned dates for interviews and notifications may change for organisational reasons. In such cases, all candidates will be informed as soon as possible via email.

The decisions of the Jury are final and non-appealable. The Organisers reserve the right not to award all available participation slots.

JURY

Martina Muzi, BIO 29 Curator (Head of Jury)
Ro Pérez Gayo, BIO 29 Associate Research Curator
Maša Ogrin, Head of BIO
Anja Zorko, Head of CzK - Centre for Creativity

EVALUATION
CRITERIA

Applications will be assessed according to:

- ✓ Quality of trajectory, experience, and portfolio
- ✓ Diversity of approaches, disciplines, and backgrounds
- ✓ Experience with, and interest in, collective and collaborative processes
- ✓ Motivation to engage in long-term, context-based research
- ✓ Relevance and clarity of the proposed Departure Point.

DURATION,
STRUCTURE
& ATTENDANCE

DURATION

The BIO 29 Production Platform has a total duration of 8 months, taking place between the 16th March 2026 and November 2026. The Production Platform follows a hybrid format to remain compatible with participants' other commitments.

STRUCTURE

The Production Platform is structured into three main phases: Exploration and Concept Development; Project Implementation; and Exhibition, Publication and Communication. While these phases may overlap in their development, each phase concludes with a defined deliverable.

The Exploration and Concept Development phase results in the submission of a project proposal and internal presentation to other participants on the 8th of May. The Project Implementation phase concludes with the delivery of the realised project and its documentation on the 21st of August. The Exhibition, Publication and Communication phase includes the preparation of an exhibition plan, materials for exhibition, publication, and communication channels (mid-September). The exact format and content requirements for each deliverable will be communicated by BIO 29.

ATTENDANCE

Curatorial Meetings – participants are expected to take part in curatorial meetings throughout the programme. Meeting frequency may vary according to the different phases of the programme, with increased frequency during the initial stages and reduced frequency in later phases, but in no case less than once per month, in coordination and agreement with the participants.

COLLECTIVE MOMENTS

Participants are required to attend the main online collective moments of the programme, including the Kick-Off on the 16th of March, 2026; the Mid-Term on the 8th of May, 2026; and the Final sessions in the first week of September. These moments are essential for shared orientation, project coordination, and the presentation of outcomes.

Participants are expected to take part consistently in the programme's activities and to submit all required deliverables on time. In cases of prolonged absence or non-compliance with agreed commitments, the MAO reserves the right to discontinue the participant's involvement if the Terms and Conditions of the collaboration are not respected.

BUDGET

Selected individuals or groups will be allocated funds to carry out the project, including designer or team fees, costs related to project development & implementation, and exhibition related expenses.

The total budget available for the development of the projects of this specific open call is EUR 50,000 (including 22% VAT). Funds are allocated as collective resources and distributed according to project typologies, scale, and negotiated needs. The final allocation is subject to approval by BIO 29, and based on submitted proposals, technical requirements, and feasibility.

DESIGNERS/
TEAMS FEES

Fees for independent designers and collectives depend on the scale of the project, level of engagement, and the size of the collective and will be allocated after the selection process is completed. Payment of the designers fees is structured as follows: 60% at the end of the Exploration and Concept Development phase, and 40% after successful completion of the programme.

PROJECT
DEVELOPMENT &
IMPLEMENTATION

Funds for project development and implementation will be allocated after the submission and approval of the project proposal.

EXHIBITION &
PROMOTION

Funding for exhibition production and promotional materials will be allocated after the submission and approval of an exhibition proposal.

BIO 29 will not reimburse travel, accommodation or subsistence costs. Participants of the selected teams are required to handle any arrangements other than those provided by the biennial at their own expense, and within their own organisation.

QUESTIONS OR
ENQUIRES

For questions or enquires please write bio@mao.si

[APPLY HERE ↗](#)



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
MINISTRY OF CULTURE