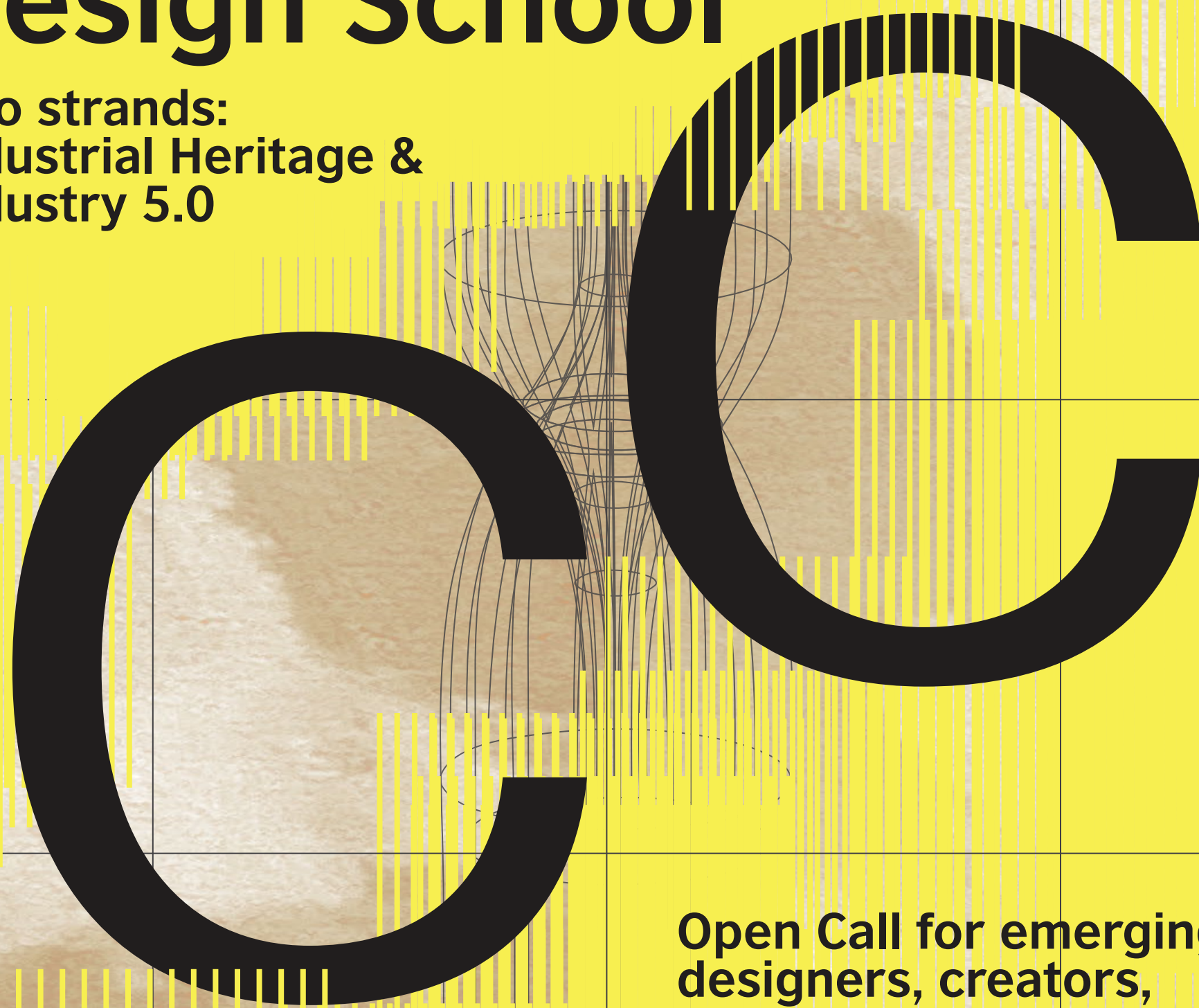


# Circular Cultures Design School

**Two strands:  
Industrial Heritage &  
Industry 5.0**



**Open Call for emerging  
designers, creators,  
planners, and makers  
from Romania**



# OPEN CALL

## Circular Cultures Design School 2026

The **Circular Cultures Design School** (CC Design School) is a capacity-building programme for emerging designers, creators, planners, and makers. It serves as a platform for peer learning, collaborative experimentation, and skills development focused on sustainable design and circularity. The design school aims to support creative professionals by fostering critical dialogue and strengthening both their knowledge and practical abilities in circular design practices.

### **Programme period**

23–27 February 2026

### **Programme location**

Timișoara, ARChA - a flagship space of the Faculty of Architecture and Urban Planning at Politehnica University Timișoara

### **Eligibility**

Eligible applicants are **citizens of Romania or individuals who live and/or work in Romania** (permanent or temporary residents).

### **Participation details**

Participation is free of charge. The programme covers:

- **transportation costs within Romania only**, from the participant's city of residence to Timișoara (**train or bus ticket**);

- accommodation in shared twin rooms;
- one meal per day.

### **Application deadline**

18 January 2026, 23:59 EET (Romania local time, UTC+2)

## About the Circular Cultures Design School

Organised by the **British Council Romania** in collaboration with **Politehnica University Timișoara** and part of the wider Making Matters: Circular Cultures programme, the **CC Design School** builds on the experience of previous editions held by British Council Greece and Onassis Foundation in Athens. Now, for the first time in Romania, the programme brings its ethos of transdisciplinary learning, sustainable design, and cultural reflection to one of Eastern Europe's most historically layered industrial cities.

Inspired by Timișoara's rich industrial heritage and driven by an urgent need for innovation, the CC Design School 2026 becomes a space of convergence: **engineers meet designers, cultural workers collaborate with makers, architects, urbanists, and new meanings of circularity are collectively imagined and prototyped.**

The first edition focuses on two thematic strands:

■ **Strand A Community line**, dedicated to emerging professionals and addressing the need to involve communities in industrial reconversion;

■ **Strand B Connection line**, dedicated to students and exploring the intersection between Industry 5.0 and sustainable production.

## Situating industrial heritage in Timișoara

In Timișoara, the echo of industry has never truly faded. From imperial innovation to socialist production and today's advanced manufacturing ecosystems, the city has long been a catalyst for transformation. Today, as the ideals of Industry 5.0 gain ground — with their focus on **sustainability, human-centric automation, and ethical use of technology** — Timișoara emerges not only as a repository of industrial memory, but also as a launchpad for the future of work, design, and production.

# CC Design School strands

## Strand A: Community Line

How can we read the traces of the past not as remnants, but as resources? The **Community Line explores Timișoara's industrial heritage — its buildings, its tools, its stories and memories, and the people who shaped them — as fertile ground for new shared spaces and identities.** This strand invites emerging designers, architects, urbanists, and cultural professionals to imagine new futures for industrial sites through approaches that encourage communities to collaborate in equitable and meaningful ways. Through hands-on, skills-building workshops and site-specific interventions, participants will learn how to transform forgotten spaces into engines of sustainable transformation, collective imagination, and social cohesion.

### Course leader: Grace Crannis

Grace is a designer and community engagement specialist. Her work focuses on people, places and exploring ways to collaborate from exhibition design and community storytelling, to public realm projects and research.

Through her role as Planning Engagement Lead at a combined Local Authority in London, UK, Grace works to enable more diverse participation with the planning system and bring creative practice to policy design. Grace is co-founder of design studio Syrup and is an Associate Lecturer at University of the Arts London (UAL). Grace holds an MA in Information Experience Design from the Royal College of Art and is a trustee of Turf Projects, Croydon's homegrown artist space.





## Strand B: Community Line

What does Industry 5.0 look like on the factory floor, in the design lab, or even across an entire city's ecosystem? **The Connection Line explores the intersection between emerging technologies and virtuous circular economies.** It emphasises human-machine collaboration, AI integration and an industrial (re)design for a circular city that is socially and environmentally harmonious - one capable of nurturing more resilient, circular cultures.

Targeted at engineering students from diverse disciplines - mechanical, computer, electrical, civil, and transport - this strand invites participants to engage with real-world creative challenges and prototype solutions that bridge technical efficacy with ethical foresight through circular methods that promote 'social fabric'. Participants will work in teams to imagine and test applications where technology serves not only productivity, but also adaptability, inclusivity, cultural identity and resilience.

### Course leader:

**Nick Gant & James Tooze**

Nick Gant is an award winning designer, published author and academic in fields of social and sustainable design. Nick has helped over 50 companies, NGOs and governing bodies to engage with and develop their sustainability agendas through the co-design of products, spaces, systems and services. Collaborators include Philips, PUMA, the Forestry Commission, Veolia, the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, the NHS, UK Design Council. Nick's work was featured in international press as well as peer viewed research fora and he has exhibited globally. Nick has presented research findings to the UK Government and the House of Lords, the Rural Commission, the European Institutes of Culture, the British Council, the World Crafts Council and UNESCO. Nick is the Co-Director of The Centre for Arts and Wellbeing and founder of design research agency Community21(.org).





James Tooze's research focus links regenerative design, material circularity and distributed manufacture. Where the localisation of material and labour assets, learning and supply chains offer opportunities to disrupt centralised (and non-regenerative) modes of production and consumption.

James has led national and international research into the value of shared and open knowledge transfer between stakeholders to enable more socially just and less environmental impactful to enact economic development. Significant projects including the EPSRC-funded Future Makespaces in Redistributed Manufacturing and Citizen Nature Watch, The Ecological Citizenship Network and The Future Observatory.

## Eligibility & conditions of the program

We invite emerging designers, creators, planners, and makers from all disciplines to participate in the CC Design School and contribute to the growth of the circular design community by sharing their experiences, knowledge and curiosity. We are looking for participants with innovative ideas that promote dialogue and reflection around social, cultural and ethical issues, while adhering to the principles of sustainability and circularity.

We celebrate talent from all backgrounds and we welcome applicants of all ages, genders, and diverse linguistic, cultural, and minority backgrounds, including those from underrepresented communities and people who identify as disabled, neurodivergent or have long-term health conditions.

*Please note that if selected, participation is mandatory throughout the entire duration of the programme. **The working days are 23–27 February.** Travel days can be either the 22nd or 23rd, and the 28th of February, depending on travel time and available connections.*

**English is the language we will use** for all project working sessions, discussions and materials.

The programme is open to 30 participants:

■ 15 for Strand A > Community line:

emerging professionals in design, architecture, urbanism, creative industries, and cultural management;

■ 15 for Strand B > Connection line:

Students in their 3rd or 4th year, master's, or early-stage PhD in engineering fields at Universities in Romania.

*Please select one of the strands in the application form, based on your preference and background.*

*Participation is free. The program covers **travel costs** from the selected applicant's city of residence to Timișoara (train or bus ticket), **accommodation** in the guesthouse of Politehnica University Timișoara (shared twin rooms) and **one meal** a day at the canteen of the University.*

## **Selection criteria & application process**

Applications will be evaluated based on the relevance of the applicant's interests to the themes of the CC Design School, the clarity of their motivation, and the potential for the programme to meaningfully support their professional or academic development. The selection committee will consider the applicant's ability to **actively contribute to a shared learning environment, their openness to collaboration, and the value their perspective can bring to the programme's interdisciplinary community**. We also aim to bring together a diverse group of participants and encourage applications from individuals with varied backgrounds, experiences, and viewpoints. Some applicants may be invited to a short online conversation as part of the evaluation process.

Applicants are invited to submit their application in English by completing this **online form** by **18 January 2026, 23:59 EET**. The form will ask for information about the applicant's interests, motivation, and relevant experience, as well as any additional supporting material requested.

All submissions will be reviewed by the British Council team and UK tutors according to the criteria outlined above. Applicants will be informed of the outcome by **23 January 2026**.

Due to limited capacity, we are not able to provide individual feedback on unsuccessful applications. Selected participants will be asked to confirm their attendance and are expected to join the full duration of the programme.

*If you have any questions please contact us at **roprojects@britishcouncil.org**.*

## The CC Design School Timișoara is curated & organised by:

- Hannah Robinson \_\_\_\_ Senior Manager Architecture, Design and Fashion, British Council
- Katia Stewart \_\_\_\_ Senior Relationship Manager, Architecture, Design and Fashion, British Council
- Tamina Bojoancă \_\_\_\_ Arts Manager, British Council Romania
- Anabella Costache (Strand A) \_\_\_\_ Independent Cultural Manager
- Ionel Mărginean (Strand B) \_\_\_\_ Politehnica University Timișoara

## About Circular Cultures at the British Council

Circular Cultures is British Council's **sustainable design and creative economies programme** in EU Europe, which aims to promote greater awareness around sustainable design, circularity and making cultures. Circular Cultures is part of the British Council global programme Making Matters, which aims to foster a global dialogue around the topic of circular design. The global programme has participants from multiple countries across Africa, East Asia and South Asia.

In the EU, the programme currently operates across the UK, France, Greece, Italy, Poland, Romania, and Spain. Partners have included the Onassis Foundation, Re-Barcelona, MODA-FAD, City of Warsaw, Romanian Design Week, BASE Milan, University of the Arts London, Politehnica University of Timișoara, Design Manchester and British Textile Biennial.

The programme is structured around three pillars all supporting cultural exchange through the medium of design and making:

- **Convening and audience awareness** through ongoing collaboration with EU Design Biennales and Festivals and the past Circular Cultures Conference
- **Participatory learnings and training** through the Circular Cultures Design School
- **Co-creation and networking** including a range of site-specific design residency programmes such as Circular Catalysts, Flowing Streams and Reclaiming post-industrial futures.