



Emma van der Leest and Anab Jain Beacons of DDW26

Design pioneers Emma van der Leest and Anab Jain are the Beacons of Dutch Design Week 2026

Eindhoven, 1 September 2026 - Dutch Design Week (DDW) has invited design pioneers Emma van der Leest and Anab Jain (Superflux) as Dutch and international 'Beacons' to share their expertise with colleagues and visitors in Eindhoven from 17 to 25 October 2026. Both Beacons are committed to improving and preserving the planet. Through biodesign, Van der Leest utilises the smallest living organisms, such as fungi, whilst Jain presents large-scale works exploring future-oriented design technology.

Beacons are pioneers in the field of design and have been associated with DDW for one or more years. Renowned Beacons over the years have included Julia Watson, Piet Hein Eek, Lidewij Edelkoort and Yinka Ilori.

Beacons organise a project, event or exhibition in collaboration with DDW for the public and professionals. During the design festival, Emma van der Leest will give a presentation on biodesign and Anab Jain will deliver a lecture. Tickets will be available from now at ddw.nl.

Miriam van der Lubbe, Creative Head Dutch Design Week explains the decision, highlighting the enthusiasm, network and expertise of the Beacons that DDW considers important: *"For years, Emma van der Leest has been a pioneer, demonstrating that biodesign is not just a pipe dream, but is becoming a tangible reality. She is the frontrunner who not only explores, but also takes us on a journey to discover what is already possible."*

Anab Jain demonstrates that imagination not only inspires, but also provides direction. She makes visionary ideas accessible to a wider audience and not only encourages us to reflect on the future, but invites us to shape it together."

Emma van der Leest, Beacon 2026: *"It is a tremendous honour to be a Beacon, not least for the entire field of biodesign. At DDW, I'll be demonstrating how biodesign is evolving into a growing industry, and what developments arise when you start manufacturing using living systems. With 'The Biodesign Warehouse – Department Store For Life', biodesign is not just a future scenario; I aim to connect the familiar and accessible world of a department store with that of science and biology. By gaining a better understanding of how we can collaborate with organisms that can help us tackle major challenges, I hope to shift the way we view micro-organisms and inspire visitors to marvel at what is already possible... and to realise that there is still much that needs to change."*

Anab Jain (Superflux), Beacon 2026: *"As we come towards the end of one of Europe's hottest recorded summers and head into an autumn of turbulent weather in the face of a super El Niño, compounded by deeper technological and geopolitical shifts, the question is, what role design can play in this changing world?"*

It is an honour to be a Beacon at Dutch Design Week, and this is the question I will be bringing to the gathering. Design can play a pivotal role in helping us anticipate, prepare and imagine other futures, other ways of living and being. It can make those futures tangible and viscerally experiential, something we step into and not only talk about, and that changes what we are willing to do in the present.

Superflux has spent nearly two decades working on this, and at DDW I will share some of the practical, tangible ways we do it, alongside what other practitioners and young designers are making. I hope we can build a stronger sense of community, with an appetite for debate about the future of design, and find new directions to explore together.

I hope people can leave knowing there are many different practices of design, and that design shapes our futures in the questions it asks as much as in the forms it takes. "

About the Beacons 2026

Emma van der Leest (1991) is a Dutch biodesigner, researcher, lecturer and author from Rotterdam. She is a pioneer in the field of biodesign, which involves integrating living organisms – such as bacteria, fungi, algae or cells – into the design process. Her mission is to seek out new materials that are fully compostable and to minimise the use of hazardous raw materials in order to reduce damage to the ecosystem. In her quest, she has collaborated with international scientists, physicists, artists and designers. Van der Leest is the founder and ambassador of BlueCity Lab in Rotterdam, a circular ecosystem for designers and entrepreneurs. She was a curator at the Museum of 21st Century Design, a digital museum, and has worked at renowned art and design institutions, as well as teaching and giving guest lectures at, amongst others, Central Saint Martins in London, the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing and the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT).

In Hall D of the Klokgebouw, Emma van der Leest shows where biodesign stands today: how people are using it, how it is already finding its way into everyday life, and how this design practice is increasingly being scaled up.

Anab Jain (Superflux) is a designer, futurist, filmmaker, lecturer and co-founder of the Superflux studio. Since 2009, the award-winning design studio – comprising Jon Arden and an artistic collective – has for decades been regarded as the leading studio in the fields of speculative design, critical futures studies and experience-oriented futures, and its mission is to leave a meaningful legacy for our planet and its future stewards. Their imaginative work invites us to feel that we ourselves have an influence on the choices we make today.

In 2022, Superflux received the highest honour for designers in the United Kingdom, the prestigious Royal Designer for Industry (RDI) award from the British Royal Society of Arts. Their work has been exhibited at MoMA in New York, the V&A Museum, the Science Gallery in Dublin, the National Museum of China, the Vitra Design Museum and Tate Modern. She has also been awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of the Arts London. Since 2016, she has been Professor of Design Investigations at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna. This year she co-authored the publication of the book *Designing Questions*.

Anab Jain will give a public lecture during the first weekend, as well as private keynote talks for designers.

Dutch Design Week

17–25 October 2026, Eindhoven, the Netherlands

[Dutch Design Week](#) (DDW) is the platform for high-quality design. It is all about the design of the future and the future of design. DDW opens up, inspires, shares and connects. During the nine-day event, Eindhoven is completely dedicated to design, with all possible disciplines and aspects of design represented. The emphasis is on expertise and talent, experimentation, innovation and crossovers.

Dutch Design Foundation

[Dutch Design Foundation](#) (DDF) is optimistic and believes in the problem-solving power of designers to make the world a better place. That is why DDF offers designers opportunities, support, publicity and a platform. DDF organises Dutch Design Week, Dutch Design Awards, Coalitions and The Public Design Practice (PONT) and operates far beyond the Netherlands. Throughout the year, through debates, lectures, exhibitions and events, DDF provides a platform for the best and most promising designers, helping them to share their ideas and work with the world.

Editor's note (not for publication)

Interview requests with the Beacons can be made via the press office.

There will be special press tours for the media during the first weekend of DDW26, for which you can register from September onwards.

Press accreditation is also still open. You can register via [this](#) link.

For further information or media enquiries, please contact:

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All press releases, related images, brand assets and more can be found at ddw.nl/press. Images can be found [here](#).