

inter depen dence

exploring
opposites

PRESS KIT

INTERDEPENDENCE 2025

Interdependence - the Design System of Politecnico di Milano at the Milan Design Week 2025

The Polimi Design System (the School of Design, the Department of Design, and POLI.Design) presents “**INTERDEPENDENCE: exploring opposites**”, a set of initiatives to reflect on how design interacts with **polarities** and **contrasting dimensions**, through a selection of projects by students from Politecnico and from a network of about 40 design universities around the world.

In a society characterized by a growing sense of increasing polarization, how can design deal with opposites and the nuances in-between polarities to drive towards constructive change?

INTERDEPENDENCE: EXPLORING OPPOSITES

Opposites exist in an **inherently interdependent state**: in philosophy, physics, psychology and spirituality, the opposites are complementary forces, where one cannot exist without the other. Indeed, opposing forces influence and rely on each other to create balance or transformation: they are connected by a continuous spectrum of ways of being that blend and **reconcile the extremes**.

As the gap between these opposites grows, it can lead to increased tension, misunderstanding, and conflict, making it harder to find common ground. Yet, the interdependence between these polarities can also drive debate, reflection, and the evolution of ideas, if managed constructively.

In **Design**, these polarities are not problems to be solved but **dynamics to be managed**.

The opposites span various realms and dimensions of life, including:

Center / Boundaries
Human / More than Human
Artificial / Natural
Materialistic / Spiritual
Enabling / Relieving
Individual / Collective
For-Few / For-All
Selfness / Otherness
Harmony / Discord
Obedience / Disobedience

With the aim of exploring the interdependence of opposites, the Polimi Design System organizes a **widespread event**, in close relationship with the Design Week and the city, taking place in three main venues - **Fabbrica del Vapore**, **Campus Bovisa Durando**, and **SaloneSatellite**. In addition to them, a constellation of other smaller initiatives populates the city.

At the **Fabbrica del Vapore**, INTERDEPENDENCE takes the form of an international exhibition, bringing together projects by students from Politecnico di Milano and a selection of design universities worldwide. The exhibition showcases projects

through visuals, prototypes and videos, and is further enriched by a diverse program of initiatives, including talks, workshops, performances, and networking activities.

At the **Campus Bovisa Durando**, INTERDEPENDENCE is interpreted through the DesignXDesigners exhibition, which showcases works by students from various study programs at the School of Design of Politecnico di Milano.

At the **SaloneSatellite**, INTERDEPENDENCE is present with a monographic selection of eight experimental and thought-provoking communication design projects, titled “Anthropogenic Scenarios”, encouraging visitors to reflect on the relationship between Human / More than Human, and between Artificial / Natural.

All these projects do not seek to provide answers or certainties, rather challenge us to **imagine new questions and rethink both the present and the future**.

Inspired by the theme, the **visual identity** of INTERDEPENDENCE 2025 serves as the common thread across all locations, visually rendering the constant flux of polarities. Similarly, the **exhibit design**, developed with an interdisciplinary team of students from the School of Design, creates spaces where polarities can be explored in all their nuances.

Raw materials, metals, webs, black and white colors, darkness and sharp lights, design dramatic environments in which prototypes and videos pop out and engage visitors to explore ideas from the world.

“Design can be a **tool for dialogue and reflection** against polarizations. We believe in the importance of putting creativity at the service of a constructive attitude and, as a School of Design, we constantly foster in our students a critical mindset. Opposing values, ultimately, can drive political positioning and consequently action. How can design deal with opposites and polarizations? How can design deal with the nuances in-between polarities?” explains Francesco Zurlo, Dean of the School of Design at Politecnico di Milano.

“Our Design System has a **long-standing tradition of international collaborations**. Now, for the second year, we are leveraging these connections to shape a unique event during the Design Week 2025. INTERDEPENDENCE, in fact, exists thanks to the exchange fostered by this vast network of schools that we have built over time”.



WEB

<https://www.interdependence.polimi.it>

<https://dipartimentodesign.polimi.it/it>

SOCIAL

@school.design.polimi
@interdependence.polimi
@department.design.polimi
@polidesign

VISITS

Interdependence @ Fabbrica del Vapore

Fabbrica del Vapore, Via Giulio Cesare Procaccini 4, Milano

Opening: Saturday, April 5, 17:30

The exhibition can be visited from April 5 to April 15

h. 17:30 – 19:00 on April 5

h. 10:00 – 19:00 on April 6, 14, 15

h. 10:00– 22:00 on April 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13

DesignXDesigners @ Polimi Campus Bovisa

Campus Bovisa Candiani, via Durando 10, Milano

Opening: Wednesday, April 9, 13:30

The exhibition can be visited from April 9 to May 29

h. 10:00 – 19:00 from Monday to Saturday

Interdependence @ Salone Satellite

Rho Fiera Milano, Corso Italia, Rho, Stand A10

The exhibition can be visited from April 8 to April 13 - h. 9:30 – 18:30

COLOPHON

Scientific Direction and Curation

Francesco Zurlo
Anna Meroni

Delegate for Events, School of Design

Francesco E. Guida

Delegate for Communication, School of Design

Francesca Piredda

Creativa Direction

Carlo Morgan Capobianco
Martina Esposito

International Relations

Anne Schoonbrodt
Maria Carolina Cruz

Project Management

Chiara Alberti

Exhibit Production

LAB ALLESTIMENTI “Paolo Padova” – Department of Design Politecnico di Milano:
Mariano Chernicoff, Ilaria Papotti, Gaia Sto Domingo

Graphic and Motion Design

Chiara Mazzeo
Anita Maria Ruggiu

Web Design and Development

Francesco Bonetti
Filippo Mirandola
Federico Morsia

Exhibit Design

Debora Baratta
Lorenzo Secolin

Exhibition Content Coordination

Valerio Libardo

Video and Photo Documentation

Elisa Corbetta

Technical partners

Mottola Solutions
Navigare
Zetafonts

Communication Coordination

Communication Unit, Department of Design: Eleonora De Marchi, Francesca Cassanelli, Giada Zoncada con Marco Quaggiotto

Social media

Anna Bartesaghi
Beatrice Tronconi
Nicola Maria Patitucci

Animazione teatrale

Campo Teatrale

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Design Labs – Department of Design Politecnico di Milano

Milena Di Gennaro and the Administrative Staff of the School Design

Professors and students that contributed to the event

Domenico Capobianco

Contact us

Ufficio Unit Dipartimento di Design, comunicazione-design@polimi.it

INTERDEPENDENCE: POLARITIES

1. CENTER / BOUNDARIES

How can design address the tension between a central point and its edges? For example, the relation between the center and periphery of a place, the core and margins of a group, the established knowledge and the cutting-edge experimentation, or the advantage and the disadvantage?

2. HUMAN / MORE THAN HUMAN

How can design consider the needs, agency, and competences of non-human agents, which imply coexistence with humans in the same system? For example, the relation with other intelligences, rights and interests that overlap, compete or collide with those of humans?

3. ARTIFICIAL / NATURAL

How can design manage the interplay between the artificial and natural worlds and the interaction we have with them? For example, the collaboration or competition with AI and technology, our relationship with digital life and artificial environments, or with natural, biologic, wild systems?

4. MATERIALISTIC / SPIRITUAL

How can design contribute to the development of both material and spiritual wellbeing and sustainability? For example, the relation between materialistic and spiritual fulfillment, physical and mental practices and skills, ownership and access, or between sustainability and wealth?

5. ENABLING / RELIEVING

How can design empower people and environments to make things happen while reducing the burden of action? For example, the balance between learning to do something and having it done, caring and being cared for, choosing and having something selected for you, or representing and being represented?

6. INDIVIDUAL / COLLECTIVE

How can design account for the needs of the individual and of the community? For example, the consideration for singular voices or for aggregated agency, the focus on the self or the group, the pursuit of one's own interests while respecting common goods, the importance of conviviality, the opportunities of doing alone or doing together?

7. FOR-FEW / FOR-ALL

How can design navigate the tension between exclusivity and inclusivity? For example, the balance between limiting or guaranteeing access to opportunities and resources for everyone, the management of scarcity, the dilemma of privilege or inclusivity, or the gap between disparities?

8. SELFNESS / OTHERNESS

How can design focus on one's own identity, without neglecting what is external or different? For example, the awareness of biases, discriminations and privileges, the capability to learn from everyone and everywhere, or the recognition of the

complexity of the intersection of the different aspects of a person's social and political identities?

9. **HARMONY / DISCORD**

How can design deal with conflicts and dissonances? For example, the dilemmas posed by controversial issues, peace and war, the quiet coexistence and the restless activisms, the consensus-seeking and the thought-provoking stances?

10. **OBEDIENCE / DISOBEDIENCE**

How can design address the need for compliance with rules while encouraging resistance to foster their evolution? For example, the management of power dynamics, the respect of authority or the conformity to standards, the top-down and bottom-up forces?

POLIMI DESIGN SYSTEM

The School of Design, the Department of Design, and the non-profit consortium POLI.design collectively forms the Design System of Politecnico di Milano. This collaborative framework operates synergistically on research, education, and the transfer of innovation to companies and organizations. The Polimi Design System stands as the foremost university design hub in Italy, acknowledged as one of the leading centers of excellence internationally.

SCHOOL OF DESIGN

The School of Design is currently one of the largest international universities for training designers across various fields, both in terms of student enrollment and teaching staff. It is a state university that offers study programs organized in two levels: 3-year first level degree (Bachelor or B.Sc.) and a further 2-year second level degree “Laurea Magistrale” (Master or M.Sc.).

It has approximately 4400 students, 135 permanent faculty members, visiting professors and more than 320 adjunct professors from the professional world, companies or other universities. It provides a methodological and multidisciplinary approach to design, combining science, technology, and the humanities, consistently linked to ongoing research and guided by sustainability objectives. Closely connected to industries, organizations and society, the School of Design study programs achieve a remarkable employment rate of 98% within five years of graduation. Many international opportunities are offered for mobility programs in Europe and around the world.

DEPARTMENT OF DESIGN

The Department of Design of Politecnico di Milano is one of the leading design research institutions worldwide. It operates in multidisciplinary research settings, in which design plays a mediating role and is a critical element. Its mission is to expand design knowledge, investigating how design enables and drives innovation to increase competitiveness, realize a better quality of life and achieve more sustainable and inclusive growth.

The Department Community consists of more than 350 people including professors, researchers, research fellows, Ph.D. students and technical-administrative staff. The Department has been twice appointed as a Department of Excellence with the "Design for Systemic Change" project, selected by the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research for its quality of research and education, its ability to attract funding, productivity, and international collaboration.

POLI.DESIGN

POLI.design is an international center for postgraduate education and a key player in the Politecnico di Milano Design System. Since 1999, it focuses on developing and refining cross-industry educational offerings through a project-based learning approach, leveraging polytechnic knowledge and research.

Specializing Masters, Executive Courses and customized services for organizations equip students, professionals, companies and institutions with a design mindset to lead the transformation in a wide range of fields. In addition, POLI.design is at the

core of the Italian and global network for design education and fosters connections between academia, institutions, and the world of Business.