

Nils Leonard Named as D&AD President



Creative leader and Uncommon Co-Founder succeeds Lisa Smith as D&AD Festival and New Blood Festival come together in 2027

London, 14 October 2026: D&AD, the global creative non-profit championing excellence in design and commercial creativity, today announced Nils Leonard as its new President.

Before co-founding Uncommon Creative Studio, Leonard was Chairman and Chief Creative Officer of Grey London, where he oversaw the most profitable and awarded years in the agency's 52-year history and became one of the youngest agency chairmen in the world. Ranked the No. 1 Creative Person globally by Business Insider and named among the Sunday Times' 500 Most Influential People, he has spent more than two decades at the top of advertising and design.

In Uncommon's nine years, the studio has become the fastest growing and most creatively awarded start-up of its generation, key highlights include: rebranding and launching EA Sports FC, the BBC calling it *The worlds biggest entertainment rebrand*, stopping New York Fashion Week with the viral Ratboot; creating the UK's most recognised mental health campaign: ITV's Britain Get Talking; returning British Airways to its place as an iconic British brand with iconic safety videos and reference point advertising; and, most recently, winning a Black Pencil with The Periodic Fable for The Ordinary.

Leonard takes up the presidency as D&AD prepares to bring its creative community together in a new way. In June 2027, D&AD Festival and New Blood Festival will come together for the first time as **D&AD Alive**, bringing established and emerging creative talent under one roof to explore the tensions shaping creativity today and what comes next.

Taking place at Tobacco Dock, London from 28–30 June 2027, D&AD Alive will bring together emerging talent, agencies and studios, brands and in-house teams, and creative leaders from around the world. As President, Leonard will curate a series of President Lectures as part of the festival programme.

Nils Leonard, D&AD President and Co-Founder of Uncommon Creative Studio, said:

"D&AD has shaped me and so many people I admire, so being asked to be President is a genuine honour. Creativity is one of the most powerful forces in the world. It builds brands, businesses and culture. Yet almost everywhere we talk about it like a luxury, something nice to have, rather than the engine behind our economies and our future.

Too many young people are never shown what creativity can be, or that it's a career, a skill and a way of solving problems. I want to use this year to change that, and to make the case for creativity as something every country should be proud of and invest in. Creativity is our very own human magic, and it is stronger than we think."

Tim Lindsay, D&AD Chairman, said: *"Nils has always been a powerful advocate for creativity and original thinking. He's built his career challenging convention, backing ambitious ideas and pushing for work that has genuine impact.*

"D&AD has always stood for creative excellence and the people behind it – setting the bar for great work while giving people the training, opportunities and support to reach it. As we bring different generations, disciplines and perspectives together through D&AD Alive, Nils brings exactly the energy and point of view we want from our President. I'm delighted to welcome him, and I'd also like to thank Lisa Smith for everything she has brought to D&AD and the creative community during her presidency."

Nils Leonard, succeeds current D&AD President, Global Chief Design Officer, Uncommon, Lisa Smith following her one-year term, who was appointed during her time as Global Executive Creative Director at JKR.

Further details on D&AD Alive, can be found at dandad.org/festival with more information on its programme, speakers and President Lectures, to be announced over the coming months.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

For more information please contact: laura.mcturk@dandad.org

Press images can be found [here](#):

About D&AD

D&AD is a global creativity non-profit that celebrates, stimulates and enables excellence in design and commercial creativity. Through its world-renowned Awards and education programmes, D&AD aims to generate funding to champion the next generation of creative talent to drive positive change in the industry and beyond. The global steward of creative excellence in commercial creativity. For more, visit: dandad.org