



For Immediate Release

STEFAN SAGMEISTER HEADLINES D&AD FESTIVAL 2026 AS CREATIVITY GOES ON TRIAL



- Two-time Grammy Winner Stefan Sagmeister set to reflect on the job that nearly killed his creativity, and why it didn't
- Also featuring Mary Lewis, Alex Center, Court Williams, Nils Leonard and David Lee
- Insight sessions led by Judges and Jury Presidents such as Gabriel Moses, Kate Waters (ITV) and Josy Paul (BBDO India), among many others
- Creative Impact Accelerator features Katie Vanneck-Smith (Hearst UK) and marketers from System1, Burger King and Essity, while the AI Accelerator includes speakers such as Wesley ter Haar (Monks) and Rodrigo Sobral (OLIVER).

LONDON, Wednesday 22 April: Six months after D&AD asked the question: is creativity dead or alive? The industry comes to make its case. D&AD today announces the full programme for D&AD Festival 2026, bringing together the most provocative voices in global creativity on 19 and 20 May, London's South Bank.

Leading the programme are The President's Lectures, curated by D&AD President Lisa Smith and headlined by Stefan Sagmeister. The Festival also features Jury Insight Sessions, Yellow Pencils: Why They Won and dedicated learning programmes.



Stefan Sagmeister states: *"I'm delighted to be appearing at the D&AD Festival this year. It's where the industry comes together to properly celebrate the work, challenge itself and talk about what actually matters to drive creativity forward. I'll be talking about the single worst job of my career, the kind of project that nearly kills your creativity. We all love a good disaster, so it should be fun."*

David Patton, CEO of D&AD, says: *"At D&AD, we've never believed creativity is dead, but belief isn't enough. The industry needs to prove it. The D&AD Festival is where that argument gets made at the highest level. Two days, the most provocative voices in the business and the finest creative work of the year. We think we know the answer. Come and join the debate."*

The President's Lectures

Stefan Sagmeister will reflect on the job that, in his words, almost killed his creativity, and why it didn't.

David Lee (Squarespace) will argue that creativity may be the last remaining human advantage, while Alex Center (CENTER) sets out the case for a creative rebirth and Court Williams (De-Yan) explores the intersection of brand, technology and experience.

Mary Lewis (Lewis Moberly), D&AD's first female President, joins current President Lisa Smith on stage to ask: three decades later, have we really moved on? Nils Leonard (Uncommon Creative Studio) also returns to the Festival stage.

Also taking to the stage, three Shift Alumni marking ten years of the programme, representing the next generation of creative talent.

Jury Insight Sessions

Ten Jury Insight Sessions will open up the judging process, exploring the work judges championed and challenged, the debates inside the jury rooms, and the themes and trends that emerged.

Sessions span categories including Film, Brand, Typography, Cultural Influence and Luxury, with contributors including Josy Paul (BBDO India), Justine Armour (72andSunny), Gabriel Moses and Kate Waters (ITV), among others.

Yellow Pencils: Why They Won

Yellow Pencils: Why They Won, is an exploration of the year's prestigious Yellow Pencil-awarded work, offering a first look at this year's winners and celebrating the industry's most outstanding work.

Jury Presidents will unpack what won and why, revealing the thinking behind the decisions.



Learning Programmes

Alongside the main programme, the Festival introduces two dedicated accelerator tracks for senior leaders and practitioners.

The Creative Impact Accelerator opens with new findings from D&AD's *Conditions for Creativity* research, exploring how creativity drives measurable business growth. Contributors include Katie Vanneck-Smith (Hearst UK), alongside senior marketers from System1, Burger King and Essity.

The AI Accelerator, hosted by Becky McOwen-Banks (Christopher Ward), focuses on the practical application of AI in creative workflows. Laura Jordan Bambach (Uncharted), will lead a session on human–AI collaboration, alongside case studies and live briefs exploring both the opportunities and limitations of AI in the creative process. There will also be speaking opportunities from names such as Wesley ter Haar (Monks) and Rodrigo Sobral (Oliver).

Full programme and ticket information available at dandad.org.

Ends

- For more information please contact: laura.mcturk@dandad.org
- High resolution images, interviews and accreditation available on request

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