

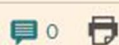
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Preview of Clerkenwell Design Week, London: what to look out for

The district's history of old-world trades and density of creative businesses have given the annual three-day event a festival feel



Glaze, a pavilion by Cousins & Cousins architects for GX Glass, in St John's Square, Clerkenwell, for last year's design week © Joanne Underhill/Alamy



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MAY 13, 2016 by: **Dominic Lutyens**

Clerkenwell in central London has long been a creative industry enclave. Renowned for clock-making since the early 18th century, it is a place where other old-world trades, including printing, bookbinding and jewellery-making, still flourish. More than 200 architecture practices and 80-plus contemporary furniture showrooms are based in Clerkenwell — there is a higher density of creative businesses here than in any other part of London. This ensures that Clerkenwell Design Week, an annual event of exhibitions, workshops and talks, held this year from May 24 to 26, feels like part of the area and not something grafted on.

Now in its seventh year, design week is growing: from four key exhibition venues in 2015 to eight this year. The event's main venues lie on a north-south axis bounded by Farringdon Road to the west and Goswell Road to the east. Kicking off at the cusp of summer, with more than 100 showrooms involved, the event has a festival feel that attracts legions of design buffs.

“Clerkenwell Design Week is compact, focused and rooted in what makes this London community unique,” says show director Will Knight. Compared with other festivals, such as the citywide Salone del Mobile in Milan, Clerkenwell's takes place within a neat 2.5 sq miles. It is an event in which venues that are normally off-limits to the public will throw open their doors — “indeed, some doors you wouldn't know were there the rest of the year”, adds Knight.

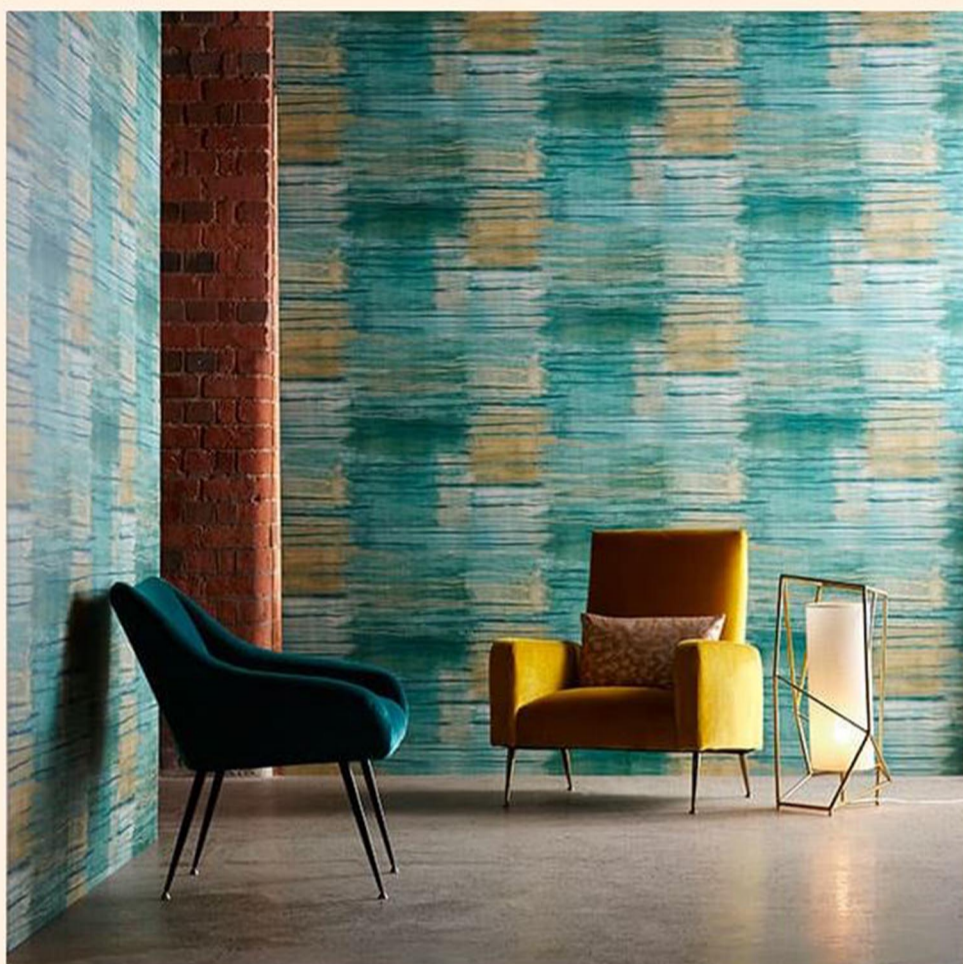
The subterranean warren of rooms that comprise the House of Detention, for instance, was once the vaults of a Victorian prison and an air raid shelter during the Blitz. In design week it will host Platform, which will showcase work by about 40 emerging designers. Another venue, the crypt of the 18th-century St James Church, will house British Collection, an exhibition devoted to homegrown talent.



Clockwise from top left: Portland collection leather panels by Whistler Leather, £15.50 per sq ft, [whistlerleather.com](#); Pipe chaise longue by Sebastian Herkner for Moroso, £4,130, [moroso.it](#); Mad Queen armchair by Marcel Wanders, £3,236, [poliformuk.com](#); Maurits dining table by Fred and Juul, from £8,784, [fredandjuul.com](#); Mad chaise longue by Marcel Wanders, £3,932, [poliformuk.com](#)

East of Farringdon rail station is the exhibition Icon House of Culture, held in the nightclub Fabric (formerly cold stores for Smithfield meat market next door). Here, Dare Studio, an East Sussex furniture and lighting specialist, will show its new oak and American black walnut cabinets, made with Eley Kishimoto, which have a screen-printed lattice pattern over the doors.

Adjacent to Clerkenwell Road are two shows for high-end and bespoke designs with the umbrella name Detail. Anthology Fabrics will show a mix of textiles suitable for curtains and drapes that mimic natural or industrial materials, from marble and bark to peeling plaster and raw concrete.



Fabrics by Anthology Fabrics, from £58 per metre, anthologyfabrics.com © Andy Gore

Another exhibitor, textile designer Ptolemy Mann, will present rugs hand-dyed in India in striped ikat patterns of green, burnt orange and indigo. While bold, the colours soften as one hue fades into another. “I’ve noticed a distinct shift towards saturated colour,” says Mann. “Green, not usually used in interiors, is proving a hit.”

Also at Detail is Poliform, which will house Dutch designer Marcel Wanders’ reliably theatrical confections for this Italian furniture brand. These include the velvet, midnight-blue Mad chaise longue and the quilted, grey Mad Queen armchair.



Clockwise from top left: Aquário cabinet by the Campana brothers, £11,916, bdbarcelona.com; Pendant lamp by Liam Treanor, from £280, liamtreanor.co.uk; Lilo chair by Patricia Urquiola for Moroso: £2,670, moroso.it; Cubo petrol-blue sideboard by Another Brand, £1,595, anotherbrand.co.uk

Whistler Leather, meanwhile, whose products are to be found in London’s Savoy and Claridge’s hotels, will present hexagonal leather panels that can be grouped or used individually for fragmented wall coverings.

The approach of Italian-Dutch design duo Fred and Juul is to create durable (and thus more sustainable) pieces in brass, iron and oak, all handcrafted in Tuscany. During design week they will show their new Maurits dining table, which is made of oak from reclaimed wine barrels and carries a geometric pattern on its top inspired by the graphic artist MC Escher.

The Watermark Collection, a London-based brassware specialist, will display a new collection of cylindrical tap handles called Elements. These combine different materials, including wood and hand-finished stone in varied tones and textures, which can be customised with tap finishes such as “brushed brass” — a gleefully defiant reaction to the clichéd view that gold-toned taps are vulgar. “We’re enjoying an exciting resurgence of 1970s and 1980s-inspired bold, exotic contrasts in materials and colours,” says Benjamin Peak, the company’s managing director.



House of Detention, venue for the Platform show © Sophie Mutevelian

Also worth checking out at Platform is the Norfolk-based company par-avion, whose Pi stool has a Scandinavian, mid 20th-century modern look. Just north of the House of Detention, in Spa Fields, is a new contemporary show called Design Fields. Here, the German company Thonet will exhibit outdoor versions of some of its Bauhaus-inspired chairs with mesh upholstery in 12 new colours, while Another Brand, which makes bespoke furniture, will show its cabinets with petrol-blue mirrored surfaces.



Brass tap by The Watermark Collection, £1,350, thewatermarkcollection.eu

Two showrooms shouldn't be missed. On Berry Street, BD Barcelona Design — known for recreating furniture designed by Antoni Gaudí and Salvador Dalí — will present the Couture armchair by Stockholm-based design duo Färg and Blanche. The chair's back resembles the contours of a hill on a topographical map and is made by sewing layers of thick plywood on a heavy-duty sewing machine, hence its name. Also on show at BD is the Campana brothers' flamboyant Aquário cabinet, its surface injected with blobs of green glass.

Meanwhile, architect Daniel Libeskind's new Gemma sofas and chairs for Moroso can be

seen at the Italian brand's shop on Rosebery Avenue. As angular and sharp-edged in appearance as his architecture, the upholstery is in a soft, knitted fabric.

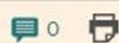
Libeskind will be a keynote speaker at Conversations at Clerkenwell, a series of talks at The Goldsmiths' Centre on Britton Street discussing various facets of design; another will be designer Tom Dixon. The centre, a charity that provides professional training for goldsmiths, will also hold workshops and an exhibition about contemporary metalwork. Laura Snoad, programme manager of Clerkenwell Design Week, hopes the events will underline the deep-rooted relationship between the area and its creative industries. "We're hoping that the conversations open the discussion that design is not just about a chair or a building but about the hugely inspiring people behind them," she says.

Clerkenwell Design Week runs from May 24 to 26, clerkenwelldesignweek.com

Photographs: Joanne Underhill/Alamy; Andy Gore; Sophie Mutevelian

This article has been amended since publication to correct the captions for the Pipe chaise longue by Sebastian Herkner for Moroso and the Lilo chair by Patricia Urquiola for Moroso

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