

The Hand Is Thinking: New London Learned Society Opens Its First Exhibition at London Design Festival 2026

Thirty-seven projects by more than one hundred practitioners assemble a temporary archive of the moment mind and body catalyse one another.

Mind × Body: Catalyst Phenomenon Archive

18–20 September 2026

Space 4, 21–31 Shacklewell Lane, Dalston, London E8 2DA

18–19 September, 12:00–19:00 | 20 September, 12:00–17:00

Free entry, no ticket required

Organised by the Reality Intelligence Association · Official Partner, London Design Festival 2026

Curated by Boyuan Yu, Jianing Luo and Prof. Lei Zhang

During London Design Festival 2026, the Reality Intelligence Association presents Mind × Body: Catalyst Phenomenon Archive, its inaugural exhibition and the first public outing of a new London-based learned society working at the intersection of emerging computing technologies, architectural materials and design research. Thirty-seven projects by more than one hundred practitioners are gathered in a converted industrial space in Dalston for three days of free public opening.

The exhibition takes its premise from Juhani Pallasmaa's *The Thinking Hand*: the hand is not an instrument of execution but an extension of thought, and in touching, shaping and building it is simultaneously thinking. Against the long-standing separation of mind and body, the exhibition positions the two not as opposing poles but as mutually catalytic forces — generating together what neither could produce alone. What occurs when they meet, the curators argue, is closer to a chemical reaction than to addition.

Selected works make that reaction visible in very different registers. Yunge Tong's *Taste Before Emotion* is a wearable textile interface that turns emotional awareness into something worn on the body. Mingming Zhao's *Wearing Affect* is a bioresponsive brooch that renders private feeling as a signal others can read and negotiate. Xiuli Xie and Hua Chen's *Sensory Equipose*: Lingnan Herbal Incense works through scent, drawing on a regional Chinese herbal tradition to address the body's least representable sense.

Elsewhere, the archive turns towards drawing, print and the document. Ru Jia's *Bread & Proust* effect pairs a wall panel with a bound portfolio to trace how a taste retrieves a memory. Yunwen Zhu's *Flux* is made in soft pastels, a medium in which the hand's pressure remains permanently legible. Hanbing Wang and a ten-person team present *Whispers of the Sacred Grotto*, an extended-reality work that asks what embodiment means once the body enters a virtual environment. A thirty-five person research cluster from Oxford Brookes University, Digital Craft in Architecture, contributes a collective body of spatial research.

Those taking part are at every career stage and based in the UK, mainland China, the United States, Turkey and beyond, working independently and within research groups at institutions including Central Saint Martins, Kingston University, Winchester School of Art, the University of Essex, Oxford Brookes University, New York University, Duke University, Harbin Institute of Technology, Southwest University, Zhaoqing University and Wenzhou-Kean University.

Jianing Luo, Director of the Reality Intelligence Association, said: "Design education has become dangerously dependent on the screen and the render. We wanted to build a room where the evidence of thinking with the hand is physically present — where a handcraft and a virtual environment can be looked at as two answers to the same question. Bringing together practitioners at this range of career stages was deliberate: the archive is more honest when the student and the professor are on the same wall."

The works are arranged to create dialogue across disciplines and methodologies rather than grouped by medium, placing a woodcut in conversation with a research document, a textile alongside a virtual environment. Together they form a living archive rather than a static display: a record of how the mind–body relationship is being negotiated, strained and reinvented now.

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

Press images:

https://realityintelligenceassociation.sharepoint.com/:f/g/personal/info_riauk_org/lgCk2yltKTSPrPq4heR8nHqAbTzCQz_V6be8ayN6hLOCjA?e=L20m1u

Press enquiries: info@riauk.org

Website: <https://riauk.org/exhibition/mindbody>

About the Reality Intelligence Association

The Reality Intelligence Association is a learned society registered in the United Kingdom, operating at the intersection of emerging computing technologies, architectural materials and design research. Its programme spans exhibitions, competitions, lectures and a peer-reviewed journal in preparation. Mind × Body: Catalyst Phenomenon Archive is its inaugural exhibition.

Participating practitioners

Chang He, Aveline Thomas, Lingjun Zhou, Mansi Kothari — CITY IN REVERIE: A Somatic Archive of Urban Objects and Spatial Memory
Chao Liu — Where Our Attention Goes
Chunling Wu — Trace of Being
Digital Craft in Architecture (as a research cluster at Oxford Brookes University)
Elif Gamze DEDELER — irregular, singular, irreplaceable
Francis Zhang — Love & Decay
Hanbing Wang, Lie Zhang, Chunling Wu, Xiwen Liu, Xiang Li, Xianqi Wang, Yingying Liu, Shiru Du, Mingjie Zhou, Xizi Liu — Whispers of the Sacred Grotto
Jiayu Gao — Vulture
Ketong Xing — Existentialism Trace
Lei Zhang, Weiming Zhang — Art Education
Linrui (Yaning) Xiong — Architectural Healing
Lucille Huang — Infinity Us
Miaoting Feng, Ruiyi Jiang, Xiaohan Shi, Siyan Yu, Baolin Yin, Chen Wang — Streaming
Ming Chen, Hedi Mao — RE: FERMENTATION
Mingming Zhao — Wearing Affect: A Bioresponsive Brooch for Emotional Visibility and Social Negotiation
Minming Wei — Style Syntax: AI × Emotion
Qian Zhang — Let's dance with music
Rachel Dong — What Remains Beyond Information
Rita Tang — Forgotten Rooms
Ru Jia — Bread & Proust effect
Ruiyi Jiang, Yi Shi — Intelligent Injury Recovery
Sainan Zuo — Infinite Corridor: The Recursive Dance of the Source Code
Shang Dai, Qianyi He, Hongzhu Zhou (as members of the artist collective 'Semiome') — The Lost Roasted Lambkin
Siliang Wang — Masked Lesion
Xi Feng, Chi Hang Paul Lo, Zhongkui Hu — Between Bodies: Designing the Threshold Between Human, Animal and City
Xi Feng, Shuyu Wu — DualLife: Design of an Urban Low-Altitude Severe Emergency Multimodal Collaborative Transport System
Xiangyi Kong, Ruixi Yang, Wenfang Wang — With U - A multi-form, multi-foldable electric vehicle design for younger elderly people based on the theory of active aging
Xinwei (Vicky) Guo (as lead designer); Zeming Zhang, Shida Wang, Zhiyuan Song (as team members) — The Second Shell
Xiuli Xie, Hua Chen — Sensory Equipoise: Lingnan Herbal Incense
Yiting Chu — Mirror Flower (Mirror Flower I: Blade, Mirror Flower II: Mirror Stage, Mirror Flower III: Flower in a Mirror, Moon on the Water)
Yixuan Wang, Nuo Cheng, Yaokun Liu, Teng Fei, Hongyuan Mei — NO COMMON DAY
Yue (Yola) Wu — BODYWISE
Yuehong Zhou — Adaptive Behavior in Digital Nomads: An Interactive Spatial Structure Study Using Machine Learning
Yunge Tong — Taste Before Emotion: A Wearable Textile Interface for Embodied Emotional Awareness
Yunwen Zhu — Flux
Yuyang (Baron) Shen — REMNANTS
Zun Wang — Simulated Plant

Full credits, including all members of collaborative teams, are published at riauk.org/exhibition.