

2026 Asia-Pacific Design TREND OUTLOOK REPORT

Elastic Design · Mindful Interaction · Root Wisdom

2026 ASIA-PACIFIC DESIGN TREND OUTLOOK REPORT: RESTRUCTURING SYMBIOSIS

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Introduction: defining a certain future in an uncertain era

As we step into 2026, the asia-pacific design community stands at a clear turning point: the rapid advancement of technology and the complex interweaving of global challenges have forced design to shift from "shaping forms" to "constructing systems". The significance of design has never been so closely linked to the resilience of survival, the essence of interaction, and the roots of culture.

Based on its cross-disciplinary expert network, the annual iai design award collection and regional insights, the asia pacific designers federation (apdf) releases this year's trend outlook. We have no intention of predicting superficial styles; instead, we aim to reveal the three core forces driving fundamental changes and issue specific action initiatives, inviting design professionals around the world to engage in joint thinking and co-construction.



Core trend 1: designing for resilience

Core definition

Design is shifting from the pursuit of "permanence" to the construction of "adaptability". Faced with increasingly frequent climate events, economic fluctuations and social changes, adaptive design aims to create products, services and systems that can absorb shocks, self-repair and evolve continuously. Its core is to design for uncertainty.

Key manifestations

- Materials and manufacturing: modular, detachable and on-site upgradable physical products; shortening and strengthening supply chains by utilizing local renewable or recyclable materials.
- Space and community: multi-functional and convertible public spaces; distributed production and support networks based on community collaboration (such as micro-workshops and food sharing systems).
- Digital systems: decentralized digital service platforms that ensure the continuity of core functions in the event of local disruptions.

Apdf annual initiative: 【resilience prototype】 case library program

- Content: globally soliciting and showcasing outstanding cases that embody "resilience thinking" in architecture, products, services and digital interfaces.
- Objective: establishing the first open adaptive design practice library in the asia-pacific region, providing references for policy-making, commercial investment and education.
- Participation: the case submission channel is open from now on. Selected cases will receive apdf certification and be compiled and released at the end of the year.



Core trend 2: mindful interaction | mindful interaction

Core definition

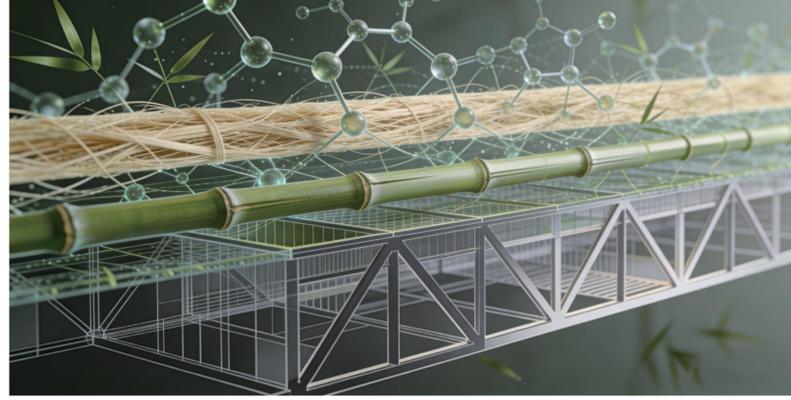
As artificial intelligence, brain-computer interfaces and sensing technologies become increasingly ubiquitous, the focus of interaction design has shifted profoundly from "interface efficiency" to "mental well-being". It concerns how technology respects and enhances rather than undermines human attention, emotions and cognitive autonomy. Its core is to design for human focus and intention.

Key manifestations

- interaction ethics: design "fading-out" interfaces to reduce unnecessary notifications and cognitive load; advocate for "digital diet" experiences.
- inclusive cognition: interaction and information presentation methods adapted to different neurocognitive patterns (such as adhd and autism spectrum disorder).
- embodied interaction: leverage spatial computing, haptic feedback and other technologies to create screen-free interactions that align with humans' natural perceptual and motor habits.

Apdf annual initiative: 【mindful interaction】 ethics seminar series

- content: cooperate with cognitive scientists, philosophers and tech ethicists to host a series of closed-door seminars and public forums, and release the asia-pacific mindful interaction design white paper (2026).
- objective: establish a forward-looking ethical evaluation framework for regional design practices and prevent the misuse of technology.
- participation: invite alliance members, iai judges and academic representatives as core initiators; public forums are open to all practitioners.



Core Trend 3: Rooted Intelligence | Rooted Intelligence

Core Definition

As the narrative of globalization wanes, the sources of inspiration for design innovation are making a powerful return to local contexts. This is not an act of nostalgia, but rather a contemporary translation and global application of the material wisdom, craft philosophy and ecological worldviews deeply embedded in the cultural veins of Asia-Pacific regions. Its core is to design for cultural sustainability.

Key Manifestations

- Material Innovation: Scientifically redevelop traditional materials such as bamboo, earth and silk to enhance their performance, and apply them across different disciplines.
- Process Philosophy: Integrate Eastern philosophies such as "circulation", "symbiosis" and "frugality" into the complete design process from conceptualization to recycling.
- Narrative Reconstruction: Use modern media to retell the stories of local craftsmanship and ecological knowledge, and build new cultural identities and consumption values.

APDF Annual Initiative: 【Roots Project】 Open Directory of Local Wisdom

- Content: Systematically investigate, document and digitally present the unique systems of materials, craftsmanship and ecological knowledge in the Asia-Pacific region.
- Objective: Establish a dynamic open-source database that allows designers worldwide to search, learn and seek cooperation, so as to prevent the loss of this precious wisdom over generations.
- Participation: Recruit volunteers including field researchers, cultural scholars and designers to co-compile the directory, and seek cooperation with museums and material laboratories.



Conclusion: From Insight to Action, Co-shaping the Next Decade

The three core trends above—Adaptive Design, Mindful Interaction and Rooted Intelligence—are not isolated from one another. Together, they point to a future of "Restructuring Symbiosis": building resilience amid fluctuations, safeguarding mental well-being in the hustle and bustle, and embedding deep roots in the context of globalization.

This abstract is merely a prelude to the APDF 2026 Asia-pacific Design Trend Full Report. The complete report will be released to all alliance members and partners after the 2026 Lunar New Year, featuring detailed case analyses, data interpretations and in-depth interviews.

More importantly, this trend research will be directly integrated into the judging perspective of the 2026 IAI Design Award. We encourage participants to take this trend framework as the backdrop for their thinking and submit design works that actively respond to the fundamental questions of our times.

Take Immediate Action and Join Us in Defining the Future:

1. Contribute Cases: Visit the "Trend Outlook Report" section on the APDF official website and submit your Adaptive Design cases.
2. Join Seminars: Follow APDF announcements and register for the Mindful Interaction Ethics Seminar Series.
3. Recommend Wisdom: Contact us to become a nominator or researcher for the Roots Project.

Design is not just about the objects of tomorrow, but about the world of tomorrow. Let us start with this outlook and deliver through collective action.

Submitted by
The Academic Committee of the Asia Pacific Designers Federation (APDF)

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