



"Urban Fabric," London Design Biennale, 2023 © Vanessa Vanden Berghe

## Global Games

The 2023 London Design Biennale's theme was "The Global Game: Remapping Collaborations." Aric Chen, chief curator and artistic director of Het Nieuwe Instituut, explained such a loaded title with Buckminster Fuller's World Game, and the question whether national pavilions are still relevant today. With over 40 national participants there was enough food for thought.

On entering Somerset House, visitors navigated through the displays with a map, which also helped to find the atmospheric Serbian Pavilion. An accompanying exhibition, EUREKA, showcased the UK's creative design thinking, including the University of the Arts London's display "Because the World Needs: Design"—a poignant title in a country where the humanities are under constant political threat. Spotlighting design research at universities is commendable, but adding it to the official LDB pavilions increased the visitors' confusion.

Throughout the LDB pavilions visitors were invited to participate and collaborate. The Democratic Republic of Congo offered a virtual experience of its National Museum in Kinshasa while others, such as the Chilean's "Borrowed Matter" and the Austrian pavilion "Brot: Baking the Future," allowed visitors to touch the displays. The Austrians even allowed 'making' as a conduit for discussions around food in a wider geopolitical context. Although it lacked any participatory event on the show's last weekend it was inviting due to the strong smell of bread. Such multi-sensory approaches were key in the pavilions of Malta and Turkey. Though closed off to the public, the Turkish "Open Work" pavilion allowed for a musical experience through steel tubes swaying in the summer breeze.

The medals for Taiwan, Poland and Abu Dhabi are deserved. All three responded to current political climates without being too obvious. The Polish pavilion "Poetics of Necessity" resonated particularly with a focus on windows and their usefulness in times of war. These medal winners are the answer to Chen's question, because by responding to current issues of national relevance they have shown that their pavilions still have a place within an international discourse.

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[Review](#)

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**UK**

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