



Regenerative Design
The Weltmuseum Wien as a Lab for the Future

6 February to June 2026
Weltmuseum Wien

At the invitation of the Weltmuseum Wien, the University of Applied Arts Vienna created a pop-up exhibition focusing on the ethnological museum as a place of research and experience, in collaboration with the Weltmuseum Wien. The starting point was the question of what knowledge is stored in museum objects, not as historical information, but as an expression of the specific relationships between people, nature, materials, and time.

Students from the international, interdisciplinary design theory course 'Design Revolution Now!', led by Harald Gründl at the Regenerative Design Lab of the University of Applied Arts, examined selected objects from the Weltmuseum Wien collection for their regenerative qualities. In the pop-up exhibition, regenerative design is not understood as a method for developing new products, but rather as the application of natural principles already at work within the objects themselves. These include being embedded in local ecological cycles, the responsible use of resources, long-term time concepts, and the close connection between design, ritual, and social practice.



Claudia Banz, Director of the Weltmuseum Wien, describes this change of perspective as follows:

‘Imagine the ethnological museum not as a static archive of human cultures, but as a regenerative laboratory – a place of thinking with the more-than-human world. From this perspective, collections are not trophies of the past, but material traces of ecological relationships.’

From Object Thinking to Relationship Thinking

The 25 objects on display originate from various regions and cultures around the world. They represent societies in which design is inextricably linked to responsibility towards the environment, resources, and the community. This knowledge is made visible in the pop-up exhibition without being generalised or translated into contemporary design strategies. Instead, the focus is on how these objects function as carriers of knowledge that is activated through use, memory, and relationships.

One example of this is an antelope mask from Burkina Faso. In the cultural practices of the Kurumba, it demonstrates that nature is not perceived as something external, but rather as an integral part of social and spiritual order. The antelope symbolises purposefulness, perseverance, and adaptability, and as a mask it represents the presence of ancestors at funeral ceremonies. Here, design does not appear functional or decorative, but rather as a means of stabilising relationships across generations.

A calabash also symbolises regenerative principles. Its natural form was adopted and developed culturally: it was reinterpreted as a bottle, given functional additions, and incorporated into everyday life. The object on display exemplifies the interplay between natural form, human design, and cultural significance.

Fundamental Shifts: Knowledge, Time, and the Status of Things

This pop-up exhibition is divided into four themed areas that challenge familiar perspectives on knowledge, time, the status of things, and their purpose.

Rather than focusing on explanation, the curatorial approach of the pop-up exhibition focuses on experience. Rather than being presented in isolation or in a hierarchical manner, the objects are placed in relation to one another. For example, a compass does not serve to orientate visitors in the space; rather, it draws attention to the reading and navigation of relationships.



In this spatial and conceptual arrangement, time is not experienced as a linear narrative, but as a layered presence. The objects do not represent a closed past, but ongoing processes of remembering, locating, and thinking ahead. Here, regeneration does not signify a return to an origin, but rather the reopening of connections between humans and the wider world, between archives and lived experience, and between traditional knowledge and future prospects.

Learning for the Future: Design as Cultural Practice

Against the backdrop of a way of life in the Global North that has largely lost touch with nature and intergenerational thinking, this pop-up exhibition aims to inspire a rethink. Curator Harald Gründl summarises the concept of the pop-up exhibition as follows:

‘The pop-up exhibition provides inspiration for a radical rethink of our consumer culture, not by imitating indigenous objects and practices, but by applying the sustainable principles of regenerative design.’

The Regenerative Design Lab at the University of Applied Arts, led by Harald Gründl, provides the educational framework for this, offering an experimental space where teaching, research, and artistic practice converge. Contributions to the project also come from transformation psychologist Irina Nalis, environmental lawyer Thomas Wallentin, and Mariella Greil from the Applied Performance Lab.

The pop-up exhibition was curated by Claudia Banz (Weltmuseum Wien) and Harald Gründl (University of Applied Arts Vienna), in cooperation with Christian Schicklgruber (Weltmuseum Wien), as well as students from the Regenerative Design Lab at the University of Applied Arts Vienna: Stina Berger, Kathamrita Chakravorti, Oulin Chen, Alfred Cyranka, Yang Hao, Zhu Hui, Lukas Liszka, Lena Lojić, Elias Milcic, Yuko Okuda, Elene Pichkhadze, Marietheres Reichegger, Dunja Savić, Pascal Stütz, Danbi Sung, Nico Toya, and Margherita Wirnsperger.

Publication

A publication in English is being published by the University of Applied Arts Vienna to accompany the pop-up exhibition, edited by Harald Gründl.

€ 15, available in the museum shop

Exhibition graphics by BÜRONARDIN



Events

Detailed information about events accompanying the pop up exhibition can be found under the following link: <https://www.weltmuseumwien.at/en/exhibitions/pop-up-regenerative-design/>

Tue, 17 March, 6:30 p.m.

Guided tour through the pop-up exhibition and presentation

A joint tour with students from the Regenerative Design Lab at the University of Applied Arts Vienna

Subject to change!

Press Photographs

Press releases and images for up-to-date coverage of special exhibitions and projects at the Weltmuseum Wien are available for download free of charge from our press area:

<https://www.weltmuseumwien.at/en/press/>

Antelope mask: Noumtiri
Unknown master of the Kurumba
1960s

© KHM-Museumsverband, Weltmuseum Wien



Sherehe ya mganga na marohani (mashetani) wake
Peter Martin (1959–2006)
1997

© KHM-Museumsverband, Weltmuseum Wien



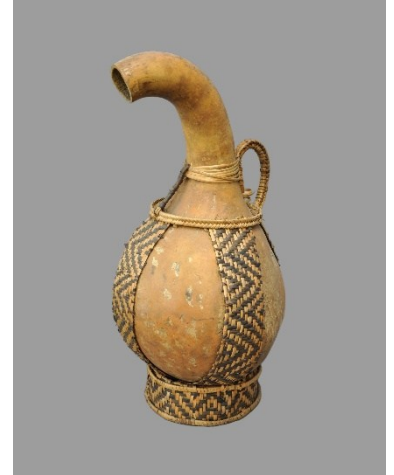
Palm wine jug Calabash

19th century

Calabash, bark bast

Cameroon

© KHM-Museumsverband, Weltmuseum Wien



Video still from Video "pan y cebolla"

© Ramona Poenaru / pan y cebolla / sound: Werner

Moebius / performance: Mariella Greil & Montserrat

Payro & Tim Darbyshire

Universität für angewandte Kunst Wien





Öffnungszeiten, Eintrittspreise und Tickets

weltemuseumwien.at/information

Ansprechpartner*innen für Ihren Besuch

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Rahmenprogramm und Veranstaltungen

Alle Veranstaltungen finden Sie online im [Veranstaltungskalender](#) des Weltmuseums Wien.

Social Media

Folgen Sie dem Weltmuseum Wien auf [Facebook](#) und [Instagram](#). #WeltmuseumWien

Akkreditierung für Journalist*innen

Im Rahmen einer Berichterstattung über einen Standort des KHM-Museumsverbands, einer aktuellen Pop-up-Ausstellung oder einer Veranstaltung stellen wir Ihnen gerne eine Eintrittskarte und Textmaterial zur Verfügung. Dazu ist eine vorherige Anmeldung unter presse@weltemuseumwien.at mindestens zwei Werktage vorab erforderlich.

Wir bitten Sie, neben Ihrem Medium das Datum Ihres Besuchs zu nennen und Ihren gültigen Presseausweis als Scan beizufügen. Vielen Dank!

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