# Design and advertising industries urged to adapt boldly amid AI transformation at D&AD Festival



In the midst of tumultuous changes within the design and advertising industries, a rallying call has emerged from the recent D&AD Festival, likening the current fight for relevance to that faced by Swiss watchmakers during the quartz revolution. As speakers and industry leaders took to the stage at London's celebrated Southbank Centre, many underscored the need for adaptation and innovation in an era significantly impacted by technological advancements, particularly artificial intelligence.

Leland Maschmeyer, co-founder of Collins, used the historical context of the Swiss watch industry’s decline, triggered by the arrival of the Seiko Quartz Astron in the late 1960s, as a metaphor for the design world’s current struggles. His insights resonated deeply with attendees, drawing parallels between the industry's challenge to redefine its identity and the watchmakers’ shift towards emphasizing unique craftsmanship amidst competition from quartz technology. By 1983, the number of Swiss watch manufacturers had plummeted from 1,600 to just 600. Those that thrived distinguished themselves through innovative “complications” that highlighted their artisanal craft. Maschmeyer argued that, akin to this historical lesson, the design sector must develop new language and frameworks—referred to as “augments”—to articulate the evolving identity of brands in a world increasingly influenced by AI.

The D&AD Festival, themed 'MAKE. CHANGE.', sought not only to celebrate creativity but also to challenge industry norms. It featured over 80 international speakers, including representatives from prominent brands such as TikTok and Microsoft, who addressed pressing issues ranging from accessibility to mental health. New D&AD CEO Jo Jackson highlighted the festival’s intention as a catalyst for stimulating meaningful change within the global creative community. The festival’s offerings included workshops and discussions that engaged with the dual challenge of embracing technological innovations while remaining firmly rooted in craft and narrative.

Contributing to this conversation, Nils Leonard advocated for a forward-looking mindset that eschews traditional advertising models. In a discussion following his address, he expressed that the focus should shift toward creating tangible "narrative objects" rather than simply adhering to outdated practices. This approach embodies his desire to create work that resonates more authentically with audiences, a sentiment echoed by other speakers throughout the festival.

The importance of craftsmanship was further underscored in a panel featuring Airbnb’s vice-president of design, Teo Connor, alongside psychologist Dr Paul Marsden. They discussed how user-centric design, rooted in genuine competence and care, can deeply resonate with consumers, thereby reinforcing the notion that every piece of work produced should have intrinsic value and relevance.

Aardman’s Gavin Strange, owned with passion the mantra of finding joy in creation. His personal projects, conducted under the Jamfactory label, are testament to the joys of making for oneself rather than solely for clients. This ethos, emphasised through his presentation, reinforces the sentiment that creativity should be driven by intrinsic motivation.

Kwame Taylor-Hayford, president of D&AD and the first to hold the position from the US, suggested that the festival served as a reflection of the changing agency landscape. He noted that newer agencies and design studios are increasingly prioritising imaginative and brave approaches, thereby fostering environments that better support creative talent.

While the spectre of AI looms large over the industry, the festival exemplified an acceptance of these changes—not as a threat, but as an opportunity to celebrate human creativity and emotional intelligence. The overarching message was clear: as the design and advertising industries evolve, so must their narratives, driven by clarity and an unwavering commitment to craftsmanship.

This era, marked by the tension between tradition and innovation, challenges creatives to harness technology as a tool for enhancing their work rather than as a replacement. The D&AD Festival served as a vibrant reminder of this potential and the imperative need to adapt, ensuring that artistry and authenticity remain at the core of creative practices.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.thedrum.com/news/2025/05/23/dad-festival-creative-industries-fight-back-against-doomsday-narrative), [[4]](https://campaignbrief.com/dad-challenges-industry-to-make-change-with-the-return-of-in-person-festival-in-london-in-may/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.thedrum.com/news/2025/05/23/dad-festival-creative-industries-fight-back-against-doomsday-narrative), [[2]](https://lbbonline.com/news/dad-challenges-the-creative-industry-to-make-change-with-return-of-in-person-festival), [[5]](https://www.marketing-beat.co.uk/2025/04/14/dad-reveals-2025-lineup-with-new-creative-look-and-feel/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://lbbonline.com/news/dandad-reveals-2025-festival-lineup-at-londons-iconic-southbank-centre-with-new-creative-look-and-feel), [[6]](https://www.medianews4u.com/dad-unveils-2025-festival-line-up-and-campaign-at-southbank-centre-london/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[3]](https://lbbonline.com/news/dandad-reveals-2025-festival-lineup-at-londons-iconic-southbank-centre-with-new-creative-look-and-feel), [[4]](https://campaignbrief.com/dad-challenges-industry-to-make-change-with-the-return-of-in-person-festival-in-london-in-may/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.thedrum.com/news/2025/05/23/dad-festival-creative-industries-fight-back-against-doomsday-narrative), [[3]](https://lbbonline.com/news/dandad-reveals-2025-festival-lineup-at-londons-iconic-southbank-centre-with-new-creative-look-and-feel)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.thedrum.com/news/2025/05/23/dad-festival-creative-industries-fight-back-against-doomsday-narrative), [[2]](https://lbbonline.com/news/dad-challenges-the-creative-industry-to-make-change-with-return-of-in-person-festival)
* Paragraph 7 – [[2]](https://lbbonline.com/news/dad-challenges-the-creative-industry-to-make-change-with-return-of-in-person-festival), [[3]](https://lbbonline.com/news/dandad-reveals-2025-festival-lineup-at-londons-iconic-southbank-centre-with-new-creative-look-and-feel)
* Paragraph 8 – [[1]](https://www.thedrum.com/news/2025/05/23/dad-festival-creative-industries-fight-back-against-doomsday-narrative), [[3]](https://lbbonline.com/news/dandad-reveals-2025-festival-lineup-at-londons-iconic-southbank-centre-with-new-creative-look-and-feel)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.thedrum.com/news/2025/05/23/dad-festival-creative-industries-fight-back-against-doomsday-narrative> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://lbbonline.com/news/dad-challenges-the-creative-industry-to-make-change-with-return-of-in-person-festival> - D&AD has announced the return of its in-person festival in London, themed 'MAKE. CHANGE.', focusing on creative excellence and addressing challenges posed by evolving technologies. The event will feature talks, workshops, and initiatives like D&AD Shift, emphasizing sustainability and social good. Speakers from brands such as TikTok, Dove, Uber, and Microsoft will discuss topics including talent, accessibility, and mental health. The festival is overseen by new CEO Jo Jackson, aiming to stimulate the global creative community to create impactful work. ([lbbonline.com](https://lbbonline.com/news/dad-challenges-the-creative-industry-to-make-change-with-return-of-in-person-festival?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://lbbonline.com/news/dandad-reveals-2025-festival-lineup-at-londons-iconic-southbank-centre-with-new-creative-look-and-feel> - D&AD has unveiled the lineup for its 2025 festival at London's Southbank Centre, scheduled for May 21-22. The event will feature over 80 international speakers across two stages, offering keynote talks, workshops, and award showcases. Brands like Skyscanner, KFC, OpenAI, and The New York Times will participate, discussing topics such as AI, craftsmanship, and technology. The festival aims to push the boundaries of creativity and craftsmanship in an evolving industry. ([lbbonline.com](https://lbbonline.com/news/dandad-reveals-2025-festival-lineup-at-londons-iconic-southbank-centre-with-new-creative-look-and-feel?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://campaignbrief.com/dad-challenges-industry-to-make-change-with-the-return-of-in-person-festival-in-london-in-may/> - D&AD has announced the return of its in-person festival in London, themed 'MAKE. CHANGE.', focusing on creative excellence and addressing challenges posed by evolving technologies. The event will feature talks, workshops, and initiatives like D&AD Shift, emphasizing sustainability and social good. Speakers from brands such as TikTok, Dove, Uber, and Microsoft will discuss topics including talent, accessibility, and mental health. The festival is overseen by new CEO Jo Jackson, aiming to stimulate the global creative community to create impactful work. ([campaignbrief.com](https://campaignbrief.com/dad-challenges-industry-to-make-change-with-the-return-of-in-person-festival-in-london-in-may/?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.marketing-beat.co.uk/2025/04/14/dad-reveals-2025-lineup-with-new-creative-look-and-feel/> - D&AD has unveiled the lineup for its 2025 festival at London's Southbank Centre, scheduled for May 21-22. The event will feature over 80 international speakers across two stages, offering keynote talks, workshops, and award showcases. Brands like Skyscanner, KFC, OpenAI, and The New York Times will participate, discussing topics such as AI, craftsmanship, and technology. The festival aims to push the boundaries of creativity and craftsmanship in an evolving industry. ([marketing-beat.co.uk](https://www.marketing-beat.co.uk/2025/04/14/dad-reveals-2025-lineup-with-new-creative-look-and-feel/?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.medianews4u.com/dad-unveils-2025-festival-line-up-and-campaign-at-southbank-centre-london/> - D&AD has officially revealed the full programme for its highly anticipated 2025 Festival, set to take place on 21–22 May at the iconic Southbank Centre. As a global beacon for creative excellence in design, art direction, and advertising, the event will bring together industry leaders, innovators, and emerging talent for two days of inspiration, learning, and celebration. Marking its 7th edition, the D&AD Festival will feature over 80 international speakers across two stages – one focused on large-scale keynotes and inspiration, and another dedicated to insight-rich learning sessions. Brands such as Skyscanner, KFC, OpenAI, and The New York Times will headline, along with masterclasses, live jury sessions, interactive activations, and a showcase of the 2025 D&AD Award-winning work. ([medianews4u.com](https://www.medianews4u.com/dad-unveils-2025-festival-line-up-and-campaign-at-southbank-centre-london/?utm_source=openai))