

MAY 2026

Monthly Newsletter

WOXSEN
UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF ARTS & DESIGN



SO
AD

Design
In Impact

DEAN'S MESSAGE

At the School of Arts & Design, we believe that the true value of design is not measured by what is created, but by the impact it creates. This edition of our newsletter reflects a powerful idea: design is no longer confined to studios, classrooms, or disciplines. It is increasingly a way to understand complex challenges, build meaningful connections, and create positive change across education, industry, communities, and society.

Over the past few months, we have witnessed this impact in many forms. Through our engagement with school leaders, national and international forums, industry collaborations, faculty research, student immersion projects, and emerging academic initiatives, SOAD continues to strengthen its role as a school that connects creativity with purpose. Whether it is reimagining future-ready learning, advancing sustainable research, nurturing young talent, or shaping Vision 2030 through collective dialogue, each initiative reflects our commitment to designing meaningful futures.

What encourages me most is that these achievements are not individual successes; they are the result of a community that believes in collaboration, curiosity, and continuous learning. Our faculty continue to push boundaries through research, mentorship, and innovation. Our students demonstrate that design begins with empathy, observation, and a willingness to engage with the world as it is. Our partners and stakeholders remind us that education becomes truly relevant when it creates value beyond institutional walls.



As we move forward, our focus remains clear: to prepare graduates who are not only skilled designers but thoughtful leaders, responsible citizens, and lifelong learners capable of creating impact in a rapidly changing world.

That is the SOAD we are building together.

Dr. Aditya Saxena





INDEX

I. School Outreach in Impact

01	SOAD Hosts School Principals' Campus Immersion Programme	1
02	National Media Coverage across 7 Platforms	5
03	CII Indian Women Network Annual Meeting	6
04	SOAD at ICDF 2026: Designing Futures	7
05	Woxsen Summer School 2026	8

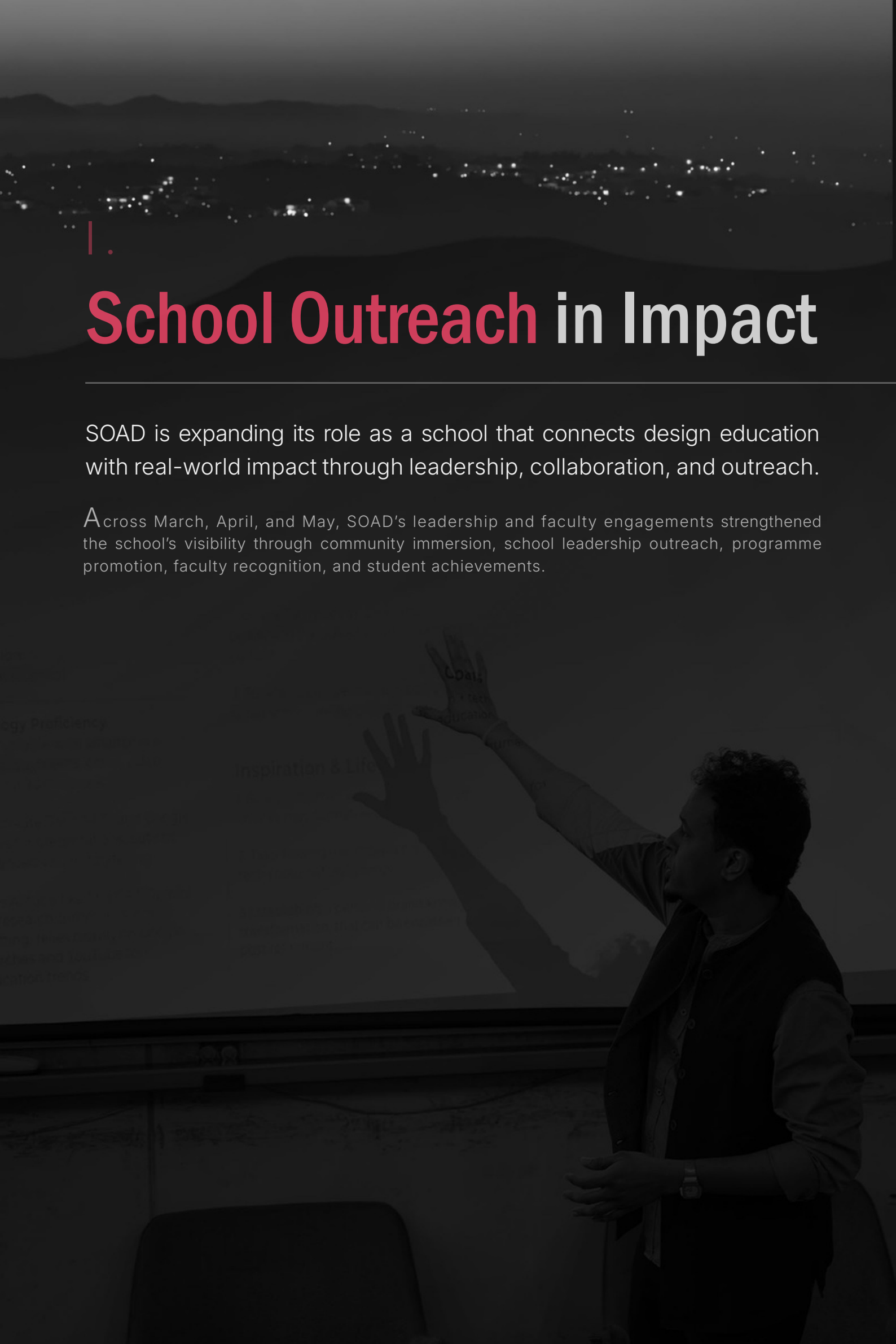
II. Faculty Achievements in Impact

06	SOAD at the WE Club Annual Awards 2026	14
07	Celebrating Dr. Rajesh Kumar's PhD Completion	23
08	Springer Publication Spotlights Faculty Research	26

III. Academic Innovation & Partnerships in Impact

09	SOAD at Network of International Business Schools	28
10	SOAD's M.Des Product Design & Innovation Programme	29
11	SOAD Voice of Vision: Building Vision 2030 Together	32

IV.	Student Learning in Impact	
12	Social Immersion in Telangana	37
13	Fashion Club Collaborates with RayRed at Summer Coffee Festival	39
V.	Academic Reviews in Impact	
14	Semester II Interior Design Jury: Spatial Thinking in Review	44
15	Semester II Industrial Design Jury: Product Thinking in Review	45
16	Semester VIII Industrial Design Jury: Industry Readiness in Review	46
17	Semester II Fashion Design Jury: Design Development in Review	47
18	Semester II Communication Design Jury: Visual Thinking in Review	47
VI.	Student & Alumni Achievements in Impact	
19	Rishita Marripalli's Artistic Milestone: Reclaimed	50
20	Aditya Reddy Wins The IKEA Kreativ Challenge	52



|. School Outreach in Impact

SOAD is expanding its role as a school that connects design education with real-world impact through leadership, collaboration, and outreach.

Across March, April, and May, SOAD's leadership and faculty engagements strengthened the school's visibility through community immersion, school leadership outreach, programme promotion, faculty recognition, and student achievements.





01

Designing Future-Ready Schools: SOAD Hosts School Principals' Campus Immersion Programme

SOAD brought together **30+ school leaders** for a design-led leadership immersion focused on innovation, reflection, AI education, and future-ready learning ecosystems.

On 27 April 2026, the School of Arts and Design, Woxsen University, in collaboration with the Private School Principals' Association (PSPA), hosted the School Principals' Campus Immersion Programme at Woxsen University. The programme brought together 30+ school leaders from across India to explore how education can be reimagined through design thinking, innovation-led leadership, NEP 2020-aligned practices, and future-ready learning. The day was designed as more than a conventional

workshop. It created a space where school leaders could pause, reflect, question, and engage with new ways of thinking about education. The programme included an insightful leadership session by Dr. Ashok Pandey, interactive design thinking exercises, campus walkthroughs, leadership reflections, and collaborative activities. A design thinking workshop led by Munwar Khan and Prof. Mrudul Chilmulwar further encouraged participants to move from discussion to action.

**Every meaningful change in education
begins with leaders willing to reimagine
what schools can become.**



thinking workshop led by Munwar Khan and Prof. Mrudul Chilmulwar further encouraged participants to move from discussion to action. The initiative also brought together the David Dunne Design Thinking Lab, Centre of Excellence: ERS, and Centre for Learning Design, reflecting SOAD's growing role in connecting school leadership, design thinking, and future-ready learning. By placing school leaders inside a living design ecosystem, the programme opened meaningful conversations on how schools can prepare young learners for a world shaped by creativity, technology, empathy, and change. Through this engagement, SOAD strengthened its position as a platform for educational transformation. The programme demonstrated how design thinking can support school leadership, not only by solving problems, but by helping leaders see learning environments as systems that can be thoughtfully designed for the future.

Design thinking gave school leaders a way to turn reflection into practical possibilities for their own institutions.



Five Goals for Future- Ready School Leadership

Design Thinking

Using empathy, observation, and problem-framing in educational leadership.

Experiential Learning

Learning through workshops, campus immersion, and collaborative exercises

Strategic Innovation

Reimagining school systems in line with NEP 2020 and future-ready education.

Peer Dialogue

Creating space for school leaders to exchange challenges, practices, and ideas.

Future-Ready Ecosystems

Exploring technology-integrated, interdisciplinary, and student-centred learning environments.

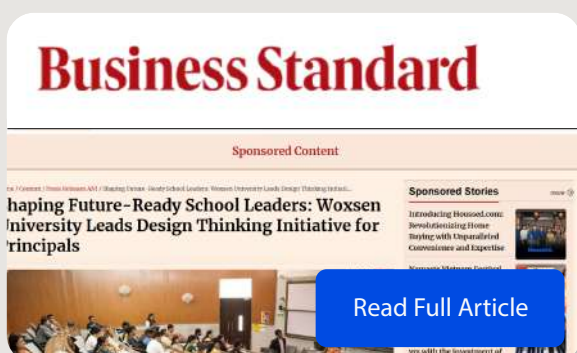
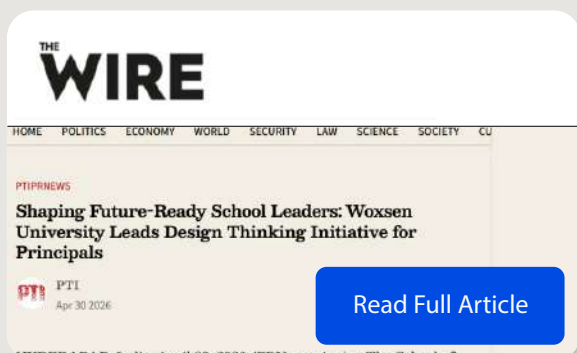
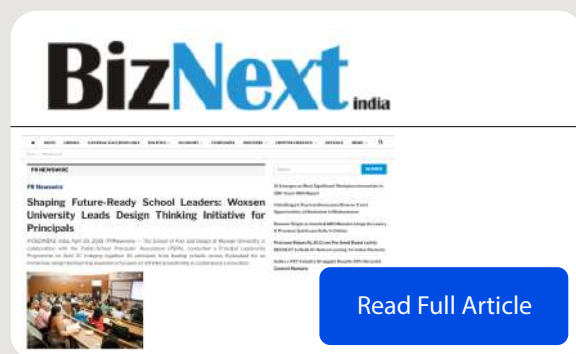
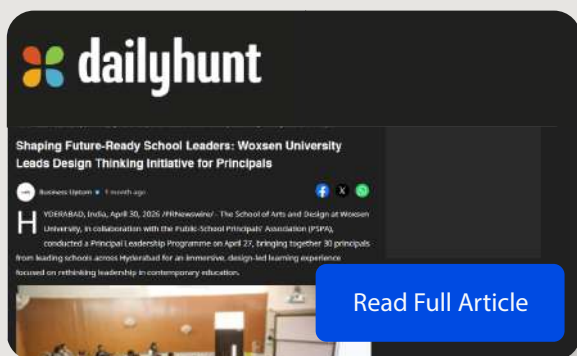


As Dr. Divya Gauri shared her reflections,
the room held onto a simple truth:
Schools do not change by adding more
content, but by rethinking how students
learn, question, and grow.



National Media Coverage

SOAD's Design Thinking Initiative Featured Across 7 Platforms



Click / tap any publication logo to read the full article.

Where Women Lead, Systems Transform

CII Indian Women Network Annual Meeting

Dr. Adity Saxena's participation at the CII Indian Women Network Annual Meeting reflected on inclusive leadership, future-ready learning environments, and the responsibility of institutions to create spaces where others can rise.

Leadership is not only about reaching a position. It is also about creating conditions where others can rise, speak, participate, and grow with confidence. Dr. Adity Saxena attended the CII Indian Women Network Annual Meeting held on 20 March 2026, under the theme "Rising Together: Engage, Elevate, Excel." The meeting brought together women leaders and professionals to reflect on leadership, inclusion, collaboration, and the role of collective growth in shaping stronger systems. The theme of the meeting offered an important reminder that meaningful leadership is not built in isolation. It grows through shared spaces, mutual support, and the ability to create opportunities for others. Conversations around women's leadership and inclusive growth highlighted the need for institutions

to move beyond representation and actively build environments where people feel seen, supported, and empowered. For SOAD, Dr. Adity Saxena's participation connected closely with the school's larger academic vision of preparing students to become thoughtful, empathetic, and future-ready individuals who can work with people, understand systems, and contribute responsibly to society. The engagement reinforced the importance of building learning environments that are inclusive, collaborative, and purpose-driven. As an academic leader, Dr. Adity's participation reflected SOAD's commitment to nurturing spaces where students, educators, and future leaders can grow with confidence and contribute meaningfully to the world around them.



SOAD at ICDF 2026: Designing Futures Through Creativity, Inclusion and Technology

Dr. Adity Saxena joined the Main Theme Roundtable at the International Conference 2026, organized by NIFT Chennai, contributing to discussions on youth innovation, inclusive design, technology, and the future role of design education.

The future is not shaped by technology alone. It is shaped by how creatively, inclusively, and responsibly people learn to use it. Dr. Adity Saxena was invited as a panelist for the Main Theme Roundtable at the International Conference 2026, organized by NIFT Chennai from 25 to 27 March 2026. The roundtable discussion focused on the theme "Designing the Future: Creativity, Inclusion and Technology in Youth Innovation".

The discussion brought attention to the important role of education in preparing young people to think creatively, work with emerging technologies, and respond to social change with sensitivity and purpose. It highlighted how design education can help students move beyond technical skill

and develop the ability to question, include, imagine, and lead. Aligned with the larger vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, the conversation reinforced the need to build learning environments where creativity and innovation support a more inclusive future. For SOAD, Dr. Adity Saxena's participation reflected the school's growing engagement with national conversations on design education, youth empowerment, inclusion, and technology-led transformation.

This engagement strengthened SOAD's academic visibility while placing design education within a wider national dialogue on future-ready learning, inclusive innovation, and the role of young creative minds in shaping tomorrow's society.





05

Woxsen Summer School 2026

Where Young Learners Met the World of Design

SOAD faculty conducted a series of hands-on workshops for school students, introducing them to design thinking, visual communication, digital tools, spatial design, material exploration, and creative problem-solving

For 5,000 years,
humans did my job
with a twig.



A photograph of several students sitting at a long wooden table in a workshop setting. One student in the center is raising their right hand. Other students are looking towards the left side of the frame. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

As part of Woxsen Summer School 2026 – Creative Visionaries and Explorers, the School of Arts and Design conducted a series of interactive workshops for school students from Grades 8 to 12. The programme introduced young learners to different dimensions of design through observation, making, experimentation, storytelling, digital tools, and problem-solving. Across multiple sessions, students explored how designers think, question, create, test, and communicate ideas. The workshops helped students understand design not merely as drawing or decoration, but as a way of seeing the world more carefully and responding to it with imagination and purpose.

**The first step into Design
is to notice deeply, ask boldly,
and let curiosity take the first
shape of discovery**

Track A

Creative Visionaries

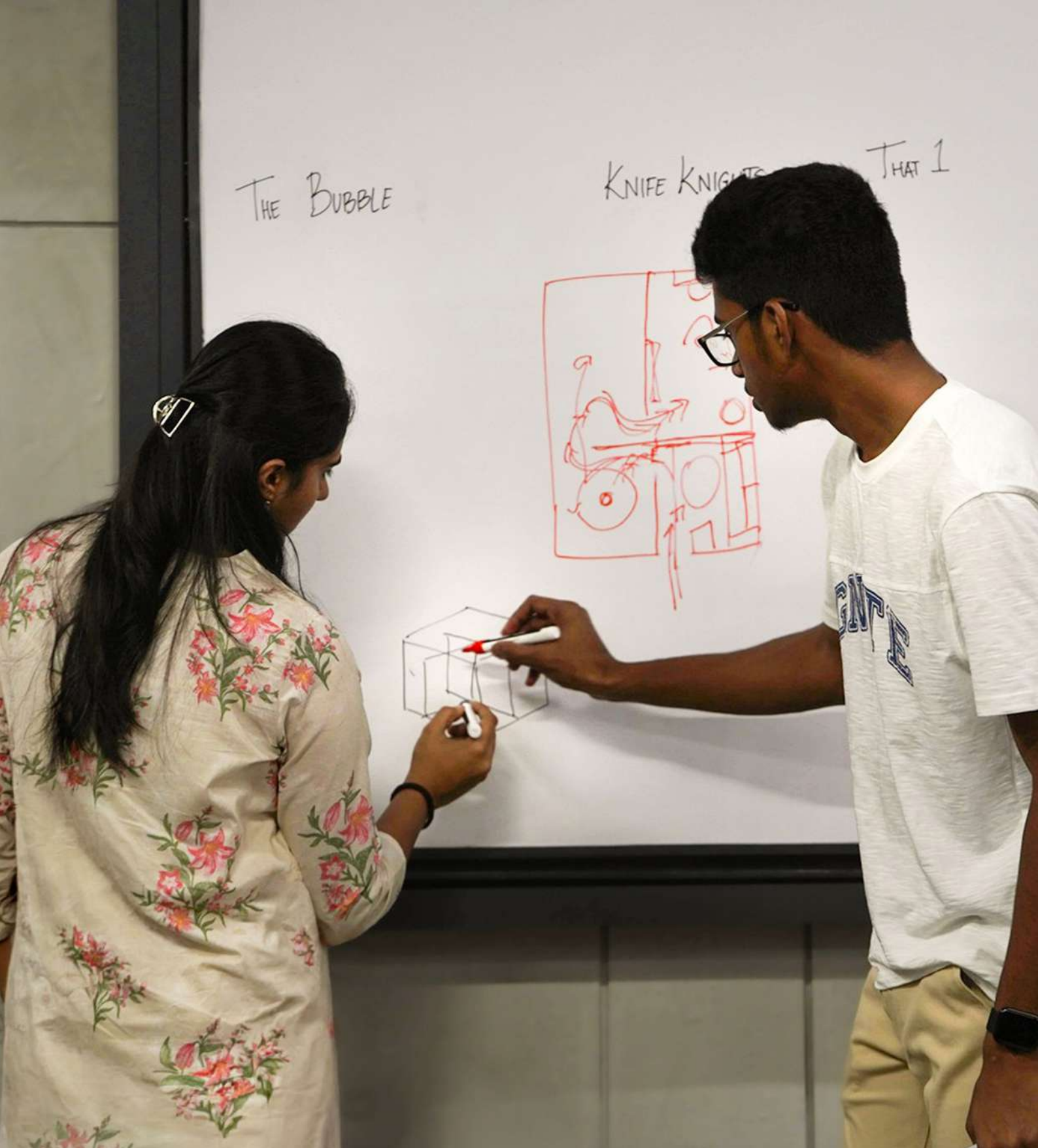
The Creative Visionaries track introduced students to creative tools, and foundations of design through thinking exercises, visual tools, digital methods, material exploration, and hands-on creative practice.

It starts here: with a question, a room full of young minds, and someone showing them that design is not decoration.



And then it clicks. They begin to see that every problem around them can be looked at differently.





Track B

Explorers

The Explorers track helped students observe the world with curiosity, engage with materials, understand spatial experience, explore digital capture, and move from problems toward prototypes.



Behind every meaningful learning experience is someone who holds the many moving parts together with care, patience, and purpose.

Special Thanks to Prof. Srijana

Prof. Srijana's leadership gave the programme its direction, warmth, and lasting impact.

II .

Faculty Achievements in Impact

A reflection of SOAD's growing academic strength, shaped by research, recognition, mentorship, creative practice, and scholarly contributions.

This section celebrates faculty milestones that strengthen the school's intellectual culture, from awards and publications to PhD achievements and research-led contributions that expand the role of design education.



Environmental Footprints and Ecology
of Products and Processes

Sadhna
Pavan M
Lata Samant
Rajesh Kumar *Editors*

Agro-Textiles

Environmental and Ecology
Perspectives



06

Celebrating Excellence

School of Arts and Design Faculty at The WE Club Annual Awards 2026

Faculty members from the School of Arts and Design were recognised at the WE Club Annual Awards 2026 for their contributions to teaching, research, academic excellence mentorship, and leadership

The WE Club Annual Awards 2026 Ceremony was held on 8 May 2026 at the Oval, 2nd Floor, bringing together faculty and staff from across Woxsen University for an evening of recognition, appreciation, and celebration. The event honoured the dedication, achievements, and everyday contributions of educators who continue to shape the academic and creative culture of the university. The School of Arts and Design had a proud presence at the ceremony, with several

SOAD faculty members receiving awards for their contributions. Their recognition reflected the school's growing strength in teaching, mentorship, research, creative practice, and institutional engagement. The evening became not only a celebration of individual achievement, but also a reminder that academic excellence is built through consistent effort, shared responsibility, and a deep commitment to teaching, mentorship, research, and institutional growth.



*When leadership recognises
excellence, individual
effort becomes part of the
institution's shared legacy.*





Teaching Excellence Award

There is something quietly profound about working with students who are encountering design for the very first time. The Teaching Excellence Award 2026 feels less like a destination and more like a pause — A moment to look back at the journey that brought me here, and to recognise the many young minds who were, unknowingly, as much my teachers as I was theirs.

My work has been largely with Foundation Semester I students, arriving with years of conditioned thinking about what it means to learn, to make, and to see. The most important work that happens in that space is not the addition of new knowledge, but the gentle unlearning of old assumptions. I see my role less as an instructor and more as a catalyst creating the conditions for that unlearning to become a discovery rather than a loss. What continues to surprise me is how much I learn in return. Every cohort asks questions I have not been asked before. Every fresh perspective challenges me to articulate things I had only ever held intuitively. In that sense, the Foundation classroom has been one of my most honest spaces of intellectual growth. This recognition affirms something I have come to believe deeply — that teaching, when done with genuine presence and curiosity, is itself a practice of continuous transformation. Not just for the student, but for the teacher.

"To teach at the Foundation is to stand where everything begins — and to remember that beginnings matter most."

Prof. Pradeep Kumar

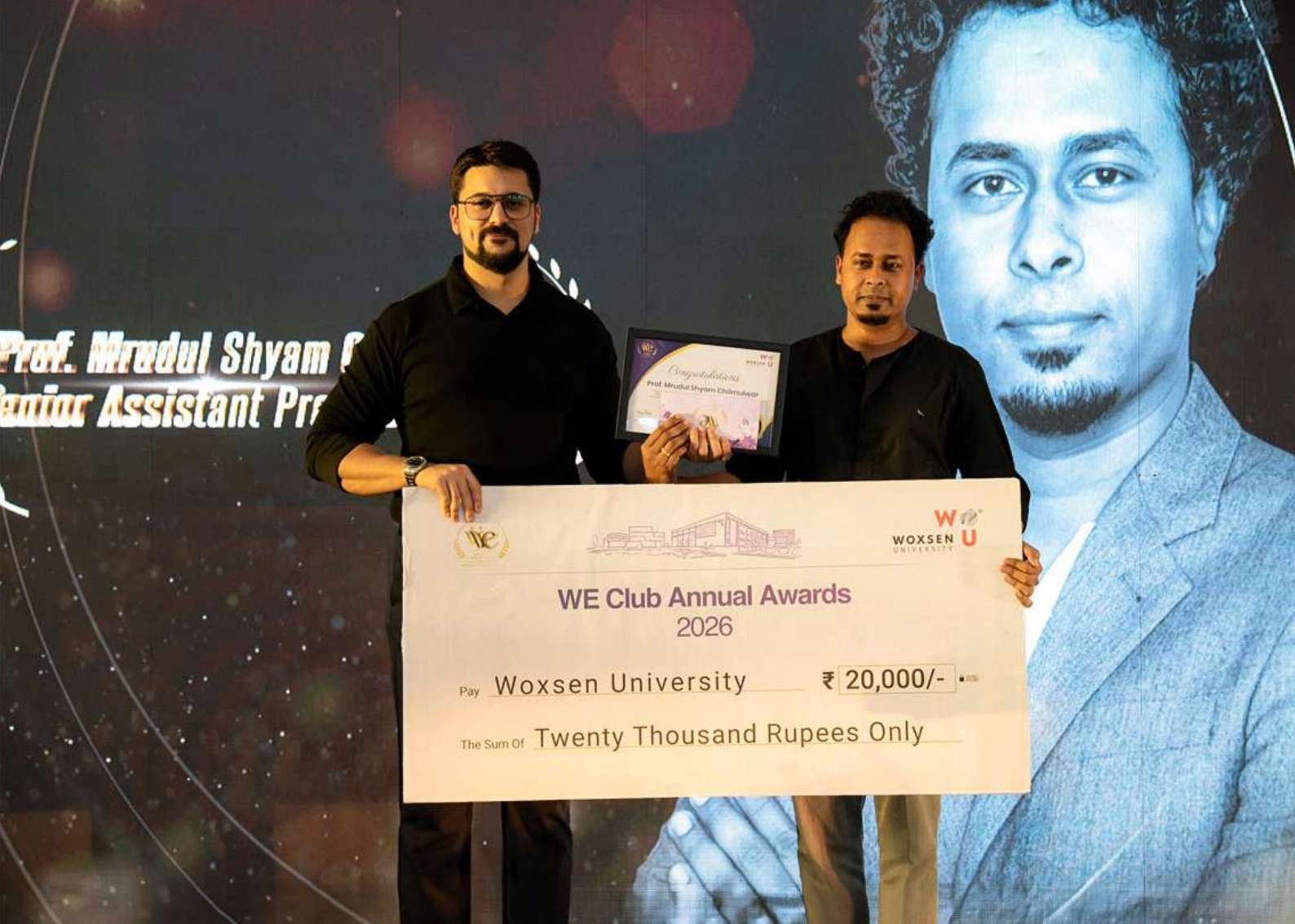


Students' Choice Award

Receiving the Students' Choice Award is incredibly moving, as there is no greater honour for an educator than knowing you have truly connected with your students. At SOAD, my journey has always been about fostering a collaborative space where young designers feel empowered to innovate. This recognition fuels my commitment to continue guiding, inspiring, and learning alongside our exceptionally talented student community at Woxsen.

"To be chosen by students is to be reminded that teaching is measured not only by what we explain, but by what we help them become."

Prof. Tejas Eknath Pawar

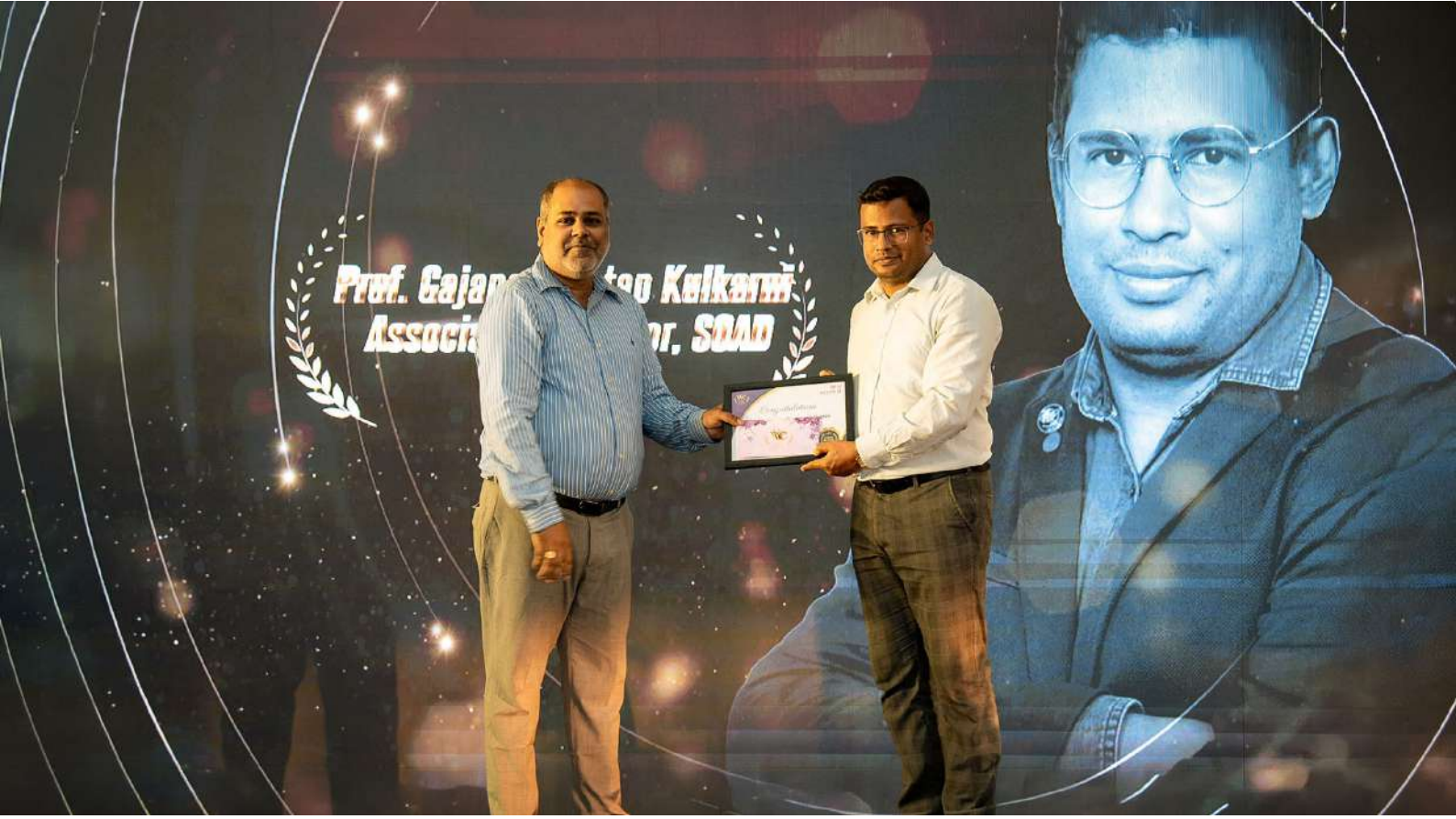


Outstanding Mentorship Award

Mentorship is one of the most important responsibilities an educator can hold. At SOAD, mentoring has always meant more than guiding students through assignments or project outcomes. It is about helping them find clarity when ideas are uncertain, confidence when the process feels difficult, and direction when possibilities feel overwhelming. For me, mentorship is built through listening, questioning, challenging, and walking alongside students as they discover their own way of thinking. Every review, discussion, critique, and conversation becomes a chance to help students move closer to their own voice as designers. The most rewarding part of this journey is seeing students grow from hesitation to conviction, from scattered ideas to meaningful work, and from learning design to believing in their ability to shape it.

“This recognition is a reminder of the quiet responsibility that comes with being a mentor: to support, to challenge, to trust the student’s potential, and to help them see possibilities they may not yet see in themselves.”

Prof. Mrudul Chilmulwar



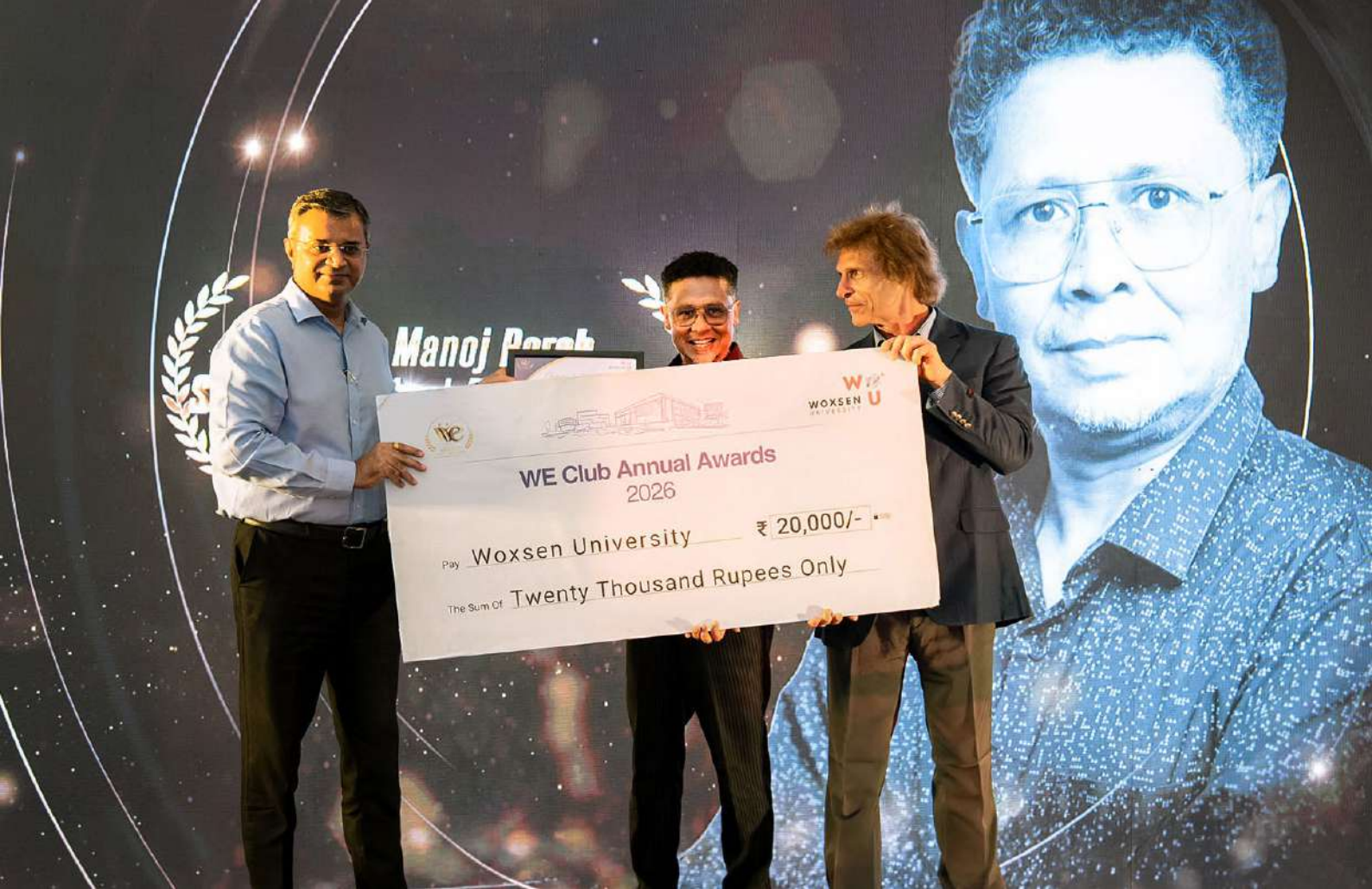
Outstanding Research Excellence and Innovation Award

Being recognized with the Outstanding Research Excellence and Innovation Award 2026 is both an honor and a reflection of the transformative research journey I have experienced at Woxsen University. This recognition acknowledges my contribution to a strategic exploratory research project with Volkswagen Innovation Group, Germany, focused on understanding India's circular and CO₂ economy and exploring sustainable transformation opportunities within the automotive sector.

The project enabled me to investigate policy frameworks, regulatory landscapes, and decarbonization pathways while developing actionable proof-of-concepts for a more sustainable mobility future. It was an enriching opportunity to uncover new insights, create original knowledge, and contribute to industry-relevant solutions with real-world impact. This award reinforces my belief that impactful research is not only about generating knowledge but also about translating ideas into meaningful change for society, industry, and the environment.

**"The future belongs to those who can transform knowledge
into sustainable action."**

Dr. Gajanan Kulkarni



Rising Star Award

Receiving the Rising Star Award at the WE Club Annual Awards 2026 is especially meaningful because it comes in the very first year of my journey as an educator, mentor, and faculty member. This recognition feels less like a destination and more like a responsibility to keep growing, learning, and contributing with sincerity. As someone still shaping my own path in teaching, I believe education is not only about guiding students, but also about allowing their questions, ideas, and energy to shape us in return. This award strengthens my commitment to continue working with purpose, humility, and dedication.

"To rise as an educator is not only to be recognised, but to accept the responsibility of helping others rise with you."

Prof. Manoj Borah





*Every recognition
carries the story of
people who kept
showing up, giving
their best, and
leaving behind a
little more hope
than they found.*

Celebrating Dr. Rajesh Kumar's PhD Completion

A Proud Research Milestone for SOAD

Dr. Rajesh Kumar's successful PhD completion marks a significant academic milestone for SOAD and strengthens the school's growing research culture.

SOAD celebrated a proud academic milestone in April as Associate Professor and Assistant Dean Dr. Rajesh Kumar successfully completed his PhD. As an integral part of SOAD since 2021, Dr. Rajesh Kumar has contributed as a committed educator and researcher, strengthening the school's academic and intellectual ecosystem. This achievement is especially significant as the first successful PhD completion from the School of Arts and Design. It represents not only an individual accomplishment, but also a collective journey shaped by perseverance, mentorship, collaboration, and belief. What should sportswear be made of in a

warming world? That question sits at the heart of Dr. Rajesh Kumar's doctoral research, which explored the comfort and performance properties of knitted fabrics woven from an unlikely pairing: cotton and cattail - a naturally abundant wetland grass. Across nine fabric samples combining three cotton-to-cattail blend ratios and three knit constructions (rib knit, interlock, and loop knit/fleece), Dr. Kumar measured how fabrics manage moisture and regulate body temperature two of the most critical factors in athletic and functional clothing. The findings were clear and actionable. Rib-knit fabrics with a higher cotton content (90:10 blend)





A PhD is carried through years of quiet discipline, doubt, patience, and the courage to keep going.



It is a long journey of questions, perseverance, and belief, and this moment marks not just one scholar's achievement, but the growth of SOAD's research culture.

emerged as the strongest performers for warm-climate sportswear, showing the fastest moisture absorption, superior spreading speed, and the highest overall moisture management capacity. At the other end, loop-knit fleece fabrics with a higher cattail content (70:30 blend) proved best suited for cold-climate applications, offering maximum thermal resistance and insulation. Interlock structures occupied a comfortable middle ground — well-balanced for temperate conditions. Beyond the performance data, the research makes a broader point: cattail, an underutilised natural fibre, holds genuine potential as a sustainable alternative in performance textiles. By demonstrating that thoughtful fibre blending and structural design can meet climate-specific comfort needs, the study opens a pathway for eco-friendly innovation in the sportswear and functional apparel industry.

“

“Completing this PhD has been one of the most meaningful journeys of my academic life — it is the culmination of years of asking questions about what fabrics can do for people and for the planet. Seeing laboratory data confirm what I believed about natural fibres is deeply gratifying, and I hope this research contributes, in some small but real way, to a more sustainable future for the fashion and textile industry.”

Dr.Rajesh Kumar



Springer Publication Spotlights Faculty Research in Sustainable Agro-Textiles

Dr. Sadhna and Dr. Rajesh Kumar contributed as co-editors to *Agro-Textiles: Environmental and Ecological Perspectives*, a Springer publication exploring sustainability, ecological responsibility, and innovation in agro-textile practices.

As the world faces climate change, resource depletion, and the environmental impact of industrial production, textiles have become an important area of sustainability-focused research. Agro-textiles connect agriculture, material innovation, and ecological responsibility, offering new possibilities for more responsible products and processes. In this context, the Springer publication *Agro-Textiles: Environmental and Ecological Perspectives* brings together research on sustainable textile practices, ecological innovation, and agro-based materials. Dr. Sadhna and Dr. Rajesh Kumar contributed as co-editors to this publication, developed in collaboration with co-editors Dr. Pavan M and Dr. Lata Samant. Their contribution reflects SOAD's growing engagement with research-led design, sustainable textile practices, and interdisciplinary thinking. The publication stands as the significant academic

contribution to ecological design discourse and highlights the role of faculty research in shaping responsible futures for textiles and material innovation. The work stands as a reminder that the future of design will be measured not only by what we create, but by how responsibly we create it.



Over two years, we discovered that the future of agro-textiles lies not merely in materials, but in our ability to harmonize technology, agriculture, and ecological responsibility.

Dr. Rajesh and Dr. Sadhna



III .

Academic Innovation & Partnerships in Impact

This section brings together stories where teaching, curriculum, industry, and institutional vision meet.

Through industry interactions, conference presentations, programme features, and collaborative academic initiatives, SOAD continues to explore new ways of preparing students for a changing world.





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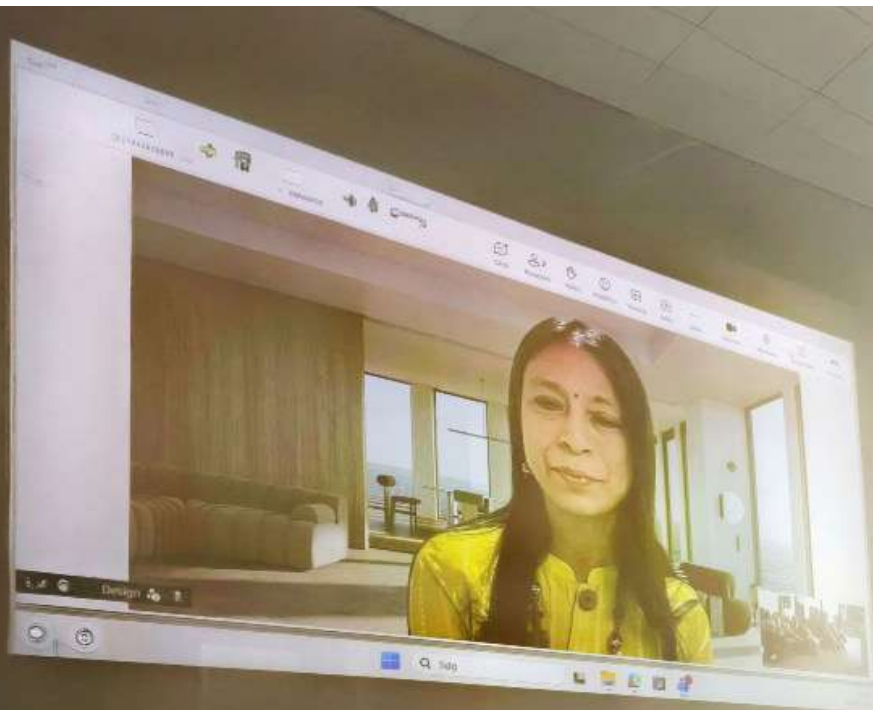
SOAD at Network of International Business Schools 2026

Rewiring Business Education, Design Practice in the Age of AI

Dr. Adity Saxena presented the Salesforce x Woxsen University project with Prof. Ed Overes at NIBS Conference 2026, highlighting how studio pedagogy, design thinking, and human-centred learning can reshape education in the age of AI.

As artificial intelligence continues to transform business, education must evolve with greater purpose. Future-ready learning cannot rely only on information, efficiency, or technical skills; it must also build empathy, critical thinking, collaboration, and the ability to respond meaningfully to complex human problems. At the Network of International Business Schools Conference 2026, Dr. Adity Saxena presented the project "From Silos to Studios: Rewiring Business Education, Design Practice in the Age of AI" with Prof. Ed Overes. The presentation explored

the Salesforce x Woxsen University project and its central message: as AI accelerates solutions, design gives them meaning, context, and responsibility. The project highlighted studio-based learning, where students learn by making, testing, reflecting, and improving ideas. It encouraged interdisciplinary collaboration, human-centred problem solving, and learning through real-world ambiguity. The presentation reflected SOAD's growing engagement with future-ready education, industry collaboration, and academic innovation.



SOAD's M.Des Product Design & Innovation Programme

Building the Next Generation of Product Innovators

In a candid conversation, Prof. Mrudul Chilmulwar and Munwar Khan discuss SOAD's M.Des Product Design & Innovation Programme as the future-focused pathway that brings together product thinking, industry relevance, design research, AI-driven methods, and human-centred innovation to prepare designers for emerging challenges.

Design education today stands at a turning point. In a world shaped by artificial intelligence, changing industries, and fast-moving markets, designers are no longer expected to create only beautiful or usable solutions. They are expected to understand people, business, technology, culture, and impact together. The future of design belongs to those who can move beyond trends, observe deeply, think critically, and transform ideas into meaningful, viable outcomes. In a candid conversation with Munwar Khan, Prof. Mrudul Chilmulwar shared the vision behind SOAD's upcoming M.Des Product

Design & Innovation Programme. The programme is designed for young designers who want to shape what comes next by combining strong design fundamentals with future-facing areas such as AI collaboration, inclusive thinking, service design, conversational interfaces, domain-specific innovation, and product-service ecosystems. Prof. Mrudul emphasized that while the foundations of design education remain important, the role of designers is changing. Designers are moving from being creators of single solutions to curators of multiple possibilities.





In this context, the programme places value creation at the centre of design learning, helping students understand not only aesthetics and usability, but also scalability, profitability, execution, and long-term user value. Across four semesters, students are expected to move from understanding people and markets to developing intelligent, culturally relevant, and commercially viable products, services, and systems.

Through industry sprints, live projects, advanced electives, prototyping culture, and a final capstone or thesis, the programme aims to prepare confident, future - ready designers who can work with clarity, creativity, and purpose. The conversation also reflected on the mindset required for emerging designers. Prof. Mrudul spoke about intellectual curiosity, comfort with ambiguity, deep observation beyond the design

domain, and the need to understand economics, business, healthcare, culture, and real-world systems. His message was clear: tools may change, but mindset endures. He also cautioned young designers against mistaking aesthetics for impact. Visual appeal alone is not enough unless it creates meaningful experiences, delivers value, and responds to real needs.

In the age of AI, where execution may become faster and idea generation more accessible, the designer's deeper responsibility will be to ask better questions, build stronger insights, and create responsible outcomes. The programme reflects SOAD's commitment to building designers who are not only skilled with tools, but also capable of thinking deeply, prototyping rapidly, responding to uncertainty, and creating work that matters in the world beyond the classroom.

The future designers are not only makers of products.

They are also
readers of
people, systems,
and change.



M.Des (Product Design & Innovation) |
Vision, Industry Relevance & Future of ...

WATCH NOW

SOAD Voice of Vision: Building Vision 2030 Together

Faculty members came together through dialogue, reflection, and shared imagination to contribute to SOAD's Vision 2030, shaping an institutional future built through collective voices and shared ownership.

A strong institutional vision is not created only through documents, deadlines, or leadership statements. It grows when the people who teach, mentor, build, question, and carry the school every day are invited to imagine its future together. Vision becomes meaningful when it is shared, discussed, challenged, shaped through collective ownership.

On 14 and 15 May 2026, the School of Arts and Design conducted the third episode of SOAD Voice of Vision, an initiative aimed at shaping the school's Vision 2030 through an inclusive and participatory process. The session created space for faculty members to share their voices, experiences, concerns, and aspirations for the future of SOAD

Through lightning talks, future notes, and reflective group discussions, faculty members engaged as Torchbearers, Navigators, and Trailblazers, contributing ideas on curriculum, collaboration, student futures, faculty growth, and the culture the school aims to build. The discussions encouraged honest reflection and helped connect individual perspectives to a larger institutional direction.

The initiative reinforced that a meaningful vision is not simply written at the top, but shaped by the people who bring it to life every day. As SOAD moves towards Vision 2030, Voice of Vision becomes an important step in building a future rooted in shared responsibility, inclusive thinking, and collective imagination.



When faculty and leadership come together to reflect on the future, the school becomes more than an institution; it becomes a shared responsibility.

Faculty members shared their views through lightning talks, future notes, and group discussions. The process allowed different perspectives to come forward, including concerns, aspirations, and practical suggestions for the school's future. These conversations helped identify what SOAD is already doing well and what needs to be improved as the school grows.

The larger purpose of the initiative was to make Vision 2030 a collective process rather than a top-down document. By involving faculty directly in the discussion, SOAD created space for shared ownership, clearer priorities, and a stronger sense of responsibility towards the future of design education at the school.



The future of a school is first written quietly, around tables where people are willing to think together.



Vision 2030 moved from written thoughts into spoken dialogue.



where ideas, questions and listening became the first act of team-building.



IV.

Student Learning in Impact

This section highlights learning experiences where students moved beyond lectures into observation, research, making, reflection, and hands-on problem solving.

Through studio activities, field-based learning, social immersion, design process exercises, and classroom projects, SOAD students strengthened their ability to understand people, explore contexts, develop ideas, and turn learning into meaningful design action.



Social Immersion in Telangana: What a Village Taught Our Design Students

SOAD Foundation Design students spent 16 days in a village in Telangana, learning through observation, mapping, listening, and community life before attempting to design solutions.



SOAD Foundation Design students spent 16 days in a village in Telangana, learning through observation, mapping, listening, and community life before attempting to design solutions. The most important skill in design is not rushing to solve. It is learning how to pay attention. The Social Immersion Project invited Foundation Design students at SOAD to step outside the classroom and enter a real community setting, where learning happened through observation, conversation, mapping, listening, and lived experience. For 16 days, 168 Foundation Design students spent time in a village in Telangana, studying everyday life before attempting to design anything at all.

For three years, the Social Immersion Project has created an important learning space beyond the studio. Instead of beginning with a ready-made brief, students began with people, place, routine, culture, and context. They observed how communities live, work, move, gather, share resources, respond to challenges, and build meaning through everyday practices.

The project asked students to slow down. With no screens and no immediate solutions to produce, they learned to understand people, systems, routines, and local realities through direct experience. They mapped spaces, listened to community members, observed daily patterns, and engaged with rural life not as outsiders searching for problems, but as learners trying to understand a living system.

This approach is deeply important in design education. A village is not just a location; it is a network of habits, relationships, materials, labour, memory, climate, economy, and culture. For young designers, learning in such a context helps develop patience, empathy, cultural sensitivity, and systems thinking. It teaches them that meaningful design cannot be built only from assumptions, online references, or studio conversations. It must begin with the world as people actually live it.

The experience also challenged students to rethink what design itself means. Design is often imagined as the act of creating solutions, but this project reminded students that design begins much earlier. It begins with noticing what others overlook, asking better questions, understanding the dignity of lived experience, and recognising that every community already carries knowledge of its own.

What the Village Teaches

The Social Immersion Project.

 **168** students.

 **16** days.

 **One village in Telangana.**

**No briefs.
No screens.**

 Just observation, conversation, and the discipline of paying attention **before solving.**



Fashion Club Collaborates with RayRed at Summer Coffee Festival 2026

SOAD Fashion Club collaborated with RayRed to present a 20-minute fashion performance at T-Works, Hyderabad, turning a public festival showcase into a student-led story of creativity, teamwork, movement, and recognition.

Fashion becomes powerful when it leaves the studio and meets people. On a public stage, garments are no longer only designed, styled, or worn; they begin to move, speak, and become part of a larger cultural experience. For SOAD Fashion Club, the Summer Coffee Festival 2026 became one such moment where student creativity stepped beyond campus and entered the wider creative community of Hyderabad.

The Fashion Club recently collaborated with RayRed, a Hyderabad-based fashion label known for contemporary design and visual storytelling, as part of the Summer Coffee Festival 2026, organized by Communitie. The festival was held on 30 and 31 May 2026 at T-Works, Hyderabad, bringing together coffee brands, artists, entrepreneurs, food experiences, music, cinema, fashion, and cultural activities under one roof. With more than 7,000 visitors reported through media coverage, the event provided a strong public platform for emerging creators and student-led initiatives. For the Fashion Club, the collaboration with RayRed offered an opportunity to participate in a professional fashion showcase while working alongside an emerging industry label. The challenge, however, was not small. The team had only one week to conceptualize, rehearse, coordinate, and execute the entire presentation.



Communication Design, 2025-29

YOUR STYLE STATEMENT



Aysha Ali Khan

Communication Design, 2025-29

Brought RayRed's look to life with a presence that made the showcase feel bold, sharp, and completely owned.

YOUR STYLE STATEMENT



Challa Veera Venkata Manikanta Reddy

Communication Design, 2025-29

Carried RayRed's look with a quiet intensity, turning stillness, attitude, and sharp visual presence into a strong runway moment.



Jasmeet Saini

Communication Design, 2025-29

Brought confidence, edge, and controlled presence to the RayRed showcase, turning the look into a strong statement of style and attitude.

V.

Academic Reviews in Impact

This section highlights moments where student work is reviewed, questioned, refined, and strengthened through academic critique.

Through juries, presentations, feedback sessions, and design reviews, students learn to defend their ideas, improve their process, and transform creative exploration into clearer, more confident design outcomes.





14

Semester II Interior Design Jury: Spatial Thinking in Review

The jury became a space where young designers learned to move beyond layout and aesthetics, explaining how interiors respond to people, purpose, and lived experience.

Interior design shapes how people move, feel, work, gather, and belong within a space. It is not only about arranging walls, furniture, and materials, but about understanding human behaviour, comfort, circulation, function, and atmosphere. For young interior design students, learning to think spatially means learning how everyday environments can support better experiences. The Interior Design Jury for the 2nd Semester students of Batch 2025–29 was conducted in offline mode on 26th and 27th May 2026. A total of 22 students presented their work, showcasing their understanding of spatial planning, design development, material thinking,

and visual communication. The jury created a reflective space for students to explain their design decisions, receive constructive feedback, and strengthen their approach towards interior spaces. Faculty members Assoc. Prof. Tejas Eknath Pawar and Asst. Prof. Eesha Sharma guided the review process, encouraging students to connect creativity with functionality, context, and user experience. The session helped students refine both their design thinking and presentation skills while understanding how meaningful interiors are shaped around people, purpose, and lived experience.

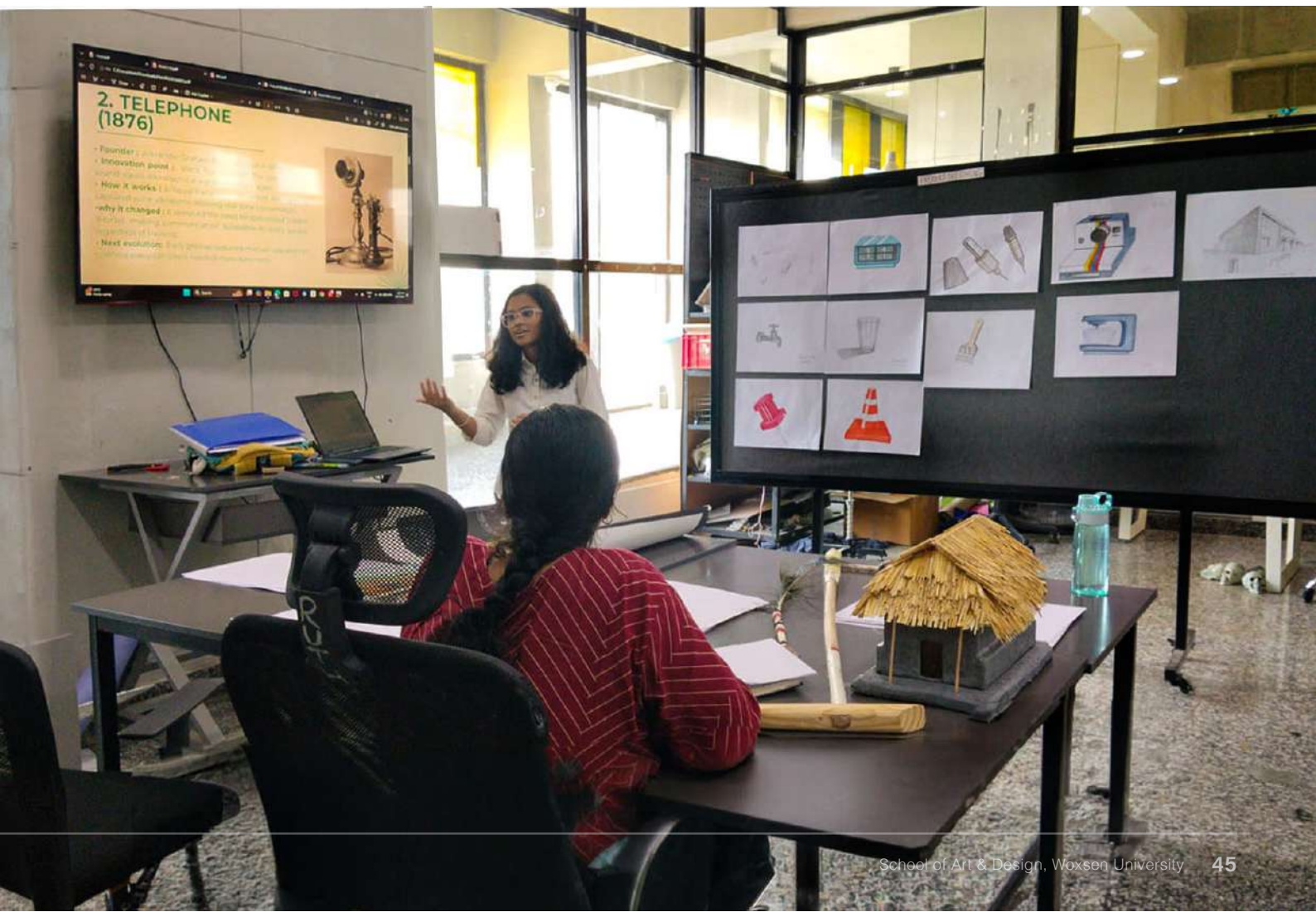


Semester II Industrial Design Jury: Product Thinking in Review

Ideas moved from sketches to possibility as students explored product thinking through form, function, craftsmanship, and design decisions, learning how everyday objects can respond to human needs.

Industrial design shapes the objects, tools, systems, and products that people interact with every day. From the smallest handheld object to larger functional solutions, product design is not only about how something looks, but how it works, how it feels, how it is made, and how meaningfully it supports human life. For young industrial design students, learning to think through the products means learning to connect creativity with usability, feasibility, material understanding, and purpose. The Semester II Industrial Design Jury for the Batch 2025–2029 was conducted on 26 and 27 May 2026, with 40 students presenting their design work. The jury focused on students' ability to develop concepts, explore product sketching,

demonstrate craftsmanship, and communicate early design decisions through their final outputs. The review panel included Prof. Harsha Sagar, Prof. Yukta Kanere, Prof. Mrudul, and Prof. Bhushan, who provided constructive feedback on feasibility, industry alignment, creative direction, and design presentation. The session encouraged students to reflect on their process, explain the intent behind their ideas, and build confidence in defending their design decisions. Through this jury, students gained valuable exposure to critique-based learning and strengthened their understanding of how product ideas can evolve from observation and sketching into thoughtful design possibilities.

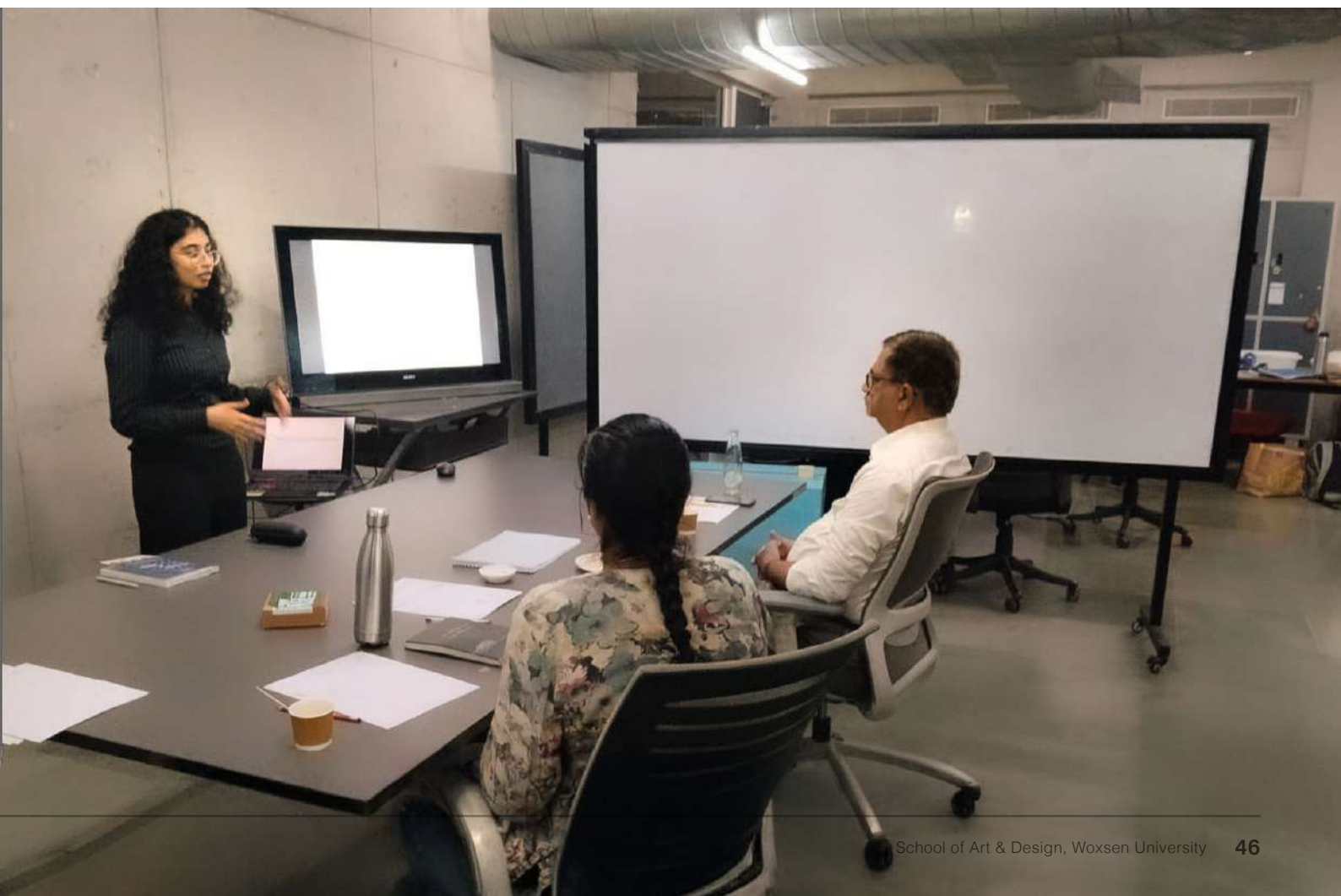


Semester VIII Industrial Design Jury: Industry Readiness in Review

Final-year students presented design outcomes shaped by concept development, product innovation, craftsmanship, and feasibility, receiving expert feedback that strengthened their transition from academic projects to professional design practice.

Industrial Design reaches its strongest expression when ideas are tested not only for creativity, but also for feasibility, usability, craftsmanship, and relevance to the real world. For final-year students, the jury becomes an important moment of transition, where academic projects are examined through the lens of industry expectations, professional standards, and future possibilities. The Semester VIII Industrial Design Jury for the Batch 2023–2026 was conducted on 20 and 21 May 2026, with 22 students presenting their final design outcomes. The jury provided students with an opportunity to showcase their concept development, product innovation, experimentation, craftsmanship, and individual design direction. The review panel included Prof. Harsha Sagar,

Prof. Yukta Kanere, Prof. Mrudul, Piyush Goghari, and Chirag Bansal, who evaluated the students' work and offered constructive feedback on feasibility, industry alignment, execution quality, and design expectations. The session helped students identify areas for refinement while strengthening their ability to present, explain, and defend their design decisions with confidence. Through this review, students gained valuable insights into how their projects could be improved, developed further, and positioned for professional design practice. The feedback also opened possibilities for future collaborations, internships, and industry engagement, while helping faculty reflect on curriculum refinement in line with current professional expectations.



Semester II Fashion Design Jury: Design Development in Review

Second-semester Fashion Design students presented their semester-end work for review, receiving feedback on design research, concept development, technical execution, presentation, and portfolio documentation.

Second-semester Fashion Design students presented their semester-end work for review, receiving feedback on design research, concept development, technical execution, presentation, and portfolio documentation. Fashion design begins long before a garment is made. It begins with observation, research, material understanding, body awareness, cultural references, and the ability to translate an idea into a clear design direction. The Semester II Fashion Design Jury for Batch 2025–2029 was conducted as part of the May academic reviews. Students presented their semester-end work across foundation-level design learning, showcasing their progress in design research, concept development,

visual exploration, material study, construction thinking, and presentation skills. The review allowed students to explain their process, defend their design choices, and receive constructive feedback from the faculty panel. The jury encouraged them to connect creativity with clarity, technical understanding, and real-world relevance. Through this process, students reflected on how fashion design is not only about aesthetics, but also about research, function, identity, craft, communication, and the body. The feedback received during the jury will support further refinement of their creative process, portfolio documentation, and readiness for advanced fashion design projects.

Semester II Communication Design Jury: Visual Thinking in Review

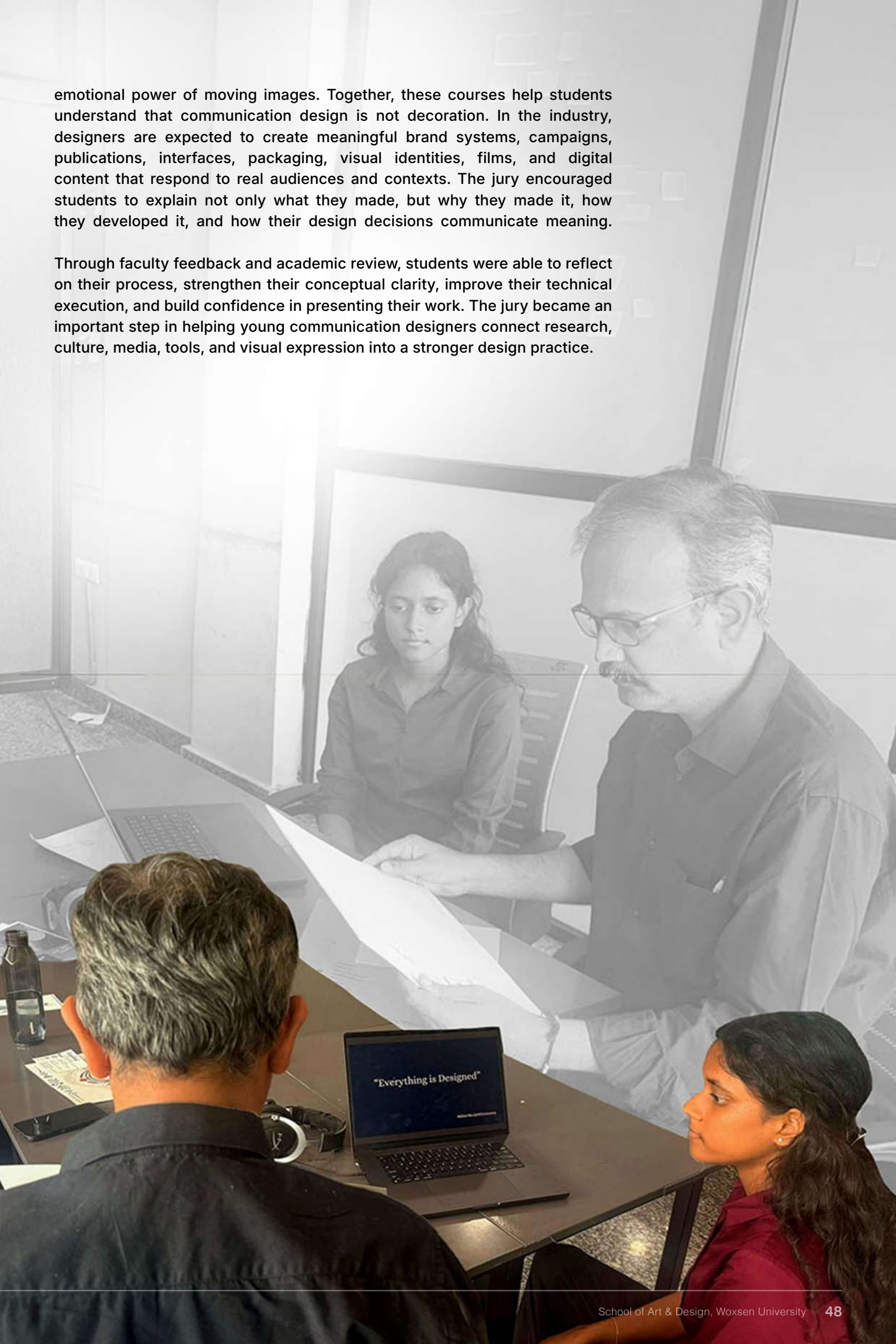
Second-semester Communication Design students presented their foundational design work for review, receiving feedback on conceptual clarity, technical skills, and creative development.

Communication design is not only about making posters, layouts, screens, or campaigns. Before a designer can communicate clearly, they must learn how to observe, research, interpret culture, understand visual media, and use digital tools with purpose. The Semester II Communication Design Jury was conducted from 25 to 29 May 2026, where students presented their semester-end projects developed across foundational courses such as Introduction to Design Software, Material Culture and Cognition, Design Research, Film and Media Appreciation, and related areas of visual communication. The review brought together student work that reflected early explorations

in image-making, layout, research, storytelling, material understanding, digital execution, and media interpretation. These subjects form an important foundation for communication designers. Introduction to Design Software helps students understand how professional tools are used to translate ideas into visual outcomes. Design Research trains them to look beyond assumptions and build work from observation, inquiry, and evidence. Material Culture and Cognition helps students understand how objects, symbols, habits, and cultural meanings shape the way people respond to design. Film and Media Appreciation introduces them to framing, narrative, visual language, and the

emotional power of moving images. Together, these courses help students understand that communication design is not decoration. In the industry, designers are expected to create meaningful brand systems, campaigns, publications, interfaces, packaging, visual identities, films, and digital content that respond to real audiences and contexts. The jury encouraged students to explain not only what they made, but why they made it, how they developed it, and how their design decisions communicate meaning.

Through faculty feedback and academic review, students were able to reflect on their process, strengthen their conceptual clarity, improve their technical execution, and build confidence in presenting their work. The jury became an important step in helping young communication designers connect research, culture, media, tools, and visual expression into a stronger design practice.



VI.

Student & Alumni Achievements in Impact

This section celebrates student and alumni milestones that reflect creative growth, academic excellence, public recognition, and the expanding reach of SOAD's design community.

Through competitions, exhibitions, curated selections, alumni success, and individual achievements, these stories show how learning at SOAD continues to move beyond the classroom into wider creative, academic, and professional spaces.



Rishita Marripalli's Artistic Milestone: Reclaimed

Communication Design student Rishita Marripalli's artwork Reclaimed has been curated for Mazda Art Festival 2026, marking her first major recognition as an artist among 250 selected artworks from across India.

Creative journeys rarely begin with a grand moment. Sometimes, they begin quietly, with a child drawing the same character again and again, changing the clothes, the hair, the mood, and slowly discovering a lifelong connection with art. For Rishita Marripalli, a B.Des Communication Design student at SOAD, that journey began when she was five years old. What started as repeated drawings of a Barbie character gradually grew into years of self-taught practice, experimentation, and personal artistic growth. Over time, she developed her own visual techniques, painting style, and creative process through consistency and dedication. Her love for painting also led her to start Craftbyte, a hand-cut and painted miniature wooden desk décor brand that brings together creativity and functional art.

Rishita's artwork, Reclaimed, has now been curated for the Mazda Art Festival 2026, a nationwide curated art exhibition that brings together artists from across India. The festival will be held from 11 to 13 September 2026 at the State Gallery of Art, Madhapur, Hyderabad. This year, only 250 artworks have been curated nationwide, making Rishita's selection a meaningful milestone in her artistic journey.

Created in acrylic on canvas, the 18 × 24 inch artwork explores the relationship between human existence and nature. The painting reflects the idea that no matter how life unfolds, everything eventually returns to nature. The human figure merging into the natural world represents the temporary nature of identity, while the hands beneath the water suggest humanity reaching, surviving, and existing within life's chaos. Through ideas of life, death, memory, and rebirth,



ARTIST RISHITA MARRIPALLI

EXHIBITING AT

MAZDA ART FESTIVAL 2026

11, 12, 13 SEPTEMBER 2026

STATE GALLERY OF ART
MADHAPUR, HYDERABAD.

MAZDA
ART

the work presents nature not as something separate from us, but as both our origin and final destination. What makes the work even more personal is that Reclaimed is a recreation of a painting Rishita first made in 2020. While she strongly believed in the idea at the time, she felt her technical skills were not yet strong enough to express the depth of the concept. Returning to the same idea years later allowed her to approach it with richer detail, stronger execution, and a more refined visual language. Throughout her time at Woxsen, faculty members encouraged Rishita to showcase her paintings during displays, events, and exhibitions. Opportunities to set up Craftbyte stalls during campus fests also helped her gain exposure and confidence as an artist. Her selection for Mazda Art Festival 2026 stands as a proud moment for SOAD and as a reminder that creative growth is built through patience, practice, and the courage to keep returning to one's own voice.



“

Being able to showcase a skill that I've spent over a decade improving through consistency and passion is something I'm truly grateful for.

Rishita Marripalli



Aditya Reddy Wins The IKEA Kreativ Challenge

Akshitha Chikoti Featured for Personal Sanctuary Concept

Interior Design student Aditya Reddy won the IKEA Kreativ Challenge for his 15' x 15' living room concept, while Akshitha Chikoti was featured for her personal sanctuary design.

Interior design begins with a simple question: how should a space make people feel? A room may be measured in feet, but it is lived through comfort, movement, memory, routine, and emotion. The IKEA Kreativ Challenge invited students to explore this very idea by turning a compact living room brief into a meaningful story of everyday life.

The IKEA Kreativ Challenge was conducted on 28 May 2026 for 4th Semester Interior Design students from the Batch 2024–2028. As part of the challenge, students were asked to design a 15' x 15' living room and build a clear narrative around the space. The exercise encouraged them to think beyond furniture placement and understand how layout, circulation, colour, storage, comfort, function, and personal identity come together in a successful interior.

Aditya Reddy emerged as the winner of the challenge with a living room concept designed for a newly married couple in their mid-20s. His proposal focused on creating an open, warm, and welcoming living environment that could support both everyday routines and social gatherings. By keeping the central area open, integrating storage, and using rugs to visually expand the space, the design created a balance between function, comfort, and visual openness. The design used warm wood tones, neutral shades, and carefully placed red accents to bring energy into the space while maintaining a calm and timeless aesthetic.

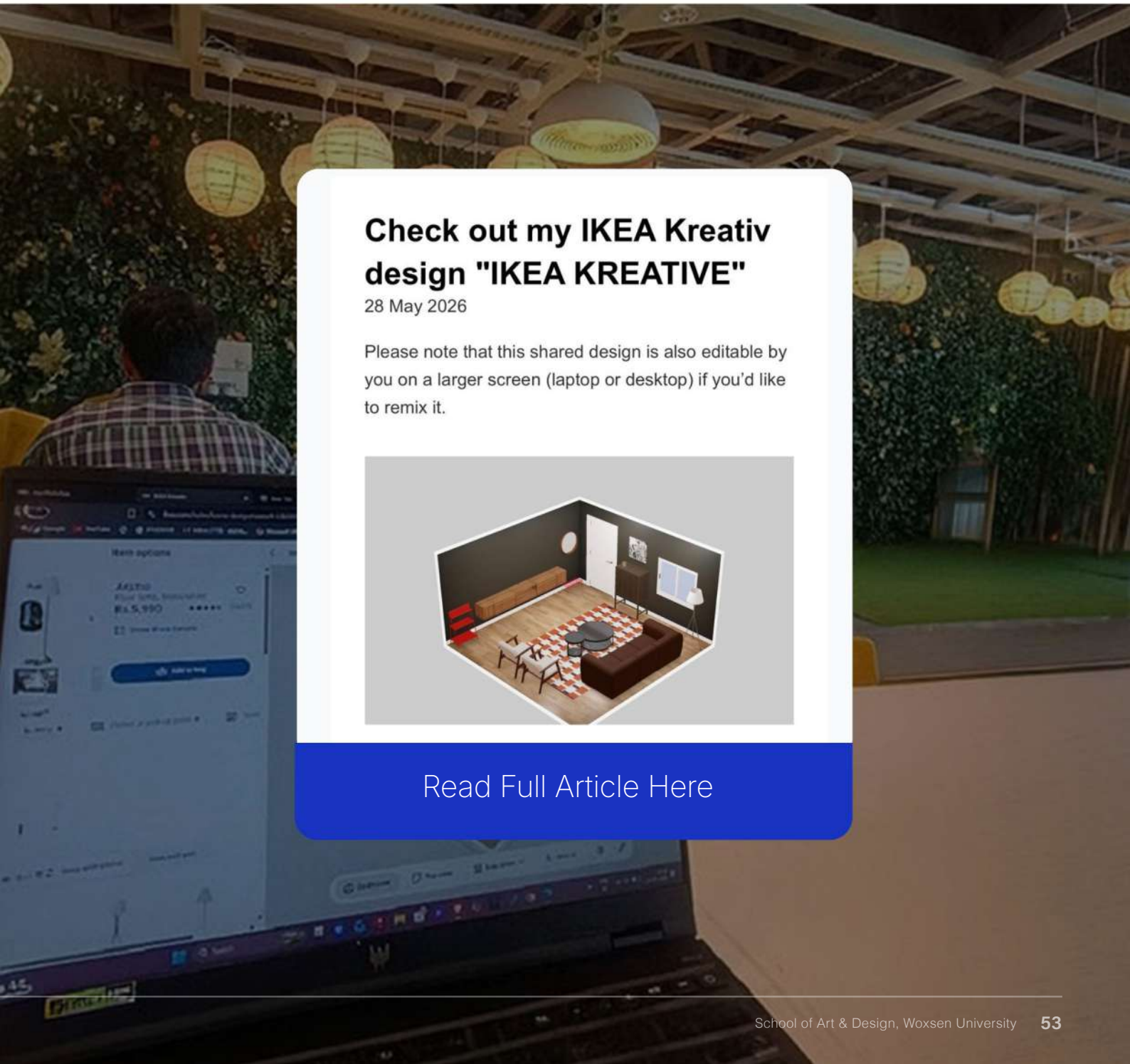


The concept showed how a living room can become more than a furnished area; it can become a space that reflects the lifestyle, movement, and emotional needs of the people using it. Aditya's work is also featured on IKEA Kreativ, and readers can access the clickable link in the PDF to view his project.

Alongside the winning entry, Akshitha Chikoti was featured for her personal sanctuary concept. Responding to the same 15' x 15' living room brief, she imagined a space that moved away from the usual entertainment-centred living room. Her proposal created an electronics-free environment focused on creativity, calm, comfort, and self-expression. Akshitha's concept included a reading nook, painting

corner, natural elements, and carefully selected décor, showing how interior design can support emotional well-being and personal identity. Her work highlighted an important design idea: every successful space begins with understanding the user and the story they bring into that space.

Through this challenge, students learned that interiors are not designed only through objects, dimensions, or decoration. They are shaped through empathy, planning, storytelling, and the ability to understand how people live. The activity strengthened students' understanding of user-centred spatial design while helping them connect classroom learning with real-world interior design practice.



Check out my IKEA Kreativ design "IKEA KREATIVE"

28 May 2026

Please note that this shared design is also editable by you on a larger screen (laptop or desktop) if you'd like to remix it.



[Read Full Article Here](#)

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The School of Arts & Design Newsletter reflects the collective spirit of learning, creativity, and collaboration that defines our academic community. Each edition brings together the efforts of many individuals who contribute to shaping an environment where ideas are explored, knowledge is shared, and design education continues to evolve.

We extend our sincere gratitude to:

- **The Vice President of Woxsen University** for his continued guidance and support in strengthening the vision and growth of the School of Arts & Design.
- **Vice Dean, Assistant Deans and Program Leaders** for their academic leadership and commitment to advancing innovative and interdisciplinary learning experiences.
- **Faculty Members** for their dedication to teaching, mentorship, and research that enrich the educational journey of our students.
- **Students** whose creativity, curiosity, and hard work bring life to the projects and explorations featured in this newsletter.
- **Parents and Families** for their trust and encouragement that support students in pursuing their creative aspirations.
- **Industry Partners, Alumni, and Collaborators** for their valuable engagement in bridging academic learning with professional practice.

Together, these contributions continue to nurture a vibrant design community committed to learning, innovation, and meaningful impact.



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