

SMITHSONIAN NATIONAL DESIGN AWARDS GALA 2026

**CELEBRATING 250 YEARS OF
AMERICAN DESIGN AND INNOVATION**

MAY 19, 2026
NEW YORK CITY

**COOPER
HEWITT**



A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



Nikola Bradonjic Photography

Dear Friends,

In 2026, our nation commemorates the 250th anniversary of its founding—a powerful milestone that invites reflection on our shared values, our diverse culture, and our boundless creative spirit. At Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, we are seizing this moment to shine a spotlight on the power of design to shape our world and our futures—through storytelling, and bold, new initiatives.

This historic year will see the celebration of our reimagined National Design Awards gala, as well as the unveiling of two major exhibitions, *Made in America: The Industrial Photography of Christopher Payne* and *Design Across Time*. We are thrilled to invite you to be part of these major initiatives for the nation's design museum. Thanks to your support, Cooper Hewitt continues to grow in influence and ambition, championing innovation, sustainability, and solutions for the future through design. As the Smithsonian museum devoted solely to design and together with our generous community of donors, we are shaping the next chapter of America's design legacy.

We are immensely grateful for your support, and we hope you will join us on May 19, 2026 to celebrate what's ahead and to honor the inspiring visionaries and changemakers who have made the greatest contributions to various fields of design during the last 250 years in America—and into the future.

With heartfelt thanks for your generous support,



Maria Nicanor
Director, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum

COOPER HEWITT

 Smithsonian Design Museum



Photo by Thomas Loof

WE EDUCATE, INSPIRE, AND EMPOWER PEOPLE THROUGH DESIGN.

Housed in New York City's historic Carnegie Mansion, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, is America's design museum. As the repository of the nation's design collection of over 215,000 objects, Cooper Hewitt develops dynamic exhibitions, education programs, events, and resources so that everyone can discover the importance of design and its power to change the world.

Cooper Hewitt is part of the Smithsonian Institution, the world's largest museum, education, and research complex. At the center of American civic life, its nineteen museums and 150 million objects form a vast community of learning and diffuse knowledge to billions of people around the globe.

SMITHSONIAN NATIONAL DESIGN AWARDS

Established by the White House Millennium Council in 2000, the National Design Awards have, for twenty-five years now, recognized innovation, excellence, and leadership across multiple design categories.

Selected by an international jury of experts, the ten categories of the awards—Architecture, Fashion, Product Design, Landscape Architecture, Interior Design, Climate Action, Communication Design, Digital Design, Emerging Designer, and Design Visionary—emphasize the power of design to improve our world and the designers leading the charge at the forefront of their fields.

Winners Announced February 2026



SMITHSONIAN NATIONAL DESIGN AWARDS GALA 2026

The 2026 Gala Honorees

For the first time in the Award's history, a selection of individuals and companies will be honored for their contributions to various fields of design over the past 250 years of our nation's history.

Featuring some of the biggest names in design, the work of this historic circle of American visionaries represents the most transformative contributions to various fields of design—from technology, AI, and digital innovation to architecture, fashion, media, product design, and more.



EXHIBITIONS AT COOPER HEWITT IN 2026

This milestone year is anchored by two major exhibitions at Cooper Hewitt: *Made in America: The Industrial Photography of Christopher Payne*, a powerful photographic exploration of American manufacturing; and *Design Across Time*, the unveiling of a selection of treasures from our permanent collection for the first time in over a decade.

Together, these exhibitions underscore how design has and continues to shape the human experience.

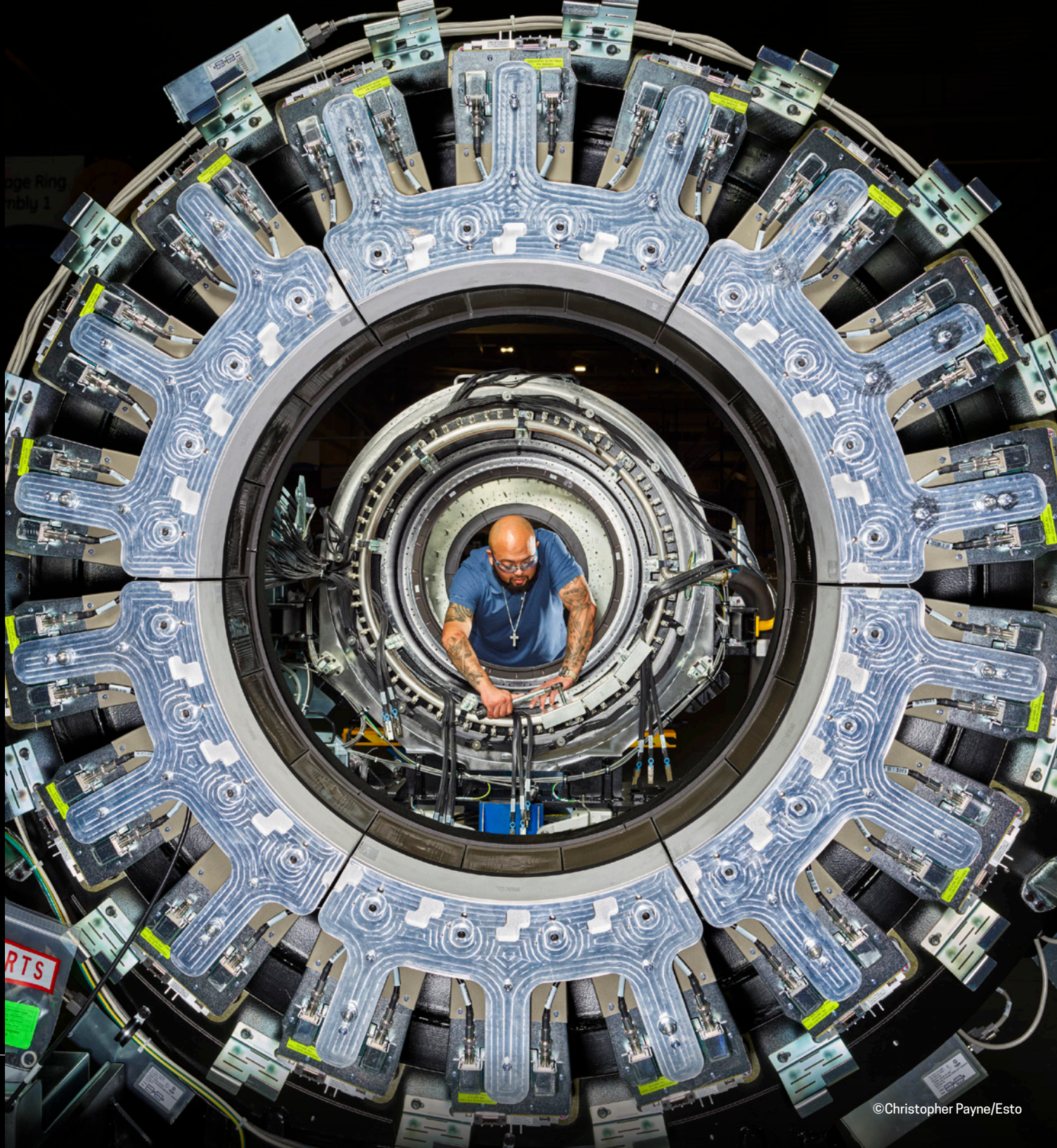


MADE IN AMERICA: THE INDUSTRIAL PHOTOGRAPHY OF CHRISTOPHER PAYNE

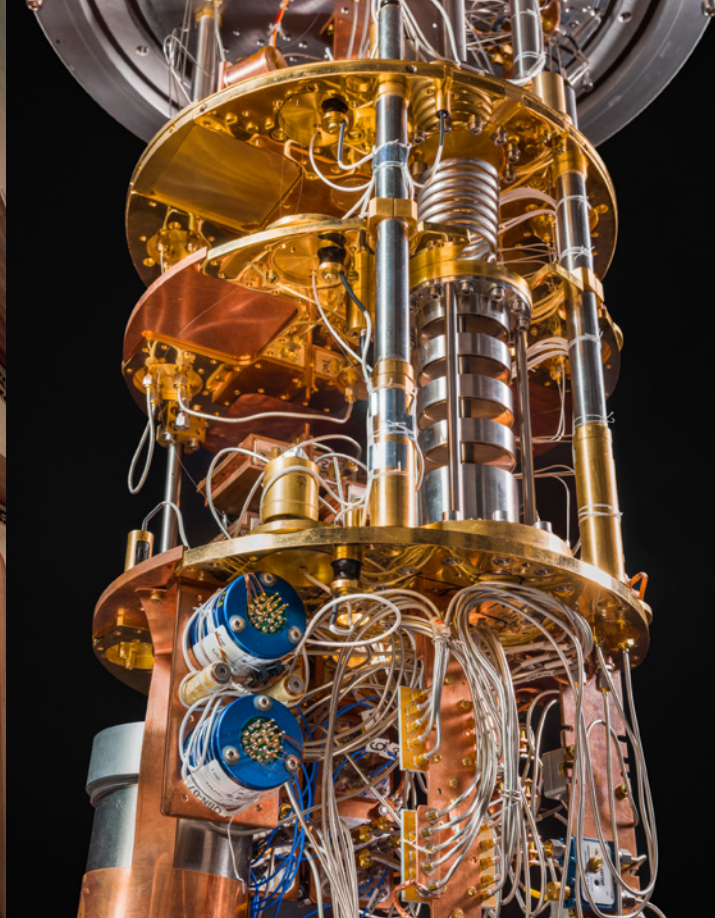
The first large-scale photography exhibition at Cooper Hewitt, *Made in America* showcases the design process through photography in a way that brings the object, the machine, and the hand together. Payne's photographs highlight manufacturing as a timeless and fundamental function of the design process. The exhibition brings together more than seventy large-format photographs captured by Payne over a decade-long photographic journey to learn more about the craft of both industrial and artisanal making in the United States.

Planned as part of the Smithsonian's celebration of the 250th anniversary of America's Declaration of Independence in 2026, the exhibition reveals America's factories as sites of human ingenuity and innovation. *Made in America* tells a celebratory story about America's industrial past and technological future, made by hand and machine together.

COOPER
HEWITT



©Christopher Payne/Esto



DESIGN ACROSS TIME: EXPLORING THE SMITHSONIAN'S DESIGN COLLECTION

In a signature presentation for 2026, Cooper Hewitt will unveil an extended presentation of its permanent collection to occupy the entire first floor of the museum's Carnegie Mansion. The two-year display will showcase a selection of Cooper Hewitt's historic and contemporary design holdings representing the national collection of design of the United States.

Through objects spanning time, geography, and discipline—including graphic design, product design, fashion, textiles, furniture, wallcoverings, digital design, and architecture—visitors will discover the breadth of the national collection while gaining insights into how design responds to and shapes the world around us.





PRESS BUZZ

Press and marketing for the National Design Awards and Cooper Hewitt's exhibitions are projected to make hundreds of millions of impressions in 2026. Among many, past publications include *The New York Times*, *Vogue*, *NPR*, *WWD*, *Architectural Digest*, *Fast Company*, *Bloomberg Businessweek*, and *People Magazine*.

REACH AND AUDIENCE

COOPER HEWITT

+86,000

Annual visitors to the museum

+350,000

Followers on social media

1.1M

Visits to cooperhewitt.org

6.4M

Impressions on social media

+3,000

K-12 students reached through programs

+80

Public Programs

SMITHSONIAN

31

Museums and research & education centers

10M

Reached through Smithsonian media

50M

In-person visitors to the nation's capital (2026)

15M

Impacted by Smithsonian education

170M

Visitors to si.edu

216

Affiliate museums

data as of 2024

**COOPER
HEWITT**



Photo by Liz Ligon



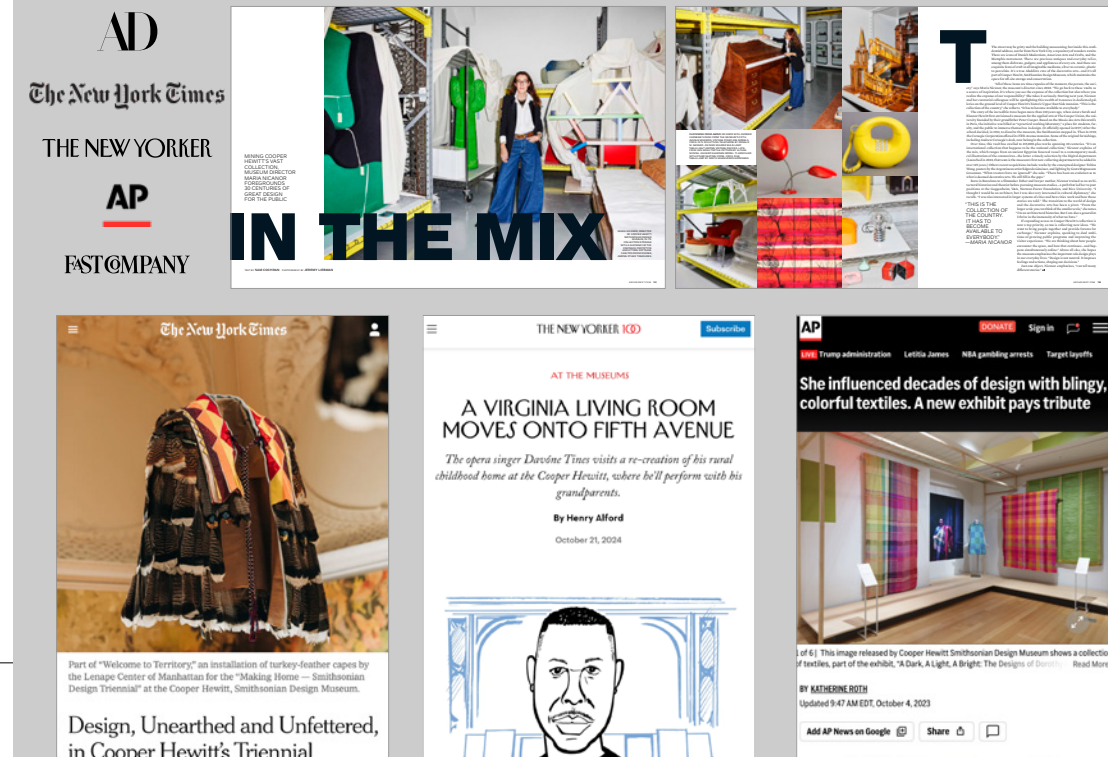
Photo by BFA/Zach Hyman



Richard Patterson Images



Photo ©Philip Greenberg



2026 SPONSORSHIP LEVELS AND BENEFITS

- **250TH HOST SPONSOR - \$1,000,000**

Presenting sponsor for *Design Across Time* (2 years) AND 2026 Host Sponsor for National Design Awards (NDA) gala (Three tables of 12)

- **CO-CHAIR SPONSOR - \$500,000**

Presenting sponsor for *Made in America* (1 year) AND 2026 Co-Chair Sponsor for NDA gala (Two tables of 14)

- **INNOVATION SPONSOR - \$250,000**

Major sponsor for *Made in America* AND *Design Across Time* AND 2026 Innovation Sponsor for NDA gala (Two tables of 10)

- **CHAMPION SPONSOR - \$100,000**

Major sponsor for *Made in America* OR *Design Across Time* AND Champion Sponsor for NDA gala (One table of 12)

- **SUPPORTING SPONSOR - \$50,000**

Sponsor for NDA gala only (One table of 10)

- **INDIVIDUAL GALA TICKET \$5,000**



250TH HOST SPONSOR \$1,000,000

Presenting Sponsor for
Design Across Time (2 years)
AND 2026 Host Sponsor
for National Design Awards
(NDA) gala

VISIBILITY & RECOGNITION

- Premier recognition across NDA and *Design Across Time* collateral, press materials, invitations, gala step-and-repeat, and digital platforms.
- Invitation to create a promotional campaign centered on *Design Across Time* and NDA, creating dynamic and mission-driven storytelling for corporate giving sites, social media, advertising, and other promotional channels.
- Opportunity to provide a sponsor statement in *Design Across Time* and NDA press kits.
- Invitation to provide remarks at NDA gala, the VIP opening reception for *Design Across Time*, and at various related programs, events, and press previews.
- Recognition as a major sponsor of the Smithsonian 250th campaign and donor wall at the Smithsonian Castle on the National Mall during the summer of 2026.

PROGRAMS & IMPACT

- Opportunity to underwrite a series of design-focused public programs on U.S. manufacturing and innovation at Cooper Hewitt during 2026.
- Recognition for supporting STEM education programs at Cooper Hewitt related to *Made in America*.

ENGAGEMENT & EXPERIENCES

- Three premier gala tables of 12 (36 seats) and VIP Salon access for all guests.
- Opportunity to host NDA winners and special guests.
- Six invitations to Smithsonian 250th signature events.
- Two curator-led tours and one Smithsonian private tour.

EVENT HOSTING BENEFITS

- Two free event rentals at Cooper Hewitt during 2026.

CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP

- One year of Visionary Corporate Membership, including 200+ passes and 10 Executive Membership cards.

CO-CHAIR SPONSOR \$500,000

Presenting Sponsor for
Made in America (1 year)
AND 2026 Co-Chair Sponsor
for NDA gala

VISIBILITY & RECOGNITION

- Prominent recognition across NDA and *Made in America* collateral, press materials, invitations, gala step-and-repeat, and digital platforms.
- Invitation to create a promotional campaign centered on *Made in America* and NDA, creating dynamic and mission-driven storytelling for corporate giving sites, social media, advertising, and other promotional channels.
- Opportunity to provide a sponsor statement in *Made in America* and NDA press kits.
- Invitation to provide remarks at various programs and events.
- Recognition as a major sponsor of the Smithsonian 250th campaign and donor wall at the Smithsonian Castle on the National Mall during the summer of 2026.

PROGRAMS & IMPACT

- Opportunity to underwrite two design-focused public programs on U.S. manufacturing and innovation at Cooper Hewitt during 2026.
- Recognition for supporting STEM education programs at Cooper Hewitt related to *Made in America*.

ENGAGEMENT & EXPERIENCES

- Two premier gala tables of fourteen (28 seats) and VIP Salon access for all guests.
- Four invitations to Smithsonian 250th signature events.
- Two curator-led tours and one Smithsonian private tour.

EVENT HOSTING BENEFITS

- One free event rental at Cooper Hewitt during 2026.

CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP

- One year of Innovator Corporate Membership, including 150 passes and 5 Executive Membership cards.

INNOVATION SPONSOR \$250,000

Major Sponsor for *Made in America* AND *Design Across Time* AND 2026 Innovation Sponsor for NDA gala

VISIBILITY & RECOGNITION

- Recognition across NDA, *Made in America*, and *Design Across Time* collateral, press materials, invitations, gala step-and-repeat, and digital platforms.
- Invitation to create a promotional campaign centered on your sponsorship, creating dynamic and mission-driven storytelling for corporate giving sites, social media, advertising, and other promotional channels.
- Prominent recognition in event remarks.
- Recognition in Cooper Hewitt and Smithsonian annual reports.

PROGRAMS & IMPACT

- Opportunity to underwrite one design-focused public program on U.S. manufacturing and innovation at Cooper Hewitt during 2026.
- Recognition for supporting STEM education programs at Cooper Hewitt related to *Made in America*.

ENGAGEMENT & EXPERIENCES

- Two premier gala tables of ten (20 seats) and VIP Salon access for eight (8) guests.
- Invitations to select VIP Cooper Hewitt and Smithsonian events during 2026.
- Two curator-led tours for up to 25 guests.

EVENT HOSTING BENEFITS

- 50% discount on one Cooper Hewitt event rental.

CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP

- One year of Leader Corporate Membership, with 100 passes + 3 Executive Membership cards.

CHAMPION SPONSOR \$100,000

Major Sponsor for *Made in America* OR *Design Across Time* AND Champion Sponsor for NDA gala

VISIBILITY & RECOGNITION

- Recognition across NDA and either *Made in America* or *Design Across Time* collateral, press materials, invitations, gala step-and-repeat, and digital platforms.
- Recognition in Cooper Hewitt and Smithsonian annual reports.
- Recognition in event remarks.

PROGRAMS & IMPACT

- Recognition as supporter of STEM education programs at Cooper Hewitt.

ENGAGEMENT & EXPERIENCES

- One gala table of twelve (12) and VIP Salon access for four (4) guests.
- Invitations to select VIP Cooper Hewitt and Smithsonian events during 2026.

EVENT HOSTING BENEFITS

- 25% discount on one Cooper Hewitt event rental.

CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP

- Partner Corporate Membership, with 50 passes + 2 Executive Membership cards.

SUPPORTING SPONSOR

\$50,000

VISIBILITY & RECOGNITION

- Recognition across NDA collateral, press materials, invitations, gala step-and-repeat, and digital platforms.
- Recognition in Cooper Hewitt and Smithsonian annual reports.
- Recognition in event remarks.

ENGAGEMENT & EXPERIENCES

- One gala table of ten (10) and VIP Salon access for two (2) guests.
- Invitations to select VIP Cooper Hewitt and Smithsonian events during 2026.

EVENT HOSTING BENEFITS

- 10% discount on one Cooper Hewitt event rental.

CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP

- Supporter Corporate Membership, with 25 passes.

**NATIONAL
DESIGN
AWARDS**

JOIN US

**SMITHSONIAN NATIONAL
DESIGN AWARDS GALA**

MAY 19, 2026

at the Smithsonian National
Museum of the American Indian
New York

One Bowling Green
New York, NY 10004



FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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