

Interior Design Competition

Kindling is an initiative created by two leading UK-based hotel design firms, ReardonSmith Architects and MKV Design, and is supported by Europe's hotel design event, HIX. In English, the word Kindling refers to the sticks used to create a fire around which people gather to talk, exchange ideas and make new friends. In the same spirit, Kindling is a platform to highlight, elevate and celebrate the work of Architecture & Design students.

Join Competition

kindlingdesigncompetition.com

The Kindling Experience

A design competition for under-graduate students studying architecture or interior design at a European college or university.

Winner Benefits and Rewards

London visit: a 4-day, all expenses paid trip to London for one member of the winning team to attend the Kindling ceremony at HIX 2026 and join the hotel industry's leading lights as a guest of the AHEAD Awards.

Prize: A £750 cash prize per winning entry

Winners press coverage and social media

Who Should Enter

Entries are sought from individual students or groups of students studying architecture or interior design, or possibly a combination of both. Entrants may enter either the architecture or the interior design category, or both. If entering both categories, the submissions should be sent in as separate entries.

The organisers understand that some colleges may wish to assimilate the competition into a teaching module. We would welcome this, but, if this is the case, it must be made clear to the organisers on the separate form, "Intention to Enter".

Students are encouraged to undertake research into the condition of homelessness and dislocation and, on the basis of this, create a concept which responds to the needs of the envisaged residents.

The portal will be monitored during the course of the competition and the organisers will endeavour to respond to questions in a timely manner.

About the Partners of Kindling

ReardonSmith Architects was established in London some 40 years ago and was the first UK architectural practice to specialise exclusively in hospitality design. Today, the practice is internationally recognised as an authority in its field with projects spanning the UK and Europe, ranging from grande dame hotels in major cities to country estates and coastal resorts.

www.reardonsmith.com

MKV Design has planned and designed interiors for some of Europe's most prestigious hotels and resorts. These have included the restoration and redesign of palace buildings, the creation of mountain and coastal resorts and the translation of faded hotels into places of contemporary purpose.

www.mkvdesign.com

Judges

The judges will include:

Patrick Reardon
Executive Chairman, Reardon Smith Architects

Maria Vafiadis
Founder & MD, MKV Design

Joel Butler
Director, Hix Event

Su Pecha
Managing Director, ESP Business Development

Elsa de Jager
Ambassador to the Refugee Council

Sanctuary

The Overall Brief

Kindling 2025/26 explores 'Sanctuary'. What can hospitality spaces, from existing buildings to structures yet to be conceived, offer people who have been, for whatever reason, displaced from their homes and communities.

Students should propose schemes designed to welcome, nurture and help break down barriers, as well as to cater for the practical needs of those who are dislocated via buildings and interior spaces that provide a sense of home, a sense of place, and a sense of security. In short, a place where human dignity can be restored.

"The displacement of people from their homes and communities, both temporarily and permanently, is happening in ever larger numbers around the world," says Maria Vafiadis, Founder & Managing Director, MKV Design. "I believe it is relevant to consider how we in the hospitality sector, which is a global industry dedicated at heart to giving succour and safety to strangers and neighbours, can shine a light on this universal tragedy. I hope to encourage our student participants to look beyond borders and think about the best of human values enshrined in hospitality settings."

"Kindling is all about helping tomorrow's architects and designers to explore the potential of design to influence change by inviting them to consider an issue of our time in the context of a hospitality environment," says Patrick Reardon, Executive Chairman, ReardonSmith Architects. "The solution may be temporary or permanent, newly built or repurposed, and students may work by themselves or collaborate with others. What matters is the vision of their competition entries."

Interior Design Brief

Students are invited to present their interior design concepts for a combination of spaces that offer sanctuary and support to those displaced. The interior design should consider the wellbeing of the residents, the psychological impact of being displaced and ways of making residents feel not only safe but comforted in a welcoming environment. Ideas on how space could easily be adapted and personalised to reflect people's lifestyles and cultural background would also be encouraged.

Timeline

Friday 20 February 2026
Deadline for submitting Letter of Intent Forms

Friday 2 October 2026
Deadline for final submissions

Week of 5 October 2026
Judging; winners and runners-up are notified

November 2026
HIX and AHEAD Europe in London

**Good luck
to all entrants!**

Deliverables

Your submissions should include:

A text of no more than 500 words, stating the country and location of the scheme and describing your building and the design solutions you are proposing. Please give your hotel a name that you feel reflects its values and style. Please write your text in English. All entries must be submitted as a pdf file.

A minimum of a floorplan and a visual (hand drawn or computer generated) for the three spaces listed below. If your scheme involves an associated outdoor space, for example a dining terrace, this should be shown on your floorplan.

- **A typical bedroom and bathroom**
- **A restaurant and bar**
(possibly with a kitchen for communal cooking)
- **A shared activity area**
(creche, coworking, lounge, meeting rooms etc.)

Each visual should be accompanied by a short description of materials, furniture and fittings proposed.

Location

Entrants may choose a location of their choice – city, in the countryside or on the coast. The structure may be permanent or temporary, an existing building that is converted to provide sanctuary, or an entirely new building.

Context

People who are dislocated from their homes and communities are affected physically and psychologically. Fundamentally this sanctuary must provide warmth, security and human dignity; it should foster community between the residents and between residents and their neighbours, and a sense of wellbeing as well as an environment designed to cater to the residents' practical needs.

At the same time, competitors should attempt to convey the identity of the country or location in which their proposed accommodation is sited. This is desirable in order that residents gain a sense of the country or location where they are seeking sanctuary.