

Open Call: Art Exhibition and Events Urban Waters 2027

Dear artists and cultural practitioners of Winterthur

We invite you to explore and interpret water as both a vital resource and a space for experience through artistic expression. Present your work outdoors in a wide range of formats – from installations and performances to workshops and other creative interventions.

What is Urban Waters?

Urban Waters is an initiative within the [AWEL](#) funding program [“#hallowasser – Experiencing Zurich Waters.”](#) It enables artists and designers to realize existing or new artworks, performances, interactions, workshops, and other formats related to the theme of “experiencing water,” with a focus on local water and waterways. [Urban Waters 2027](#) continues the series of [Urban Waters 2025](#) and [Urban Waters 2026](#).

Urban Waters was initiated by the [Zurich University of the Arts \(ZHdK\)](#) in 2025. For the 2027 edition in Winterthur, we aim to invite not only participants from ZHdK but also artists and cultural practitioners from Winterthur.

We understand water in its many forms: as rivers and lakes, snow, ice, steam, urban water systems, natural waters, as well as plants and living organisms in aquatic environments. Water inspires play, sports, contemplation, cleansing, and more. An impression of this can be found in the [documentation of Urban Waters 2026](#). The exhibition and events are intended to create lasting experiences and insights for visitors. Participation in and access to all events and exhibitions are free of charge.

Urban Waters consists of two formats:

- **Artworks and installations**, freely accessible outdoors.
- **Events: performances, workshops, concerts, film screenings, readings, theater**, etc., related to water and bringing together art, culture, and science. These may take place indoors or outdoors.

Where will Urban Waters 2027 take place?

Urban Waters 2027 will take place at [Vitus–Areal](#) close to the river Töss in Winterthur. The site will include indoor and outdoor spaces for events and art installations. Since the area is publicly accessible, certain conditions apply for outdoor installations.

When will Urban Waters take place?

Urban Waters will take place over four weeks between March and April 2027. The international [World Water Day](#) on March 22 will be integrated into the program.

Who can submit a project idea?

Projects in the categories “Artwork/Installation” or “Event/Performance” may be submitted via this [form](#) by artists and cultural practitioners from Winterthur. A jury will select the final contributions. Selected projects will receive financial support from ZHdK.

Who is the audience?

Urban Waters is aimed at the general public of the city and canton. This includes both non-experts and experts, people interested in art and culture, and others. Families are especially encouraged to participate.

What are the possibilities for my artwork or installation?

The freely accessible outdoor artworks should engage with local water (e.g., in the Canton of Zurich). Possible formats include paintings, photography, textile works, interactive installations, sculptures, objects, etc. Artworks will be labeled with the title and the artist’s name. The works must not produce disturbing emissions (noise, light, etc.), must be weatherproof, protected against theft, safe for the public, and structurally stable. They should be removable without leaving traces. Artworks may not be placed directly in the water, and trees must not be affected. Electricity access for installations requiring power must be clarified in advance. The final placement of artworks will be determined in dialogue with the Urban Waters organization team.

How can I participate with an event or workshop?

Urban Waters supports thematic workshops, readings, concerts, film screenings, dance, performances, theatre, and other time-based activities involving audiences, primarily taking place on weekends. Ideally, visitors should be able to actively participate (e.g., in workshops). Here too, the focus is on creating meaningful experiences of local water for a broad public audience. In addition to artistic formats, we especially encourage exchanges between art, science, society, and sustainability. A heated indoor space for approximately 30 people will be available. Outdoor activities must comply with certain conditions (no disturbing noise emissions, no amplifiers, safety requirements, etc.). Events must not disturb nighttime quiet hours.

What is the selection process?

Ideas for both artworks and events can be submitted via this [form](#) until September 27, 2026. The form must be completed in full. A jury will select the final artworks and events by the end of October 2026. Following the selection, a dialogue with the selected artists will begin regarding implementation. Participants will receive an agreement with ZHdK covering funding and responsibilities. Afterward, the installations, artworks, and events can be realized with support and supervision from ZHdK.

What are the selection criteria?

Submissions will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- **Artistic quality** – How innovative and convincing is the project?
- **Quality of the water experience** – To what extent does the project convey a special experience or perspective related to water/waterways?
- **Connection to local water/waterways** – How does the project relate to local water (natural waterways, urban water systems, water in different forms and states, etc.)?
- **Suitability for the site** – How well does the project fit into the spatial context of the location?
- **Interaction with visitors** – How does the project engage with visitors? (Optional – not mandatory)
- **Balance of effort, experience, and quality** – How does the budgetary effort relate to the visitor experience and insights gained? What is the quality of the project's implementation?

What support will I receive if my project is selected?

Artworks may receive funding of up to CHF 4,000, while events and workshops may receive up to CHF 3,000. A corresponding budget for labor and materials must be included in the application. (Students without a Swiss work permit cannot receive salaries.)

Location

Urban Waters will take place at [Vitus-Areal](#) in Winterthur. A guided site visit will also be organized. Please contact [Juliana Schneider](#) per e-mail if you are interested.

Communication and Promotion

[Urban Waters 2026 has its own website.](#) ZHdK, in cooperation with the City of Winterthur, will publicly promote Urban Waters through posters, social media, and other channels. Urban Waters will also be included in the city's official cultural program.

Looking Back: Urban Waters

For those wishing to gain an impression of Urban Waters 2025 or 2026:

Urban Waters 2025 took place during February at Strandbad Tiefenbrunnen. Artworks were exhibited throughout the park area, while weekends featured activities, performances, concerts, workshops, film screenings, and readings in the pavilion. Urban Waters 2026 took place directly along the Limmat River at GZ Wipkingen. Access to all art installations and events was free and open to the public. Approximately 600 people attended the events. All contributions – from installations to performances – were created by members of Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK).

The performances were accompanied by ZHdK artists as well as Urban Waters assistants. Overall, Urban Waters proved to be an unexpected success. An SRF feature on "Urban Waters" is [available online](#), as is the article ["Urban Waters – a dialogue between art and water"](#) from ZETT magazine.

Information and Site Visit

Juliana Schneider is the contact person for Urban Waters 2027 at ZHdK. For questions and further information, please contact her at: juliana.schneider@zhdk.ch