

Media information

## HANDS-ON

Exhibition at the Gewerbemuseum Winterthur / Switzerland  
27 November 2026 to 17 May 2027

Individual tours of the exhibition by arrangement  
Wednesday to Friday, 25 to 27 November 2026

Exhibition preview  
Thursday, 26 November 2026, 18:30

**Hands grasp, touch, play, work and create. The “Hands-on” exhibition invites the visitor to rediscover hands in all their aspects. In a world where machines are omnipresent and artificial intelligence is revolutionizing our lives, the question arises: what do we still use our hands for today? Divided into six zones, the exhibition brings to life the central importance of hands in design, art and culture.**

Hands are much more than anatomical marvels. They are tools, a means of expression, a medium of communication and repositories of experience. All of them are different – each hand is shaped by its habitual actions and what it does.

The “Hands-on” exhibition takes this unique combination of qualities as its starting point and explores hands at the interface between design, art and society. It looks at their amazing abilities and the traces that life leaves on them. Also considered is the question of what is lost when we attempt to imitate the complex diversity and skill of the human hand using technical means.

Hands tell stories, touch things and create meaning. From a thumbs-up sign to the famous Vulcan salute in Star Trek, or from a friendly fist bump through to emojis and ritual gestures, hardly any other part of the body is such an integral aspect of our visual and social communication. Hand movements can bring people closer, signify belonging, express

power or convey stories. The exhibition also asks whose history is passed down – and whose stories are lost.

At the same time, notions of the “standard hand” tend to shape design, technology and the way we interact with objects. What does this mean for left-handers, older people and those with disabilities? Projects focusing on prosthetics, assistive devices and robotics investigate whether machines can mimic the human hand – and whether they will eventually equal or even surpass it.

Craftsmanship and automation, working with one’s hands, touch and digital intimacy, materiality and haptics are also explored. International art works, research projects, recent design experiments, visual media and artefacts pose questions of current interest. Numerous interactive display stations invite the visitor to grasp, feel, play and test out. The exhibition becomes a place where human hands are not just observed, but directly experienced.

## **EXHIBITION ZONES**

### **EVERY HAND IS UNIQUE**

The human hand is an anatomical marvel, and the focus of the exhibition is on its development – from both the evolutionary and the individual aspects. Moulages from different stages of a human life, by Johanna Stierlin (CH), and an installation of palm prints, by Lina Meseke (NO), illustrate the individuality of every single hand and how it changes during a person’s life.

Ilse Kind’s (NL) installation “Lifetime Approval Rate 96%” is about the role played by artificial intelligence in depicting hands, although AI can give little idea of their diversity. Anna-Maria Chernigovskaya’s (RU) animated film “My Hands” shows how memories are inscribed onto hands – and hands become memories.

### **BETWEEN TOOLS AND ROBOTICS**

There are notions of “standard hands” that shape the way we handle objects and affect design and technology. How does this create barriers – such as for older people, left-handers, and those with reduced mobility or disabilities? What special role does the thumb play? In her “Third Thumb Project”, designer Dani Clode (GB) investigates the advantages that a third thumb would bring, while in his speculative design project “No Spare Wheels” Thomas d’Enfert (DE) examines what it means to have no thumbs.

“Hands-on” throws light on topics at the point of intersection between technology, biology and design: the opportunities presented by assistive devices and prosthetics; how robotics at the ETH Soft Robotics Lab acts as an interface technology; and the question of whether it is possible to mimic hands. In the futuristic animated film “The Stranger” by Jihye Jung (KR), for example, the exhibition also looks at whether we can develop expertise and tactile knowledge through manual work. Is the human hand actually superior to a robotic hand? And if so, for how much longer?

## **WORKING WITH HANDS**

The long-term film project “Enzyklopädie der Handhabungen” [“Encyclopedia of manual operations”] by Anette Rose (DE) documents human handicrafts and machines in production processes and shows how increasing automation is changing how people work. Meanwhile, outfits from the Human Touch label (DE) demonstrate how invisible labour, in the form of touch, is embedded in textiles, and the film “To Your Hands” by Ana Mouyis (US/CY) illustrates where and how manual work takes place and creates cultural identity in Cyprus.

A stage in the middle of the exhibition shines a spotlight on working with one’s hands. Here, as part of the supporting programme, people from a wide range of occupational backgrounds are invited to present their crafts, art work or creative activities. Designer Daniel Heer uses recycled horsehair to make new horsehair mattresses, watchmaker Anny Weber repairs watch movements, and dancer Tom Bittins introduces visitors to the art of “finger tutting and waving”. Sign painter Marco Wyss showcases the art of hand-drawn typographic design, master florist Anita Leuthold creates floral decorations using wild plants, and Lea Reutimann makes “nail art to go”. This zone considers what kind of work we will still need our hands for in the future, and what value we place on work done by hand.

## **SIGN LANGUAGE AND GESTURES**

From emojis to instructions on dog-waste bags, from Mr. Spock’s Vulcan salute to Barack Obama’s fist bump greeting, the hand functions as a key medium of communication and a vehicle for a wide range of meanings. This part of the exhibition focuses on the cultural and social dimensions of sign language, gestures and remembering with your hands. It features works by Stéphanie Baechler (CH), Paul Farrell (GB), Lena Rosa Händle (DE) and Jonathan Horowitz (US), who open up very different perspectives on the visual language of hands. There is also the filmic work “I Want to Tell You Something” by Anawana Haloba (NO/ZM), in which hands are bearers of action and memory, raising the question of whose story we are passing on.

## **TOUCHING AND BEING TOUCHED**

Touch signifies bonding, emotion and closeness. Richard Renaldi’s (US) photo series “Touching Strangers” is an archive of intimate and surprising encounters between strangers, while Valery Poshtarov (BG) brings “Father & Son” together. Erik Kessel’s (NL) “Incomplete Encyclopedia of Touch” shows how much people enjoy touching things and taking pictures of themselves doing so. Meanwhile, Barbara Glasner’s (DE) collection “Most Touched” is a record of door handles that have been touched thousands of times, from all over the world. In Julia Chamberlain’s (US) “Touch Archive”, the touched object is the smartphone, which bears fingerprints indicating how it has been used. These works are joined by Harun Farocki’s (DE) film “Übertragung” [“Transmission”], in which hands function as a means of non-verbal ritual communication.

The exhibition presents a wide range of perspectives, such as the phenomenon of “phantom touch” in the digital space, while the tactile qualities of materials are explored in the Materials Laboratory. Gloves of all kinds, made from many different materials and used for a variety of purposes, are also on display.

## JOIN IN: A WORLD FULL OF HANDS

What does that feel like? How does it work? May I have a go? There are numerous interactive exhibits where visitors can explore for themselves how hand and brain work together – including a surgical simulation tool and the chance to test whether assistive devices actually help. The world of finger games and story-telling offers endless opportunities to show off your hands and have a go yourself, whether through “finger tutting”, games of skill or the “shadowgraphy” of Drew Colby (GB). In the film performance Hopeful Monsters (GB), hands create animals and whole worlds, while Annina Mosimann’s one-woman play “Bestiarium” brings a box to life. These works fascinate adults and children alike.

The “Hands-on” exhibition also has a participatory art project: “Coral Crochet Reef” by Margaret and Christine Wertheim. Crocheting is allowed! Afterwards, the project will be on display at the Gewerbemuseum Winterthur from April 2027, in an exhibition of the same name.

## WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF

Stéphanie Baechler (CH), Julia Chamberlain (US), Anna-Maria Chernigovskaya (RU), Dani Clode (GB), Drew Colby (GB), Em Cooper (GB), Johanna Dahm (CH), Thomas d’Enfert (CH), Harun Farocki (DE), Paul Farrell (GB), Barbara Glasner (DE), Anawana Haloba (NO/ZM), Lena Rosa Händle (DE), Hopeful Monsters (GB), Jonathan Horowitz (US), Human Touch Clothing (DE), Jihye Jung (KR), Katerina Kamprani (GR), Erik Kessels (NL), Ilse Kind (NL), Lina Meseke (NO), Ana Mouyis (US/CY), Valery Poshtarov (BG), Richard Renaldi (US), Anette Rose (DE), Johanna Stierlin (CH) and many more

## EVENTS

The supporting programme actively encourages the participation of visitors, families and anyone interested in art and design. Guided tours, workshops and interactive exhibits offer direct experience of the myriad abilities of hands. The participatory blog “Doing Things” enables visitors to share their own experiences and exchange ideas about different cultural techniques. A workshop for schools is also available.

## INFORMATION

### INDIVIDUAL TOURS OF THE EXHIBITION

The Media Relations office can arrange appointments for individual introductions to the exhibition. Susanna Kumschick, Curator/Director Gewerbemuseum Winterthur, and selected exhibitors will be available on the following dates:

**Wednesday, 25 November to Friday, 27 November 2026**

### MEDIA RELATIONS

Luzia Davi, [gewerbemuseum.medien@win.ch](mailto:gewerbemuseum.medien@win.ch), tel. +41 (0)52 267 51 36 (direct line: 68 83)

### MEDIA IMAGES TO DOWNLOAD

[gewerbemuseum.ch / Activities for the media](http://gewerbemuseum.ch/Activities_for_the_media)

See next page for overview.

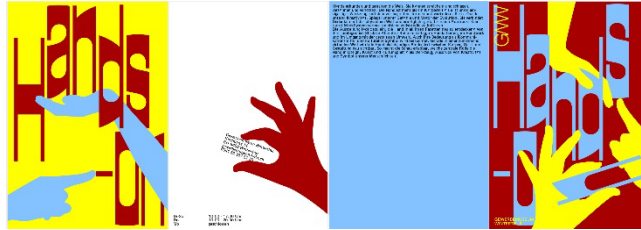
## MEDIA IMAGES

[gewerbemuseum.ch / Activities for the media](http://gewerbemuseum.ch / Activities for the media)

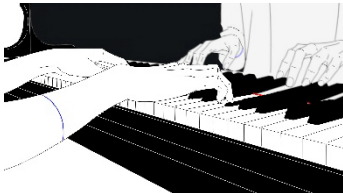
Please respect the copyrights and use the images only in connection with reporting on the “Hands-on” exhibition at the Gewerbemuseum Winterthur. Thank you very much!



“Hands-on” exhibition poster



“Hands-on” flyer. Graphic design: HOMI, Zurich/Basel



1) Jihye Jung: The Stranger, 2022  
(Film still)  
© Jihye Jung  
“Every hand is unique”



2) Johanna Stierlin: Moulages  
Photo: Michael Lio  
“Every hand is unique”



Two pictures on left:  
3) © PSYONIC

4) Faive  
© Soft Robotics Lab, ETH Zurich  
“Between tools and robotics”



Two pictures on left:  
5) + 6)  
Dani Clode: The Third Thumb, 2024  
© Dani Clode Design  
Both: “Between tools and robotics”



Two pictures on left:  
7) Anette Rose: Enzyklopädie der Handhabungen. Modul #1, 2008 (film still), © 2026, ProLitteris, Zurich

8) Anette Rose: Enzyklopädie der Handhabungen. Modul #15, 2008 (film still), © 2026, ProLitteris, Zurich

Both: “Working with hands”



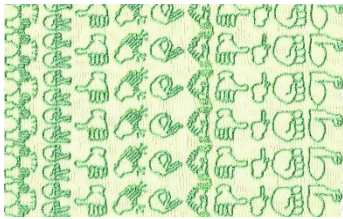
9) HUMAN TOUCH: Paint-sewing, 2024  
Photo: Studio MIME  
"Working with hands"



10) HUMAN TOUCH: SS26 look 1, 2025  
Photo: Victoria Kämpfe  
"Working with hands"



11) Ana Mouyis: To your hands, 2025 (film still)  
© Ana Mouyis  
"Working with hands"



12) Stéphanie Baechler: Emoji & Hands, 2018  
© Stéphanie Baechler  
"Sign language and gestures"



13) Jonathan Horowitz: Power, 2019  
© Jonathan Horowitz. Courtesy the Artist and Sadie Coles HQ, London  
Photo: Robert Glowacki  
"Sign language and gestures"



14a) + 14b) Anawana Haloba: I want to tell you something, 2010–2011  
© Haloba, Anawana/BONO  
"Sign language and gestures"



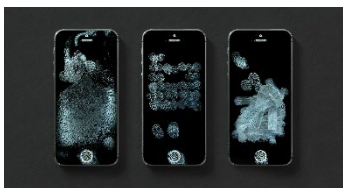
15) Lena Rosa Händle: An Inimitable World, 2022  
© Lena Rosa Händle  
"Sign language and gestures"



16) Harun Farocki: Übertragung [Transmission], 2007 (film still)  
"Touching and being touched"



17) Richard Renaldi: Vincent & Charles, 2012  
© Richard Renaldi  
"Touching and being touched"



18) Julia Chamberlain: Touch Archive, 2015  
© Julia Chamberlain  
"Touching and being touched"



19) Annina Mosimann: Bestiarium (performance)  
Photo: Nikolaj Leu  
"Join in: a world full of hands"



20) Hopeful Monsters (film still)  
Photo: Mihaela Bodlovic  
"Join in: a world full of hands"