

# FALLING WALLS FOUNDATION

14.08.2025

## FALLING WALLS SCIENCE SUMMIT, 6 – 9 NOVEMBER: FINALISTS FOR SCIENCE BREAKTHROUGH OF THE YEAR AWARD 2025 HAVE BEEN SET

- The Finalists in five categories for the annual *Science Breakthrough of the Year* award have been announced
- Five distinguished international juries have reviewed more than 1,500 entries from 52 countries and selected the most promising and forward-looking scientific breakthroughs.
- In each of the five categories – Life Sciences, Physical Sciences, Engineering & Technology, Social Sciences & Humanities, and Art & Science – one project will be named *Science Breakthrough of the Year*.
- The *Science Breakthroughs of the Year* will be announced on Tuesday, 16 September 2025, and will present their scientific breakthroughs at the Falling Walls Science Summit on 9 November in Berlin.
- An overview of our Finalists is available online:  
<https://falling-walls.com/science-summit/finalists-2025>.

**Berlin, Germany, 14 August 2025.** The **Falling Walls Foundation** announces the Finalists in five science categories competing for the title *Science Breakthrough of the Year*. For each category, distinguished international expert juries have selected ten Finalists based on their outstanding potential to advance humanity and create positive change for the global community.

From each category, one Finalist will be named *Science Breakthrough of the Year*. The five awardees will be announced on 16 September 2025. In addition, the Falling Walls programmes *Engage*, *Female Science Talents*, *Lab*, and *Venture* will each bring forth one *Science Breakthrough of the Year*, to be selected and honoured as part of the **Falling Walls Science Summit**.

All awardees will present their work on 9 November during the **Falling Walls Science Summit**, which takes place from 6 to 9 November in Berlin – with global visibility.

The Finalists in each category are:

### LIFE SCIENCES

**Jake Brenner – University of Pennsylvania, US**  
Breaking the Wall of Therapeutic DNA Delivery

**Paola Laurino – Okinawa Inst. of Sci. & Tech. Graduate Univ., JP**  
Breaking the Wall of Ocean Microbes' Survival Secrets

**David Maresca – Delft University of Technology, NL**  
Breaking the Wall of Deep Tissue Imaging

**Ingo Mellinghoff – Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, US**  
Breaking the Wall of Targeted Brain Tumor Therapy

**Carole Mitnick – Harvard Medical School, US**  
Breaking the Wall of One-Size-Fits-All TB Treatment

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**Crina Nimigean – Weill Cornell Medical College, US**

Breaking the Wall of Drugging Ion Channels

**Ali R. Rezai – West Virginia University Rockefeller Neuroscience Institute, US**

Breaking the Wall of Treatment for Alzheimer's

**Melina Schuh – Max Planck Institute for Multidisciplinary Sciences, DE**

Breaking the Wall of Invisible Ovulation

**Ramon Sun – University of Florida, US**

Breaking the Wall of Metabolism with 3D and AI

**Peter Yingxiao Wang – University of Southern California, US**

Breaking the Wall of Genetic Control by Sound

## PHYSICAL SCIENCES

**Alexie Leauthaud-Harnett – University of California Santa Cruz, US**

Breaking the Wall of Dark Energy

**Athina Anastasaki – ETH Zürich, CH**

Breaking the Wall of Plastic Circularity

**Cathleen Crudden – Queen's University, CA**

Breaking the Wall of Metal Instability

**Christine Muschik – Institute for Quantum Computing, CA**

Breaking the Wall of Quantum Computing with Qudits

**Claudio Emma – Stanford Linear Accelerator Center, US**

Breaking the Wall of Intense Particle Beams

**Henry Chapman – German Electron Synchrotron DESY, DE**

Breaking the Wall of Observing Molecules in Action

**Jian-Wei Pan – University of Science and Technology of China, CN**

Breaking the Wall of Practical Satellite QKD

**Martin Harmer – Lehigh University, US**

Breaking the Wall of 100 Years of Superalloys

**Richard Norte – Delft University of Technology, NL**

Breaking the Wall of Miniaturization in Nanotechnology

**Tanja Mehlstäubler – Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt, DE**

Breaking the Wall of Time & Frequency Standards

## ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY

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**Cesar de la Fuente – University of Pennsylvania, US**

Breaking the Wall of Antibiotic Discovery with AI

**Gopala Krishna Anumanchipalli – University of California, Berkeley HQ, US**

Breaking the Wall of Speech Loss with Neural Implants

**Junwang Tang – Tsinghua University, CN**

Breaking the Wall of Clean Energy Chemistry

**Lu Fang – Tsinghua University, CN**

Breaking the Wall of High-Power AI Needs

**Mario Lanza – National University of Singapore, SG**

Breaking the Wall of Energy-Efficient AI

**Shana Kelley – Northwestern University, Chan Zuckerberg Biohub Chicago, US**

Breaking the Wall of Hidden Disease Signals

**Shoji Takeuchi – The University of Tokyo, JP**

Breaking the Wall of Biohybrid Robotics

**Takuzo Aida – RIKEN/ The University of Tokyo, JP**

Breaking the Wall of Non-Degradable Plastics

**Zhiqin Chu – The University of Hong Kong, HK**

Breaking the Wall of Flexible Diamond Membranes

## **SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES**

**Andreas Ponderfer – Technical University of Munich, DE**

Breaking the Wall of Misguided Social Norms

**Emmanuel Letouze – Data-Pop Alliance, US**

Breaking the Wall of Humanitarian Action

**Jennifer Lackey – Northwestern University, US**

Breaking the Wall of Epistemic Injustice

**Leo Speidel – RIKEN, JP**

Breaking the Wall of History Hidden in Our DNA

**Lilie Chouliaraki – London School of Economics and Political Science, UK**

Breaking the Wall of Media and Communication Ethics

**Mira Johri – Université de Montréal, CA**

Breaking the Wall of Exclusion from Child Vaccination

**Octavio Aburto – Scripps Institution of Oceanography, UC San Diego, US**

Breaking the Wall of Marine Conservation Limits

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**Shee Kupa Shee – Lamu County Government, KE**  
Breaking the Wall of Peace Fragility in Disaster Zones

## ART & SCIENCE

**Agnieszka Kurant, PL**  
Breaking the Wall of Collective Intelligence

**Arnhildur Pálmadóttir & Arnar Skarphéðinsson – s. ap architects, IS**  
Breaking the Wall of Lavaforming

**Beatie Wolfe, UK**  
Breaking the Wall of Neurobiology Through Art

**Carla Alcalá Badias & Laura Villanueva – Polytechnic University of Valencia, ES**  
Breaking the Wall of Microbial Prophecy

**Chloe Bensahel – MIT, US**  
Breaking the Wall of Weaving Hybridity

**Guillaume Castagne – fabrique POLA, FR**  
Breaking the Wall of Air Pollution with Augmented Reality

**Marco Barotti – Studio Marco Barotti, DE**  
Breaking the Wall of Ecological Healing Through Sound

**Robertina Šebjanič, SI**  
Breaking the Wall of Demilitarisation of the Ocean Floor

**Vladan Joler – University of Novi Sad, Academy of Arts, RS**  
Breaking the Wall of Empires

**Xin Liu – Xin Liu Studio LTD, UK**  
Breaking the Wall of Material Science & Artistic Innovation.

A laureate will be selected in each category and invited to present their work on 9 November during the **Falling Walls Science Summit**. We look forward to welcoming the awardees live on stage in Berlin. The laureates will be announced on 16 September 2025.

## Press contact

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## About the Falling Walls Science Summit

# FALLING WALLS FOUNDATION

Since its inception in **2009**, the **Falling Walls Science Summit** has become a premier international forum for scientific breakthroughs and interdisciplinary dialogue. Held annually in **Berlin from 6 – 9 November**, the **Science Summit** commemorates the fall of the Berlin Wall by bringing together global leaders to explore how science can shape a sustainable future.

With its key formats—**Falling Walls Pitches**, **Falling Walls Circle** and **Falling Walls Science Breakthroughs**—the Summit fosters collaboration among academia, industry, politics and civil society to drive transformative change. The event is organized by the **non-profit Falling Walls Foundation**. More information: [falling-walls.com](https://falling-walls.com).

## About the Falling Walls Foundation

The **Falling Walls Foundation gGmbH** is a Berlin-based non-profit organization dedicated to advancing science communication and public engagement with research. Its initiatives bring together international experts to develop breakthrough solutions for global challenges.

Alongside the **Falling Walls Science Summit**, the Foundation runs the **Berlin Science Week**, as well as specialized programmes such as **Falling Walls Lab**, **Falling Walls Engage**, **Falling Walls Venture** and **Female Science Talents** and **Young Entrepreneurs in Science**. Since **2020**, the Foundation has also organized the **Creative Bureaucracy Festival**, an international platform for public sector innovation.

The Foundation is supported by the **German Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space**, the **Berlin Senate**, the **Hannover Re Foundation**, the **Museum for Natural History, Berlin**, **PD – Public Sector Advisory**, **Volkswagen Foundation** and more than 100 additional international philanthropies, academic institutions, companies and NGOs. Learn more: <https://falling-walls.com/foundation>.