

Rethinking Souvenirs: a 21st Century Design Workshop

Souvenirs are everywhere, representing locations and cultures boldly in their tiny packaged bundles of memory and meaning. The question is how representative they are of local culture, of changing cities?



The British Council has been digging into the meaning behind souvenirs and their link to culture and how design plays into this relationship with a series of workshops. By inviting young international participants from design schools to come together for a few days and tackle the puzzle of creating souvenirs that represent current culture as well as history and tradition, the British Council's Design and Architecture team has created the opportunity to take a new look at something so widespread, yet often overlooked.

In terms of design, creating the perfect souvenir is a challenge. The size is limited, it must be desirable and it must somehow incorporate recognized symbols and icons. All the while, the item must be widely appealing to purchasers coming from various backgrounds. This makes it a great tool

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for looking at design utility in the intercultural context. In addressing these issues, the workshops have aimed to stimulate meaningful relationships between designers and the local



craft production. Particularly, the organizers have targeted newly independent countries, provoking contemporary cultural expression where national identities are being rediscovered.

The workshops have brought together international designers to create souvenirs for Brussels, Shanghai, Moscow, Warsaw, Bombay and an expanding list of major cities. Each time, they were challenged to create something original, yet achievable. The participants come from various technical backgrounds, each bringing their own unique combination of cultural understanding and technical know-how.

For the workshop that took place in Budapest in October, thirty students from the MOME (Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design) along with seven local designers were asked to participate. Over five days, three members of the British Council Design and Architecture team led the group in their exploration of souvenir creation. This time around, the focus was on creating something truly representative of Hungarian culture.

The results were fantastic, and were displayed at the university's own gallery, Ponton, after being photographed and prepared in exhibition format. The creations played with the traditional images of Hungarian culture as well as that which is widely known to be the reality. Some of the products included Hungarian alphabet pasta, Rubik's Cube accessories, mustache corkscrews and Hungarian "slow-food."



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CAMOU BUDAPEST by Beatrix Fehér

For Beatrix Fehér, a talented young designer, it is all about prints, forms, photography and clothes. She carries her camera with her always and doesn't pass a day without snapping at least a few shots. She travels often, constantly collecting material and ideas. These photos are then artfully applied to jackets, skirts, dresses and bags via silkscreen to create her men's and women's street wear. In this way, she successfully pairs her lifelong passions in unique, modern designs.



The concept stems from the notion of "urban camouflage," an idea inspired by the military chic movement of recent years, taking it in a new direction. Elements of the city, including both known monuments and lesser known buildings, trees and facades are combined with a city-inspired color palette of grey, black and red.

Her ideas have won her numerous awards, including a first place Hungarian Design Award, and have taken her further a field. Fehér already showed great promise with her final university project for Swiss brand Amok, where she designed men's skirts and accessories. Most recently, she was invited to participate in the Souvenir Workshop and exhibition at the Ponton gallery, where Funzine was proud to select her as a winner.

You can find Fehér's products at the WAMP markets as well as in Edectick and Tasenka & Dio.
Or, contact her at fehtrixi@freemail.hu.

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