



The Rice planter celebrates Taiwan's agricultural history.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ISLANDERS STUDIO



Islanders Studio's best seller is a series of lampshades made from recycled materials and inspired by animals native to Taiwan.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ISLANDERS STUDIO



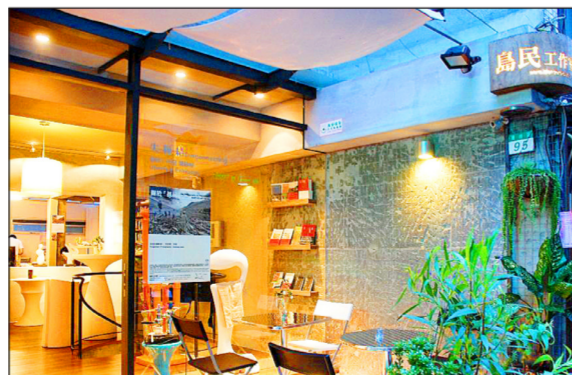
Candleholders shaped like Taiwanese animals can be stacked together to form an allegorical tree of life.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ISLANDERS STUDIO



Animals native to Taiwan are a recurring motif in Islanders Studio's products.

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Islanders Studio's combination store and studio near National Taiwan Normal University also hosts exhibits and lectures by visiting artists.

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## STORE NOTES:

**WHAT:** Islanders Studio (島民工作室)  
**WHERE:** 95, Chaozhou Rd, Taipei City (台北市潮州街95號)  
**OPEN:** Tuesdays to Saturdays from 10am to 7:30pm  
**TELEPHONE:** (02) 2396-9208  
**ON THE NET:** www.islanders-studio.com

# Island bounty

*Islanders Studio's sleek, modern home products celebrate the ecology and culture of Taiwan*

BY CATHERINE SHU  
 STAFF REPORTER



Above: The Crack planter pays homage to the rebuilding process after the 921 Earthquake.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ISLANDERS STUDIO

Left: The Lohachara Island planter memorializes the first island to disappear as a result of global warming.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ISLANDERS STUDIO

The team of artists and designers who make up Islanders Studio (島民工作室) take the experience of living in an island nation and interpret it in everyday objects with a modern twist.

Whimsical but elegant lampshades and candleholders are shaped like animals native to Taiwan. Planters are inspired by the first island to disappear as a result of global warming, the agricultural history of Taiwan and the 921 Earthquake. Even a toilet brush in the shape of a stylized fish reminds users that anything they toss in their commode eventually ends up in the ocean.

Islanders Studio's combination studio and store off Jinshan South Road (金山南路) near National Taiwan Normal University also hosts rotating exhibitions of emerging artists' work.

"We hope to have exchanges with islands all over the world," says executive director Hsiu-Ling Kuo (郭秀鈴). "Island" is not necessarily just a geographic term. When we talk about the experience of islands and islanders, it includes the experiences of living in isolated areas all around the world."

The environment is a repeating motif in many of Islanders Studio's products, including the Lohachara Island flower planter. The center of the white ceramic planter has an opening shaped like the islet in India's part of the Sundarban Delta, which researchers consider the first island to have been submerged by the effects of global warming. As plants grow, they turn into a miniature tribute to the lost island.

Another planter is square with a crack-shaped opening that leaves peep through as they grow. It pays homage to the process of rebuilding that Taiwan underwent after the 921 Earthquake. "You saw a lot of holes in the wall, but plants still grew through those cracks. For us, it symbolizes the dynamism of life on an island, despite all sorts of natural disasters," says Kuo.

Other products highlight Taiwan's ecology, including Islanders Studio's best-selling series of paper lampshades, inspired by endangered species native to the country. Made from recycled materials, the lampshades are shaped



like a Formosan black bear, sika deer, wild boar or scops owl. These animals also appear in candleholders that can be stacked on top of one another, creating a visual cross between the Bremen Town Musicians fairy tale and the allegorical tree of life.

Kuo says that the intent of the products is to allow people to enjoy the beauty of the animals without killing them. The lampshades are also sold in stores in England and the Netherlands.

"We hope by using these animals as a motif, we can make the world aware of different endangered species on this island. In terms of the environment, Taiwan hasn't garnered very much international attention, but there are really a lot of precious indigenous species here," says Kuo.

The studio's downstairs exhibit space, Sugar Cube Gallery (白方糖畫廊), displays artwork that focuses on ideas relevant to Islanders Studio's mission. The current show features pieces by Kuo Chiayun (郭家媛), a young artist who used ink and wash paintings of stray dogs to convey the feelings of isolation and homesickness she experienced when she moved from southern Taiwan to Taipei for university. In conjunction with the exhibit, Islanders Studio is hosting a series of talks that also explore

the theme of displacement. The last talk in the series, by director and documentary filmmaker Hsueh Changhui (薛常慧), will take place on Aug. 29 at 2pm.

Hsiu-Ling Kuo spent 10 years in the UK and Germany studying and working and says that her time abroad influenced her decision to help found Islanders Studio. As a student, Kuo found that many of her classmates' knowledge of Taiwan was limited to cross-strait relations.

"In terms of culture, people know very little. That was an important drive for me to come back to Taiwan to work, to try to know my country better and introduce it to the international community," says Kuo.

The Islanders Studio team also wants "to help our fellow countrypeople appreciate our own culture more," she adds. "Being abroad for so many years, I realized in Taiwan we really have a lot to contribute in terms of the natural environment. The minute you step outside of Taipei, you can really see that Taiwan is a beautiful island everywhere, in the east, the north and the south. It's all very different."