

FEATURES

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13

United by design

Taiwan Designers' Week takes over Huashan Culture Park for its third and largest edition

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The theme of this year's Taiwan Designers' Week (台灣設計師週) is Share & Enjoy (享·設計), and for the third year it gives designers from around the world a chance to do just that.

The event, which was launched in 2007, runs until Sunday at Huashan Culture Park (華山文化園區).

"Taiwan is known for manufacturing electronics and home appliances, but our designers are less celebrated. Here they have created their own stage," said Jung-wen Wang (王榮文), founder of Yuan-Liou Publishing (遠流) and an event speaker, during a press conference on Friday.

The products made by this year's 300 exhibiting designers range from consumer-oriented items, such as furnishings and jewelry, to more conceptual pieces. Taiwan Designers' Week has expanded in scope over the past three years — the first edition was held at EsLite bookstore's Xinyi branch, while the current event fills three buildings at Huashan Culture Park, and includes an outdoor design mart that took place last weekend and will return on Saturday and Sunday. In addition to Taiwan, this year's participants also hail from China, Germany, the Netherlands, Japan and Sweden.

Most of the items in the event's main exhibition hall are arranged into themed groups, including Reincarnation 2 — Hope (美麗轉世2 — 希望), featuring home design and jewelry created from used plastic bags, cardboard and other waste products, and The Artistry of Paper Cutting (剪技之美), which displays work from 20 designers based on elaborate traditional Chinese paper cutting.

Perhaps one of the most popular displays was Save (省), which lured visitors with an especially timely message. Items were based on lighthearted — but still somewhat serious — methods of reducing spending. Particularly novel creations included a giant calendar with pockets for money saved per day by Miffy Hsieh (謝舒婷) and Alvin Tsai (蔡騰毅), and a money clip by Yuki Tsui (崔睿錕) that screams when bills are removed from it (unfortunately, a "do not touch" sign prevented curious viewers from seeing just how loudly it could yell).

Another popular group was Rain (雨), where soggy weather provided the inspiration for designs ranging from an umbrella that measures the pH-level of raindrops by Hsiehng Wu (吳協衡) to Wenchih Huang's (黃文志) floral decals that forecast rainy weather.

Taiwan Designers' Week also gives designers a chance to show off their side projects. Mothers' Design (你媽、我媽、他媽媽的設計) is a group that matches professional designers from different fields with mothers to celebrate the latter's "daily wisdom" and take advantage of their crafting acumen.

"A lot of moms craft and create lovely things, but many of them are shy about showing off their work, especially if they are housewives and don't have business experience," said Ting-yu Wang (王亭喻), one of the project's designers.

Items showcased by Mothers' Design take homespun crafts, such as knitting, macrame and beadwork, and give them a new twist. Design pair Jen-Feng Chen (陳人鳳) and Meilin Lin (林美玲) wove large plastic beads from popular crafting emporium Mama Bear

(小熊媽媽) into rectangular lamps that emanate a soothing blue light and can be arranged to evoke a cityscape at night. Wang's design, which she created with her own mom, Li-luan Lai (賴麗鸞), is a large piece of wool felt with snaps that can be folded into a soft, origami-style hat.

"We hope that exhibiting at Taiwan Designers' Week will show off what the moms have made and encourage other designers to participate," said Wang. "Our designs aren't too conceptual. They are accessible and anyone can enjoy them."

This year's event includes the largest attendance of international designers so far. Bob Pao (鮑宏斌) from BLK studio, who attended the festival with a group of designers from Beijing, said he'd already had a chance to chat with many other participants.

"I think you can see the differences in aesthetic, a difference in the spirit of the design. It's a good opportunity for us to take it all in," said Pao.



PHOTOS: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

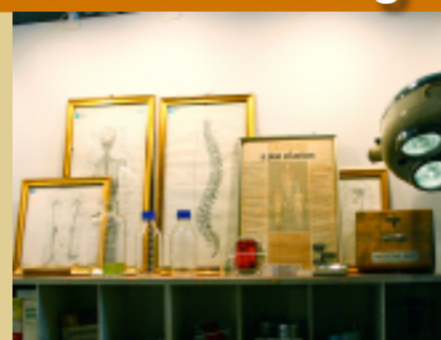
A few of the highlights at this year's Taiwan Designers' Week



Zuny

Zuny is a Taiwan-based brand that has focused on marketing its whimsical home items overseas. This is the company's first year at Taiwan Designers' Week and it hopes to get a sense of how Taiwanese consumers will react to its weighted stuffed animal bookends, faux fur-covered dumbbells and other products.

On the Net: www.zuny.info



DHH Studio

(東海醫院設計工作室)

Designer Hsu Ching-ting's (徐景亭) goal is to break down the barriers between art, design and the cold, sterile environment of hospitals. Items include a soft tote bag based on pharmacy pill packets, sleek hospital gowns and art made from repurposed vintage medical charts.

On the Net: web.mac.com/dhhs

Carton King

(紙箱王)

This design collective's installation art and other projects are all made from cardboard. Check out Carton King's 3D models of landmarks such as the Eiffel Tower and the Leaning Tower of Pisa.

On the Net: cartonking.blogspot.com

The Artistry of Paper Cutting

Designs inspired by the traditional Chinese art of elaborate paper cutting have been a Taiwan Designers' Week mainstay since the event started in 2007. Items this year include parasols with cutouts that cast lacy shadows by Sunny Chung (鍾毓珊) and delicate false eyelashes made from paper and meticulously cut into traditional motifs like peonies by Kin Wang (王婷艷).



Second Soul

Twelve Taiwanese graphic designers and graffiti artists collaborated with Ikea to create a series of armchairs. Highlights include the somewhat disquieting Portal by Half Dozen (半打), which features a figure clawing its way out of a seat cushion, and Dark-Circle Fever No. 9 by Hsu Chung Fang (方序中), in which ghostly images of cultural icons like Albert Einstein and Charlie Chaplin can be discerned in the upholstery pattern.



OTTIMO

Taiwanese company OTTIMO imports designer home furnishings from the US, Italy, Denmark and Japan. Its exhibit at Taiwan Designers' Week focuses on lacy paper curtains, lamp shades and garlands based on forest motifs by Tord Boontje. A limited-edition series of jewelry by the popular Dutch designer is also available.

On the Net: www.ottimo.com

