

Not for the common mall rat

The boutiques in 16 Workshop sell items by indie designers, ranging from T-shirts that give a modern spin on Buddhist iconography to art glass beads

BY CATHERINE SHU
STAFF REPORTER

16 Workshops (16工房), a cozy shopping arena in the back of Red House Theater, opened two years ago as part of an initiative by the Taipei City Government's Department of Cultural Affairs (台北市文化局) to turn the landmark into a center for creativity and make it more appealing to younger designers and artists. Fifteen of the 16 boutiques in the shopping center are currently occupied by stores selling items ranging from hand-embroidered dolls to beads bearing motifs from the Paiwan (排灣) tribe. Many of the stores in 16 Workshops are staffed (at least on weekends) by the creators of the objects on sale. "The people who shop here are very enthusiastic about what I do. They're always eager to ask me about glassmaking," says artist Steven Liang (梁志偉), the owner of Steven's Glass Wonderland (璃想國).



16 WORKSHOP (16工房)

ADDRESS: Red House Theater (西門紅樓), 10 Chengdu Rd, Taipei City (台北市成都路10號)

OPEN: Sundays to Thursdays from 2pm to 9:30pm, Fridays and Saturdays from 2pm to 10pm. Closed on Mondays

TELEPHONE: Individual phone numbers listed are for each store or the studios and designers who operate them. 16 Workshop's main phone number is (02) 2311-9380

ON THE NET: www.redhouse.org.tw

'0416 T-Shirt Shop

'0416 carries T-shirts and stationary that features illustrations by graphic designer '0416 (小宏), whose clients have included Shiseido, Yahoo and Nissan. The designs in '0416's stores are much sassier

than his corporate work and are drawn with markers in a deliberately childlike fashion. Signature items include T-shirts and notebooks bearing the image of a man in tighty-whities playing at being Superman.

Telephone: (02) 2389-6170

On the Net: blog.roodo.com/0416



PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

Betelnut (檳榔)

T-shirt brand Betelnut pays cheeky homage to Taiwanese culture with designs that include a satirical twist on the cheerful illustrations that appeared in old school textbooks or feature president Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) and former president Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) locked in a passionate embrace. The brand was launched in 2005 by graphic designers Tom Tang (湯忠謙) and Ma Chunfu (馬君輔). Betelnut regularly issues new series of tote bags, baseball caps and T-shirts, but its most popular design is still a wide-eyed squirrel cradling (what else?) a large betelnut.

Telephone: 0968-080-583

On the Net: betelnutco.blogspot.com



PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

Enjoy the Bricks

Enjoy the Bricks is an outgrowth of owner Nick Lai's (賴錦文) passion for Lego figures, which usually come as part of model kits. Lai had to figure out what to do with all the bricks he had accumulated. "I started to put them together and I thought, Lego doesn't have to just be toys. They can also be stylish," says Lai. A simple charm bracelet features a rainbow of individual bricks dangling from a silver chain, while pendants include a crystal-accented retro-style boom box. A T-shirt riffs on the iconic Che Guevara design, with the rebel's face replaced by the yellow head of a Lego figure.

Telephone: 0939-648-005

On the Net: enjoythebricks.blogspot.com



PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

Dragonfly Yazhu Colored Glass Bead Studio (蜻蜓雅築)

Dragonfly Yazhu stocks jewelry and art made from handmade glass beads. Highlights include beads based on motifs found in the art of the Paiwan tribe, who value bead-making as a divine gift. Most items are made or designed by artist Shi Xiu-ju (施秀菊) and a staff of 32 female glassmakers from the Paiwan tribe.

Telephone: 0929-199-991

On the Net: www.puqatan.com.tw,

www.wretch.cc/blog/dfab

Georgia Tsao

Every sterling silver piece in Georgia Tsao has its own story. A line of pendants shaped like the stars people doodle next to important items on memos is a reminder that "you are important, too, and you should treat yourself well," says designer Tsao (曹惠淇).

Tiny pretzel-shaped pendants also look like hearts with hands clasped within them. With a flip of a chain, infinity symbols can be turned into a number 8, a lucky number in Chinese numerology. The store's logo is a Viking helmet with a small heart in the middle, which is available as a pendant. "The heart means love and it's also cute," says Tsao, who majored in metal work at university and in graduate school. "The Viking horns symbolize bravery and strength."

Telephone: (02) 2314-0073

On the Net: www.georgiatsao.com



PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

Mago Life Shop

Mago Life takes iconography from Buddhism and reinterprets it in a sleek and modern way designed to appeal to younger people. "Buddha is not just a deity to be placed on a pedestal and worshipped. His spirit can always be a part of you," says Johnson Lee (李政光). Lee says his Guanyin (觀音) T-shirts are especially popular; the female deity is revered in both Buddhism and Taoism as a symbol of compassion. Mago Life also sells postcards extolling the three principal doctrines of Buddhism: impermanence (*anitya*), the transcendence of self-identity (*anatman*) and peace (nirvana). A colorful T-shirt bears a stylized version of Taiwan with butterflies and flowers floating over it. "I wanted to show that Taiwan is a happy and beautiful place," says Lee. "This shirt sells best among foreign visitors."

Telephone: (02) 2898-1916

On the Net: www.streetvoice.com.tw/magodesign



PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

Mew Mew Blacky (小黑貓畢雷特)

Mew Mew Blacky offers mugs, T-shirts, pins, coasters and other merchandise with the brand's pie-eyed cat characters printed on them. The main character is, of course, a black cat with a saucy sense of humor and innocent expression. His friends include an affectionate Siamese named Dibb (狄布), Qiaqia (恰恰), an easygoing mouse with golden-colored fur, and the gluttonous Dudu (嘟嘟).

Telephone: (02) 2331-3879

On the Net: www.wretch.cc/blog/cat64310

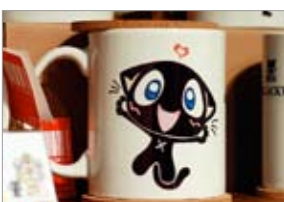


PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

Pink Co.

Pink Co. custom makes colorful bags that you can add as many pockets, dividers, buckles, handles and straps to as your heart desires. Customers pick from a thick binder of fabric choices, including *kawaii*

Japanese character cloth, Warholesque prints and leather, and several styles of handbags, pouches and totes — or they can design their own bags and bring in their own material. Most Pink Co. custom designs range from NT\$1,000 for a handbag to NT\$4,000 for a tote bag with two fabrics and multiple pockets. Ready-made clothing in colorful prints is also available, including slip dresses, leggings and scarves.

Telephone: 0922-725-594

On the Net: www.wretch.cc/album/pinkcobag



PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

Taiwan Indigenous Peoples Handcraft Studio (伍創原夢)

Highlights in the store include handwoven fabrics made into sleek handbags and totes, hand-tooled leather wallets and teacups carrying traditional motifs from Taiwan's Aboriginal tribes.

Telephone: 0925-558-159

On the Net: cultureart.pixnet.net/blog



PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

Steven's Glass Wonderland (璃想國)

Steven Liang started working at Liuli Gongfang (琉璃工房) in 1994, but it wasn't until he was sent to a workshop in Seattle two years later that he realized the artistic possibilities of glassmaking. He began attending classes and studio workshops on his own to learn new techniques, many of which he combines in the pieces available for sale at Steven's Glass Wonderland. For example, an abstract sculpture inspired by flamenco dancing merges a blown top with a flowing, colorful "skirt" made by slumping, a technique that shapes glass at extremely high temperatures over a mold or form. Liang, who also runs a glassmaking studio in Tamsui, says he eventually hopes to hold glassmaking demonstrations in front of the store. His best-selling items are colorful earrings. Individual beads and larger art pieces are also available.

Telephone: 0919-560-542

On the Net: www.wretch.cc/blog/stevenljw



PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

p714

Entering p714's store is like stepping into a cartoon zoo filled with the design team's colorful and exuberant illustrations of frogs, crocodiles, bears, cats, elephants, giraffes and other animals. A large wooden rocket cutout stands by the entrance for shoppers to pose with, as if they were jetting into an imaginary universe filled with sorbet-colored planets. p714 sells stationery, many examples of which have the word "Happy" printed in English across them.

Telephone: 0988-422-770

On the Net: www.p714.com

Younga Boutique (洋嘎)

Younga sells dresses, skirts and shirts made of traditional fabrics from Cameroon.

Designer Claire Lin (克萊兒) first discovered the colorful printed cloth, which is rich in symbology, while working as a volunteer in Africa. Younga collaborates with the Cameroon organization Association pour la Promotion de l'Artisanat de la Nature (APAN), which promotes fair-trade practices and the use of natural materials. The boutique also carries intricately woven necklaces and ornaments knotted together from thin strands of hemp or leather and embellished with seeds and leaves collected from across Taiwan by Wang Lichung (王麗君) of Dou Dou Xiang (朵朵香). Seeds include cream-colored Job's tears grains (薏仁), the bright red, coral-like seeds (相思豆) of the *adenanthera pavonina* tree (also known as red sandalwood) and large, glossy brown pods (菩提子) from the sacred fig tree.

Telephone: 0931-075-370

On the Net: younga-boutique.blogspot.com



PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

Heidi Doll (海蒂朵兒)

Heidi Doll is hopping with fluffy cellphone covers, stuffed animals, carved wooden figures and other knickknacks, all inspired by a little rabbit named Hsiaoobao Tangtang (小寶鵝鵝). Most items are handmade by Heidi's two-person staff, including soft fleeces in natural colors that evoke the coats of rabbits and homey calicos in pastel shades.

On the Net: www.wretch.cc/blog/heididoll



PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

Unique Design

Unique Design features items by Yolanda Pong (龐鏘), Su Hsiao-meng (蘇小夢) and their designer friends. Items include intricate silver and enamel, sleek salt and pepper shakers, knitwear and Swarovski crystal-encrusted jewelry.

On the Net: www.wretch.com/album/twolady2000



PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

MoArt

MoArt, whose name is a portmanteau of "more art," specializes in items from different designers who derive their inspiration from Taiwanese culture and history. Items include bobble-headed figures of politicians including Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石), Sun Yat-sen (孫逸仙) and current President Ma Ying-jeou and Vice President Vincent Siew (蕭萬長), a ceramic mug that plays off the Taiwan Beer (台灣啤酒) can, postcards printed with vintage advertisements and notebooks wrapped in brightly-colored, peony-covered *a-ma* (阿媽) fabric, so-called because it is a Taiwanese classic.

Telephone: (02) 2312-1189

On the Net: www.tgda.org.tw/menu.asp