

# STYLE

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## Design platform

Taiwan Designers' Week returns to Huashan 1914 Creative Park with an emphasis on daily life and the environment

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Taiwan Designers' Week gives designers a chance to show off what fires up their creative engines. Now in its fourth year, the event opened on Friday last week and runs until Sunday at Huashan 1914 Creative Park (華山1914).

The theme of this year's festival is "Care, I Care." "It means caring about our lives, our surroundings and the environment," said Hung Ching-feng (洪慶峰), the deputy minister of the Council for Cultural Affairs (文建會) at a press conference last Friday. "People want to see how design is relevant to their daily lives. That's our challenge."

More than 300 designers are represented at the festival. The event, which gives Taiwanese designers a platform for independent projects, has expanded considerably since it was first launched in 2007 at Eslite Bookstore's Xinyi branch (誠品信義店). A designers' market with 27 vendors took place last weekend and will return on Saturday and Sunday. In addition to Taiwan, this year's event includes design brands from Germany, Sweden, Japan, the US and the Netherlands.

The main gallery of Taiwan Designers' Week is split into 13 themed exhibits, each run by a group of designers.

Sixteen students from Tatung University Culture-Based Design Lab (大同大學文化設計研究室) saw this year's theme as an opportunity to examine Taiwan's aesthetic identity. Their exhibit, Facing the Mirror (照鏡子), features objects inspired by this country's culture and each designer's personal experiences.

Eric Cheng (鄭宇庭) satirizes the labeling of his peers as the fragile "Strawberry Generation" (草莓族) with a pair of sandals balanced on heels shaped like the fruit. A side table by Tsai Yi-cheng (蔡易成) looks like a Victorian antique, but a closer inspection reveals that the legs are built from stacked beverage bottles, with different brands (including Taiwan Beer and Yakult yogurt) recognizable by their silhouettes.

Tsai says Taiwan's exposure to different cultural influences gives its designers a wide range of references to draw upon, but makes it

harder to define the country's own aesthetic.

"Scandinavia and Japan are two places that are known for having a very recognizable design style. We want to think of a way to show the world what Taiwanese style is," says Tsai. "To do that, we have to understand our strong points and what makes us different from other countries."

A neighboring exhibit, Love Feast (愛宴), features the work of 20 Christian designers. "We all work for different companies, but we also use our skills to express our faith," says Joyce Wan (萬宜家). "It's a way for us to spread the gospel and let people know about God's love."

Over the last two months the designers, who attend different churches, gathered on Saturday evenings to prepare Love Feast. Their creations, arranged around a banquet table, use everyday objects to reflect on spirituality.

Salt and pepper shakers by David Kang (康家彰) and Peter Kou (寇志綱) are shaped like boulders with a small human-shaped figure pushing against them.

"When you shoulder obstacles, it is exhausting, but eventually you develop strength and balance. And God is the spice of life," says Love Feast co-organizer Amy Wu (吳靜宜).

Wu's own creation is a set of angular red erasers that gradually become softly rounded hearts as they are used. "They symbolize forgiveness and the ease of mind it brings," she says.

Environmental awareness is a popular theme this year, with three exhibits showcasing items made from eco-friendly or recycled materials.

Less of Everything (一切從減), organized by the National Taiwan Craft Research and Development Council (國立臺灣工藝研究發展中心), focuses on the design potential of driftwood gathered in Pingtung County. Items including eating

utensils, loudspeakers and furniture preserve the natural curves and grain of planks and branches.

"We start by looking at the shape of the wood and thinking of what it can be turned into," says Connie Liang (梁秀君). "We want to show off its beauty and design potential. Taiwan has a lot of driftwood that would go to waste otherwise."

Foreign brands also see Taiwan Designers' Week as a chance to gain exposure in a potentially lucrative market.

Berlin-based DMY, a label representing German designers, is seeking Taiwan distributors. Its products include inflatable aluminum stools, wooden music boxes shaped like round Mozartkugel candies and modernized macrame flowerpot holders made with wire mesh.

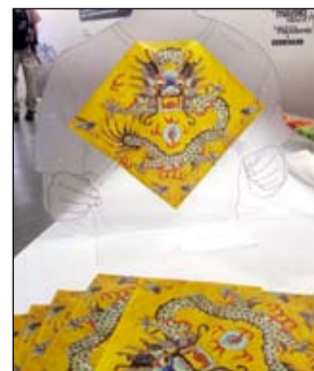
"It's our second year here. The Taiwan market is very important for us," says DMY CEO and managing director Joerg Suermann. "People here have a good understanding of design and it's a good platform to promote our products."

### Highlights from Taiwan Designers' Week



Woven from the dried leaves and stalks of boat orchids, Tsai Hsin-huang (蔡信煌) and Yang Hsing-tan's (楊杏丹) electric fan cage scents the breeze with a sweet, summery fragrance. Other items made from plant fibers in exhibit Potential 50 (原力五十) include a pair of sexy stiletto heels and lighting fixtures

Based on the imperial yellow brocades once worn by Chinese emperors, napkins by Jamie Wang (王中閔), Steven Chou (周晉群) and Show Shen (沈德佑) turn even the cheapest instant noodles into a royal feast. The design is part of Copycat (山寨)



Mothers' Design (手包) features collaborations between designers and their moms. Lamp-Knot by Hung Cheng (鄭洪) and Rosa Tan (譚蓮竹) transforms electric cords into a traditional Chinese knotting motif

The theme of Reincarnation 3 — Natural is turning junk into treasure, or at least useful objects. Tseng Yung-ling (曾永玲), Yang Hsi-hsia (楊夕霞), Hsiao Ming-yu (蕭明瑜) and Chen Yu-chuan's (陳煜權) caps, molded in the shape of vintage toys, save empty soda bottles from the recycle bin and turn them into chic storage containers



Every Taiwan Designers' Week has included an exhibit with items inspired by traditional Chinese paper cutting. Zeni Wang (王菁菁) adapted paper-cutting techniques to embellish a vintage leather suitcase. Her work is displayed alongside Wang Ting-yu's (王亭瑜) umbrella with I-Ching trigrams bordered by symbols representing a happy marriage

