

Central Values

Common Heritage
in Contemporary
Central European Design

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Imprint

The project

Central Values

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Hungarian Design Council (Hungary)

Zamek Cieszyn (Poland)

Creative Industry Kosice, NGO (Slovakia)

Depo2015 (Czech Republic)

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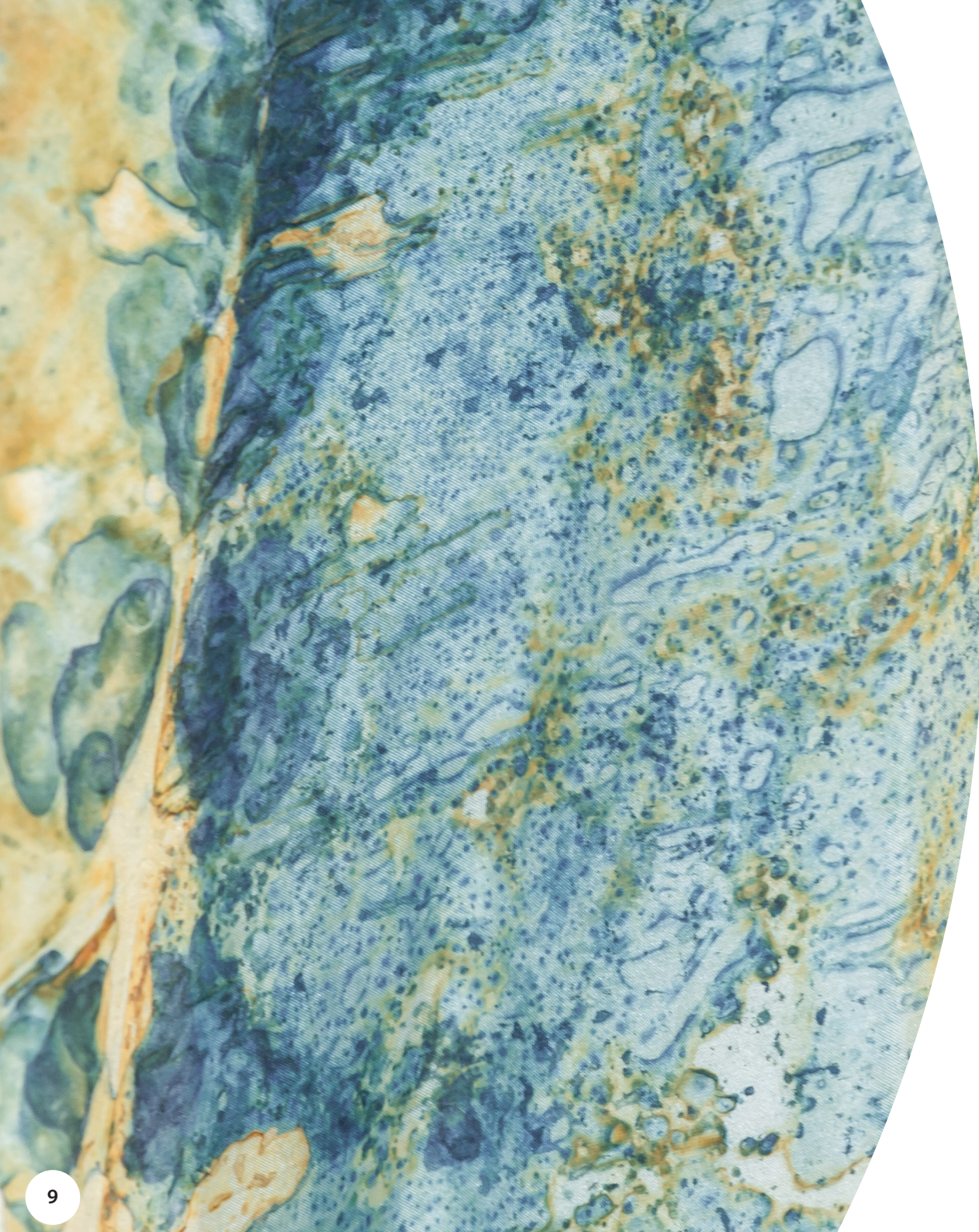
INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Design has become an increasingly important topic in the 21st century. In the era of globalization, mobilization and technology, the role of a designer has become crucial in the development of products and services in order to reduce manufacturing and delivery costs and to create items appealing to the audiences. The recent challenges of the economic crisis, the increasing importance of sustainability and the protection of natural resources have further refined the already highly versatile expertise of designers – which ultimately leads to an increase in competitiveness for the company that employs them. To make things even more complicated, products also need to have a character that makes them more attractive and therefore more successful on the market.

But what is character and where does it come from? In the age of globalization, does it help if a product has a strong local character? And if it does, what kind of local character have products designed and produced in the Visegrád Countries? Do designers from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia have similar inspirations, ideas and approaches? If they have, what are these and where do they come from? Finally, and most importantly: how can these similarities be turned into a strong and easily identifiable character that transforms tradition into future possibilities?

The project Central Values – Common Heritage in Contemporary Central European Design tries to find the answers to these questions.



KICK- OFF EVENT

Kick-off event:

Central Values – Common Heritage in Contemporary
Central European Design
An exhibition at the Museum of Applied Arts,
Budapest, during Budapest Design Week



Curator: *Judit Osvárt*
 Expert: *dr. András Szalai*
 Installation design: Studio Nomad
 Graphic design: *de_form*
 24 September – 20 November 2016
 Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest, Hungary

Unusual and unique in the Middle Ages, monarchs of the Central Eastern European historic kingdoms flourishing in the “borderlands of Western civilisation” (Oscar Halecki), Czech king John I of Bohemia, Casimir III of Poland and the host king Charles Robert I of Hungary organised a congress in Visegrád, Hungary. At the meeting held in early November 1335 the participating countries forged an alliance, which – through dynastic relations - brought about an almost century-long peaceful and glorious period in the history of the three countries, when all of them participated in and actively shaped the history and culture of Europe.

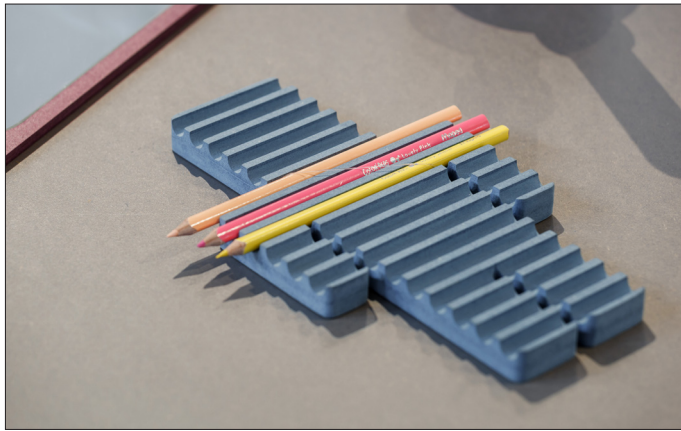
Looking upon the congress of the 14th century kings as a symbolic lead-up, President of Czechoslovakia Václav Havel, President of Poland Lech Wałęsa and Prime Minister of Hungary József Antall met in Visegrád in February 1991 to refresh regional cooperation, and, as a result, formed the Visegrád Cooperation of the three countries, adding Slovakia as the fourth partner after it had become an independent state (1993).

Taking the path of true independence and democratic development, the four Central and Eastern European countries

expressed their wish to be regarded as a European region united by numerous aspects of history and culture, whose value system and spirit are shared in many respects. However, cooperation also means that the participants wish to leave behind a part of their shared past that may cast a shadow over their future. A past that in the early 20th century was a paradoxical result of a thousand years of dynastic endeavours to integrate power, bringing about a political region that was incapable of integration and consisted of countries characterised by what Hungarian historian István Bibó called “the misery of Eastern European small states”.

Cooperation of the Visegrád Countries – particularly in the context of the European Union – offers a chance to recover from the aforesaid misery, and provides an opportunity to leave behind the occasionally surfacing “intellectual hangover” (Peter Zajac). This cooperation is indispensable also from the aspect of modern democratic development within an independent national framework, as – quoting Slovak historian Peter Zajac again – “a fundamental interest” of the region today “is to ensure that its countries follow a parallel but unidirectional path of development, because this is the only way to achieve internal stability and peaceful gain in the region (...), and to create a cultural region in Central and Eastern Europe within the European civilisation and its processes.” Therefore, a prerequisite to the creation of a common cultural region and to the contributory cooperation is modern democratic development that has been a historical chance and possibility for the Visegrád Countries for over 25 years now.





And if “modern democracy represents the triumph of the way of life led by man working and creating with great care” – as István Bibó put it –, then the role of design to create value may arise as a condition to the practical implementation and fulfilment of the desired unidirectional development and the contributory cooperation. This is because – as proposed by poet Vilém Flusser, who also has ties to this region by reason of his roots in Prague – “design is the base of all culture”. Design is not just a matter of market economy or commerce, and what it shapes is not only product quality but also the culture of work and behaviour formulated by the demand for quality through the need for a superior environment and object culture to serve man; and therefore, in a complex way, it plays a social role that creates and carries value. This role enables design to find a shared goal in line with values that connect us instead of dividing us. This exhibition wished to present these shared values through works of dozens of contemporary designers. Based on an extensive research of designers’ works and design products of the last 15 years in the Visegrád Countries, a clear pattern of four major topics has become evident for the curators. Most of the designers active after the year 2000 have been working based on the following four paths: reinterpretation of traditional materials and handcrafting objects, ironical references to their countries’ history, heritage of modernism, social realism and postmodern, and experimentation of new materials, techniques and design languages. Therefore, the selected items have been grouped into four bigger groups in the magnificent, art nouveau dome hall of the Museum of Applied Arts in Budapest.

Tradition

The Central and Eastern European countries have an extremely abundant heritage in terms of traditions of craftsmanship. Traditional decorative techniques like blue-dyeing or blanket stitches, crafts like harness-making or weaving still represent an inexhaustible source of inspiration for designers, who combine the often centuries-old techniques with contemporary motifs and modern elements, following the trends of slow design and new craft. Another group of designers interpret traditions more abstractly and boldly: this is how china figurines are reinvented due to digital technologies, and this is how wheelbarrows or carts of itinerant tradesmen are adjusted to the changed needs and tasks of the 21st century. In addition, the majority of the objects shown here are linked to traditions that are present in the majority of the Visegrád Countries, which makes them interpretable – and marketable – across the whole region instead of just in a single area.

History

Besides the stories of monarchs and countries, history also records stories of our culture, habits and environment. Moreover, the traditions of fashion, gastronomy or interior decoration tend to characterise a whole region instead of just one nation; in terms of the Visegrád Countries, examples include the typically Central and Eastern European custom of consuming pickles, or the strong presence of the Roman Catholic religion. Moreover, history can also be personal: private or micro-history inspires contemporary designers just the same way as nostalgia does – examples are retro style sports shoes reminiscent of the peaceful mass sporting events of the socialist era, or the cuts of clothing from the romantic period. Pieces





inspired by history also stimulate the hidden corners of our collective unconscious, evoking familiarity and cosiness, and generating emotions – or in any case they definitely touch the viewer, as does Eastern European storytelling that is extremely popular also in Western countries as a special exotic feature.

Modernism

Dominant in the first half of the 20th century, modernism keeps inspiring designers worldwide. Its core principles – minimal use of materials, the thesis 'form follows function', sleek elegance – are lasting values that are globally popular with designers and buyers of design products alike. Modernism has sprouted a peculiar wildling in Central Europe: the aesthetics of prefabricated concrete buildings dominating cityscapes, which serves as a major source of inspiration for young designers who were born around the time of the regime change. This category of the exhibition includes objects inspired by both major trends – international modernism and the architecture of socialist prefabricated concrete buildings –, including ones that are a special mix of nostalgia, irony and humour.

Experiments

The Visegrád Countries share the experience of a regime change – along with the ensuing euphoria, then disenchantment. The emergence of consumer society and globalisation brought about innumerable new concepts, objects and habits in Central Europe, which transpire through contemporary designers' works in an abstract form. Today, 25 years after the inception of the Visegrád Cooperation, it is safe to say that the designers in the four countries work in line with the trends and the spirit of

the time: an eco-friendly approach and experimentation with new materials and procedures dominate their works; moreover primacy of innovation, social sensitivity, sustainability, cultural and historical self-reflexion, technological considerations, and even criticism of the consumer society have been detected. The contemporary designers of Central Europe think on a global scale – and, accordingly, their works generate global interest.

The exhibition, on view until 20 November 2016, was one of the most successful events in the 'design' topic in Hungary in 2016, with the record number of visitors 7700* at the Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest.

* based on the tickets sold by the Museum for the exhibition. The number does not contain free visitors (participants of the opening ceremony, school visits, guided visits etc.), a further estimated 500-700 people.



CENTRAL VALUES – COMMON HERITAGE IN CONTEMPORARY CENTRAL EUROPEAN DESIGN

Central Values – Common Heritage in Contemporary

Central European Design

Design Forum

A conference about design heritage

28 September 2016

Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest, Hungary

The exhibition Central Values – Common Heritage in Contemporary Central European Design was completed with a conference about contemporary design approaches in the four Visegrád Countries. The event was held at the Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest, where participants from all four countries were invited to share their experience regarding various connections between heritage and design. The event aimed to show how the region's countries, all having similar social, economic and cultural traditions and endowments, are addressing the formal, technological and systematic challenges of the 21st century. The lectures were followed by a vivid discussion.

Opening lecture:
Central Values – Common Heritage in Contemporary Central European Design
By *dr. András Szalai*

Lectures:
Design at the sources
lecturer: *Ms. Lubomira Trojan*
Head of Design Department, Zamek Cieszyn (Poland)

The Story of Makerspace – Rediscovering the Beauty of Old Crafts
Lecturer: *Mr. Ondrej Kasperek*
Makerspace – DEPO2015 (Czech Republic)

About Creative Industry Kosice
Lecturer: *Mr. Michal Hladký*
Creative Industry Kosice (Slovakia)

10 years of Contemporary Architecture Centre
lecturer: *Julianna Libárdi*
Contemporary Architecture Centre



INVESTPLACE – SEEK AND FIND INVESTORS!

InvestPlace – Seek and Find Investors!

Investor Workshop

Conference and Networking Event

29 September 2016

Széphárom Community Space, Budapest, Hungary



140 participants and 40 investor meetings – this is the result of InvestPlace Conference and Networking event where guests listened to different lectures about recent experiences in design and investments, and where also practical advices were shared about the changes of the investor market, business angels and raising capital.

Digitalis Jolet Nonprofit Kft. has been the launching organizer of Hungary's most successful investor seeking event: Invest Place, since 2013. The conference, workshop and networking event has been organized during Budapest Design Week in recent years in order to reach as many stakeholders in the Hungarian design industry as possible. Small and medium enterprises, independent designers and design studios have also participated at this year's event in a big number – more than

140 registered guests have attended who all were interested in how their businesses can be strengthened through investments and what kind of investment possibilities were available at the moment. In the first part of the conference, dr. Viktor Botos, Director of . Digitalis Jolet Nonprofit Kft. has reflected on the recent changes of the investor market in Hungary. Mr. Antal Károlyi, on behalf of Hungarian Business Angel Network has talked about Hungarian and international angel networks and on how designers and startups can contact and work with them. Csaba Kákósy, representing Day One Capital was able to discuss dilemmas that these companies face when they search and find an investor, from the perspective of small and medium enterprises and startups. József Török, Business Development Director of Széchenyi Capital Fund Management Ltd. reported on project conditions, realized investments and successful exits.





In the second half of the program, investors from Hungary and the Visegrád Countries gained insight on the regional investor market through a panel discussion. Finally, personal consultations took place between designers, startups, business angels, investors, incubators and various consultants – a possibility that most of the participants did not miss.

Opening lecture:

Make Your Intellectual Property Attractive

Lecturer: *dr. Viktor Botos*

Digitalis Jolet Nonprofit Kft. (Hungary)

Lectures:

Help from the Angels

Lecturer: *Antal Károlyi*

Hungarian Business Angel Network (Hungary)

Venture Capitalists – Seed Financing and Second Round Investments

Lecturer: *Csaba Kákósy*

Day One Capital (Hungary)

Realised Investments, Successful Exits

Lecturer: *József Török*

Széchenyi Capital Fund Management Ltd. (Hungary)



Regional Investment Panorama –

Panel Discussion About the Experience of Investors from the Visegrad Four Countries

Moderator: *Lénárd Horgos*

Board Member at the Hungarian Private Equity and Venture Capital Association

M27 ABSOLVO (Hungary)

Panelists:

Zoltán Tóth, Euroventures (Hungary)

Radoslav Vašina, Investeers (Slovakia)

Andrej Kiska, Credo Ventures (Czech Republic)

Paweł Maj, Skyline Venture (Poland)

ECONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE –

**Economy and independence –
a model of career or a way of living?**

Panel discussion

25 February 2017
Zamek Cieszyn

Organizer: Zamek Cieszyn (Poland)

A MODEL OF CAREER OR A WAY OF LIVING?



The issue of heritage and traditions in design has been discussed from a particular point of view during the panel discussion 'Economy and independence', organized by Zamek Cieszyń, during the celebrations of the 12. anniversary of the institution. The event was focusing on the changing role and possibilities of the designer – in the 20th century, the only way to success for a designer was being employed by a state-owned, large company, likely a furniture or clothing manufacturer. After the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 the possibilities of designers have also changed. Today, most of these formerly state-owned companies have vanished, and thanks to globalization, the majority of furniture and clothing production (and therefore: design) is centralized: employing designers in the company headquarters, and outsourcing production into countries where labor is relatively cheap to achieve higher profits. Central European designers have almost exclusively one path in front of them: to become independent, to establish their own studio and to act not only as design studios but also as brands that design, produce and sell their products. The changing role of the designer requires of course various skills and meets different requirements, but these challenges are very similar in the four countries of the Visegrád Countries, where similar processes have taken place in the last 25 years. The meeting aimed to discuss how designers can meet these challenges based on independence, passion and local traditions.

The meeting was attended by 50 participants from Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary, all of them were young designers, academics, students, business, representatives of design institutions, and other stakeholders of the design industry.

Moderator:
Andrzej Śmiałek
designer, professor of Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków (Poland)

Panelists:
Mateusz Bzówka
journalist, editor of "Zwykłe Życie" magazine (Poland)

Anne Fischer
designer, graduate of Royal Academy Eindhoven (The Netherlands)

Anna Marešová
designer, owner of Anna Marešová Studio and the brand "Whoop de doo" (Czech Republic)

Agata Matlak-Lutyk
designer, owner of BALAGAN and Transparent Shopping Collective (Poland)

Urszula Szwed
owner of Dinkys, design&illustrator studio (Poland)





DESIGN

DESIGN ŽERU

discussion about common cultural values in design

Talks, discussion and networking event

22, 26 June 2017

Depo2015, Plzeň (Czech Republic)

Organizer: Makerspace / DEPO2015 (Czech Republic)

ZERU



Design žeru is a series of discussions with designers on issues of common cultural values in design in the Central European territory. Organizers were especially interested in what the designers have in common, how they work, what they are trying to focus on in their present work and invited participants to discuss on how local heritage, materials and craftsmanship can help in the revitalization of different urban areas, the city or even a region. Designers of course have also talked about their personal experiences regarding the implementation of local traditions into the design process, their motivations to do it and on how the audience reacts to these products.



Lectures:

Proces in design
Zdeněk Veverka

Nature and design
Tomáš Libertiny

TRADITIONS AND CONTEMPORARY DESIGN

Traditions and Contemporary Design

Talks, discussion and networking event

28 June 2017

Kasárne/Kulturpark, Košice (Slovakia)

Organizer: Creative Industry Košice (Slovakia)

We all refer to the past. But how do successful designers perceive the cultural, industrial, or historical heritage and how do these themes reflect in their work? Do they use references consciously or subconsciously? Where and why do they use the knowledge of traditions and how do they use it as their advantage? At the event organized by Creative Industry Kosice, three successful young designers brought their unique insights into the modern and innovative use of the memories and traditions, which they refer to in their designs. They have talked about why did they choose traditional themes, processes or forms and how do they create new values on their basis. They have also presented their motivation and thoughts that reflect the current consumer lifestyle and sustainability in contemporary design. The talks were followed by an intense Q&A section with the active participation of the audience, and a networking event.

Speakers:

Tomáš Libertíny (SK/NL)

Tomáš Libertíny is an artist, architect, beekeeper. He looks for connections between art and modern technology within his work. In his designs, he focuses on ecology and he refers to Slovak tradition of beekeeping. He is fascinated by the functioning of nature and its societies. There is a long process of studying, research and comprehension of natural patterns before each artwork. Final products are the results of patient work with bees, which brings inner satisfaction in addition to process of creation. Tomáš develops constructions that are placed into bee hives. He motivates the swarm to place their by-product (wax) on the construction by the author's rules. Tomáš has been reacting on the social responsibility issues, referring to heritage and creation of valuable artwork for the future for a long time. One of his main topics are local traditions, which he tries to implement and re-invent in his art work. He refers to current society and the need to care about the resources, that remain on the planet. His art pieces were exhibited in Milan, Paris, New York, Tokyo and South Korea. The designer talked about his attitude to nature, nature materials and how to use its potential in contemporary design work.

Michaela Bednářová (SK)

Michaela Bednářová is known for her brand Poujd which is now focusing on creation of gift items. Its characteristic author's imprints reflects on current Slovakia. Michaela is trying to



show positive reference on her own country sometimes even with the wit. In her work, she refers mainly to natural heritage, motifs, crafts and she applies these tendencies also in the names of her products. Besides the Slovak themed gift items, you can find the collections of clothing with the emphasis on the design of textiles in Poujd's portfolio. The new clothes lines bring the patterns that are tailored to various types of figures. Headword of the brand is „no waste“ ideology, focus on the local production and sustainability of textile industry. Recently, Michaela has been interested in restoration of tradition of weaving in Slovakia („Footsteps of Tatralan“ initiative) and she

uses the fabrics made by the latest textile technologies. The designer introduced us to her views on heritage, traditions and why she uses the potential of heritage in clothing and textile design.

Matěj Matouš (CZ)

Matěj Matouš is a graphic and product designer, who emphasizes the connection of contemporary design and trends in modern technology, as well as traditional crafts. His work is closely related to managing unique open workshop space called Makerspace. He is participating in the creation of unique projects of the participants: his main idea is to bring traditional crafts to wider audiences, to get the designer in touch with the materials and to provide the environment for production or prototyping. The designer talked about the workshops, about the relationship between designer and craftsman and about crafting itself. Matěj has also talked about the importance of being in contact with the real product, of knowing the process and technologies and „If you have never touched the saw, you will never design a good chair.“

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