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THE OBJECT BY SHUMON BASAR



At a recent auction, I happily paid £200 for a painting that was pure fake. No, I wasn't duped by some cunning art market scam. I knew full well that it was phoney. I also knew who had produced it, how old he was, and how much he got paid to do it. I bought the forgery because this beautiful, melancholic picture of a couple wandering in a dark, foreboding European forest embodied a terse fact about art in the age of late globalisation.

My purchase originated in a fascinating Chinese hub where culture is literally being copied and pasted, en masse, for the rest of the world to enjoy. Da Fen is a village-city north of Shenzhen that, since 1998, has earned the sobriquet Da Fen Oil Painting Village. Why? Because there are more than 8,000 artists and 622 galleries producing five million-plus painted reproductions of Monets, Van Goghs, and now, Damien Hirst 'spot paintings' (yours for only \$65!).

Production lines of painters do a few strokes each and then hand the painting over to the next worker-painter. It is a cottage industry technique at a Fordist scale of assembly. Twenty people produce 100 paintings a day. The Chinese government, in recognition of Da Fen's industry and constant economic growth, heralds it as a shining beacon of China's cultural health. This may seem weird to westerners. After all, isn't Da Fen just a sanctioned factory for cheap forgeries? A sweatshop for suppressed Chinese artists?

Not from the Chinese authorities' perspective. There's honest toil in each of the products, whose destiny will most likely be to hang in a corporate hotel boardroom or bathroom. It is art that's never really intended to be looked at, like muzak that's never really listened to. Da Fen obliterates western preciousness over the original and authenticity with millions of copies of our collective desires.

Before we smugly dismiss Da Fen's open economy of shameless shams, hasn't much culture (west or east) safely settled on reruns and remakes? Isn't wanting to have your own Guggenheim Museum by Frank Gehry a little like painting a forgery of a Rembrandt? It looks like the original, everyone thinks it's the original, but it isn't. Anyway, Rembrandt and his ilk were never solely responsible for their masterpieces. Their assistants did most of the work.

I may have paid 100,000 per cent more for my fake painting than the Da Fen artist earned fabricating it, but I was told the money would make its way back to him (somehow). In any case, why shouldn't we all have access to real copies of art's greatest hits? I'll put my money where my ideology is.

Following its award-winning initiative last year, the **Ten** team is back. *Gian Luca Amadei* takes 10 to look at its latest crop of bright ideas

After grabbing centre stage and a Blueprint/100% Design award in 2006, design collective Ten is back. This time under the title Ten Again.

Chris Jackson, the originator of the initiative, last year challenged 10 designers to produce a small collection of objects made with materials sourced within a radius of 10km of their studio, and with a restricted budget of £10 each.

This year, each of the designers has been asked to design or curate a collection of 10 products. The sustainability theme remains but this time the budget has been relaxed and the restraints on distance have been removed, allowing the designers to source materials from further afield and approach sustainability from a more realistic perspective.

Being freed from this geographical constraint, some of the designers took the opportunity to look beyond London and indeed Europe, starting with Jackson himself. 'I have collated 10 objects from around Asia,' says Jackson. 'All have something to do with sustainable design, but from a cross-cultural perspective. Some demonstrate a nice use of a sustainable material.

some are cultural comments, and others are more frivolous.'

Working on a similar wavelength to Jackson, Hector Serrano has been looking at souvenirs, selecting ten cities with iconic landmarks such as New York and London.

'They will be printed in white wax, using a 3D Systems printer,' says Serrano. People will be able to purchase a password to download a 3D design of the souvenir and customise it by writing a message, which will be engraved onto its base (as pictured below). The object will then be printed using a rapid prototyping technique. 'The concept behind my project,' explains Serrano, 'is about saving money and material while minimising transport costs and environmental implications.'

Some of the designers abstained from producing a physical object, for example Sam Johnson, who explored the re-use of everyday objects in a series of concept sketches.

'I wanted to keep on the same line as last year by not making anything,' says Johnson. 'This time, I came up with the idea of making 10 short films about sustainability with 10 children aged 10, as they will be the consumers of tomorrow.'

Johnson is interested in offering a cross section of attitudes that cuts through social classes and cultures, giving a more realistic picture of how the issue of sustainability is perceived.

On a more traditional front, Danish designer Nina Tolstrup is using wooden panels from scaffolding to craft a collection of 10 objects, including a chair, a coat stand and light fittings created out of inch-square wood sticks. Last year Tolstrup also based her research around wood, creating furniture

and interior accessories using a standard wooden pallet.

After the exhibition is over, Jackson will leave each designer to decide what they would like to do with their collection. Some will be available for sale to raise money for charity, while others will be donated.

Ten Again is ultimately an opportunity for the collective to take a break from their individual careers. However, it directly feeds back into the experimentation each designer conducts on new materials and techniques as an essential part of their commercial work.

'We have a great bunch of very talented and skilled designers at Ten Again,' says Jackson. 'We all have different opinions and perspectives on the topic of sustainable design,

FRED FROM ANY GEOGRAPHICAL CONSTRAINTS, THE DESIGNERS TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO LOOK BEYOND LONDON

but I think most of the success is because this is a sincere initiative.'

At times the sustainable issue is used as a smokescreen rather than a genuine philosophy, but Ten Again has used the issue to inspire some original designs in this second collection of work.

Ten Again is: Carl Clerkin, Chris Jackson, Gitta Gschwendtner, Hector Serrano, Michael Marriott, Nina Tolstrup, Onkar Singh Kular, Sam Johnson, Stephen Bretland and Tamoko Azumi



Hi Jane,
I am so tired from all the
SHOPPING! I didn't forget
about you though! Here's
your present...The Statue
of Liberty!
Mel 2007

REDUCED CARBON
FOOTPRINT SOUVENIR
BY HECTOR SERRANO