NURTURING DESIGN IN THE BALKANS

Balkan Design Network activity overview
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Despite the fact that the Knowledge Economy is characterized by enormous progress in pushing the boundaries of human knowledge, the speed and intensity of knowledge creation and its innovative application has a disruptive effect on the human society. Changes are happening so fast that sometimes it is possible just to acknowledge them. In the world this phenomenon is recognized as a paradigm shift to the Knowledge Society/Economy. All professions are facing the need to adjust to changes brought by this paradigm shift, particularly creative ones, such as design.

In the design sector, as well as in all the other sectors, the social and economic changes that have become more visible and intense in the last twenty years are strongly reflected. So far it is clear that those changes, with their consequences, point to the need and aspiration for more integrated-holistic approach to thinking and acting, especially in the context of solving problems and challenges designers are facing today and will face tomorrow. Furthermore, the Zeitgeist – the spirit of our time is expressed through continuous innovation and application of innovation. Consequently, the rising expectations from design, which as a creative discipline contributes to social and economic well-being, brought increasing pressure on the design profession to continuously innovate. To be able to do that, designers have to understand the changing pattern of innovation, to cope with constant technological changes, to continuously develop new skills, and to possess the ability to understand technological opportunities and act upon it. Also, it is expected from designers to possess excellent communication skills, a multidisciplinary attitude and knowledge, and willingness to cooperate and continuously learn from all relevant stakeholders important for their projects. And the design sector is expected to be able to create a communication
strategy with different stakeholders, to induce concrete initiatives, and to encourage cross-disciplinary and cross-institutional dialogue, as well as synergies from joint research, educational modules and development projects.

All those expectations from the design sector can be fulfilled only with the support of other interested parties like industries and government actors. Given the design’s ability to find creative solutions to social and economic challenges, almost all EU countries became aware of its increasingly important role in the future, as complexity and pace of changes increase. However, most countries in the Balkans in the last 20 years, when the paradigm of the Knowledge Society started to take place, dealt with their own transition to democratic and market-developed societies. During this transition time, designers in these countries were confronted with a long period in which the only certainty was uncertainty. But paradoxically this is also the main mantra of the new paradigm of the Knowledge Society. Therefore, the one thing that all Balkan designers have in common is the fact that they are already familiar with the work in an uncertain environment. And they learn to improvise, to work with fewer resources, to embrace challenges as their inspiration and to do their best in their endeavour to articulate and materialize their ideas, statements, creativity and talents. And they do that with great optimism and persistence in their effort to change their reality through their ideas and skills. And not a small number of them were recognized as leaders in the global design community. But it seems that the designers and the design sector in the Balkan countries are not yet recognized by their governments and public policy makers as one of the main driving forces of the national economy competitiveness, development, innovativeness and growth. All developed countries in Europe already made huge steps in the systemic inclusion of the design sector in the state’s economic policy and competitive strategy. As a mechanism to systematically address the challenges brought on by the Knowledge Economy many governments have, to date, been investing heavily in sponsoring and promoting design as a key route to stimulate innovation, jobs and exports. And a large number of EU countries is convinced that design will be at the core of a strong knowledge economy of the future, one of the coping stones of the innovation system and the most important intangible investment for firms. Therefore, the countries from the Balkans need to react faster to current social and economic challenges and try to speed up their own transformation regarding the effective use of their design sector potentials. In order to achieve this there is a need for close cooperation between the state, educational institutions, the business environment and the design sector. And paradoxically, the Balkan countries already have an exceptional main resource, capable and talented designers.
Balkan Design Network is an innovative platform established by Mikser Organization from Belgrade, Croatian Designers Association from Zagreb and Public Room from Skopje, with the aim of articulating and providing strategic support for the development and promotion of the Balkan design, both within the region and at European and international level. The aim is also to raise awareness of the importance of design in the processes of social and economic development, as well as promoting the design values among broader audience.

Balkan Design Network was created as a reaction to unfavourable climate for the development of creative sector in the Balkans, caused by a range of factors – from early aborted process of modernization, through unstable political situation and chaotic economic transition to absence of stimulating local business policy. The Network calls for experts, designers, design collectives, formal and informal educational institutions, companies and developing agencies, to unite their experiences gained from similar historical, economic and social circumstances and direct them towards proactive reverse of reality in the Balkans under the umbrella of newly established platform.

Mission of the Balkan Design Network is to empower social roles of design as a catalyst of humane, intelligent and sustainable environment that will contribute to the improvement of common human prosperity. All three organizations that are initiating BDN platform proved their capability and integrity during many years of work in promoting design as a method and way of thinking which enables constructive innovation and economic and social progress. Balkan designers who gained notable public presence through these activities and an opportunity to
implement their ideas in numerous regional and international projects, showed remarkable resistance and flexibility to limited resources that promises great results in the future, especially in the context of a changing society. It is precisely that kind of capability to cope with unfavourable circumstances of local and global economies, and to develop modern, sustainable practices under these conditions that makes designers from countries in transition, especially from the Balkans, potential European creativity leaders in a permanent crises that our politicians continuously predict.

Therefore, one of the key motives for launching the network is the urgency for the strategic and long-term action of regional design organizations and institutions on linking the sectors of design and business. Equally important is to establish more efficient cooperation with state institutions in order to understand better systematic investment in the creative potential of the Balkans and its particular implementation by the business sector.

One of the first joint activities of the Balkan Design Network is the further development of the well established regional talent competition and travelling exhibition ‘Young Balkan Designers’, a seed project that motivated two partner organizations to join Mikser initiative in 2013 and encouraged regional cooperation in supporting young design talents. Balkan Design Network offers young designers visibility at the relevant regional and international events, enhanced mobility and possibility for further education through educational workshops and lectures, as well as intense practical training in the leading regional companies.

Future steps in developing the network as a sustainable, robust and firmly built up organization are aimed at developing crucial strategic and operative activities that support the growth of the design sector, like R&D projects that are related to design innovations, but also to economic aspects of design, exhibitions and promotional activities, exchanges with educational institutions, cooperation with manufacturers, as well as membership expansion by including many more participants from all countries in the region.

Special attention is placed on creating a common designers and production resources database among member organizations in the region, implementation of unifying ‘zero study’, a thorough research on design sector and articulation of regional design strategy which would empower the designers’ community status on national levels, renew the multicultural cooperation in the Balkan and affirm Balkan design as a cultural phenomenon with its recognizable identity on the global scene.

The key role in the development of the Balkan Design Network is also given to the impact of international partner institutions present in the Balkan countries for their experiences and exchange of their best practices of applying design and creative disciplines in the promotion and development of their countries and regions, such as Scandinavian countries, Great Britain, Australia etc. Their representatives are welcome to offer strategic support to our initiative, in the belief that design, as an elemental and inseparable part of society and everyday life, can contribute to the improvement of human prosperity and better efficiency in the public sector.

www.balkandesignnetwork.org
This publication offers an insight into the activities of the Balkan Design Network in the past year, since its formal foundation. In rather informal ways, the relevant organisations and their representatives from the Balkans have already been establishing a solid network of exchange programs for years, with a focus on education, design development and design promotion, through lectures, exhibitions, workshops, regional competitions for young designers and collaborations with local productions. So the framework of the Balkan Design Network can be seen as an extension of already established activities, rather than a newly proposed model which will suddenly put things in the arena of Balkan design in order. However, due to the fact that individual countries’ national policies on design, as a consequence of historical discontinuity and current unstable political situations, are either non-existent or quite far from understanding and establishing design as a relevant strategic shaping tool of other aspects of our societies’ realities, it seems like the initiatives such as the Balkan Design Network, which gathers members from cultural, creative, economic, educational and many other sectors with which design intersects, are needed.

Therefore, the publication starts with a number of short interviews with some of the relevant representatives of the design organisations, educational institutions and independent experts of the Balkan design scene, in an attempt to detect the common focal points of design movements in the Balkans today, offer some insights into the status of design as a profession in the region and raise the questions about the future of regional cooperation and networking. Besides that, the interviews are trying to give a glimpse of the complexity of the coined term Balkan design itself and its interpretations by different actors.

The second part of the publication directly documents one of the core activities of the Balkan Design Network, organised so far by the three regional organisations: the Croatian Designers Association from Zagreb, the Mikser organisation from Belgrade and the Public Room from Skopje. The Young Balkan Designers program embodies elements needed for practicing design on different levels: informal education for young designers, through open calls, mentored workshops, seminars and lectures; products and services development through collaborations with companies; promotion of Balkan designers and their concepts through travelling exhibitions during design festivals.

Special attention in the publication is given to last year’s edition of YBD, under the theme Common Grounds, which was a breaking point in establishing intense collaborations of nine participants of the YBD 2015 edition with production industries in Croatia (Prostoria, Regeneracija, Spin Valis), Macedonia (Dizajn DN, Urum, We and Nature) and Serbia (GIR, Metalac). Their concepts, design processes, collaborations and insights into the design scene have been documented through photo material, sketches and interviews.

In other words, the intention of this publication is both to raise the questions about the state of current design practices from a designer’s point of view, but also to give practical insights to companies on how to begin to collaborate more closely with designers. Therefore, it can serve as a sort of a manual for better understanding on how design, through bottom-up actions, can directly affect our cultural and economic environment, and indirectly trigger societal changes in humane, intelligent and sustainable ways on higher policy levels.
Interviews with representatives of institutions and independent experts from Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro, Turkey, Albania and Austria

RAYA STEFANOVA — Bulgarian designer and artistic director of ONE DESIGN WEEK, International Festival for Design and Visual Culture, Plovdiv

BORUT VILD — Assistant professor at ‘Digital Arts’ Dpt, Faculty of Media and Communications, University Singidunum, Belgrade

ANA MATIĆ — Professor at the Graphic Design Department at the Faculty of Fine Arts Cetinje, University of Montenegro, coordinator of the FLUID Design Forum Cetinje

ARHAN KAYAR — Founder of dDF (Dream Design Factory) ad. Agency, director of IDW (Istanbul Design Week), board member of EO Turkey working for Creative Industry

SAIMIR KRISTO — Architect and urban designer; vice-dean and lecturer at the Faculty of Architecture and Design, POLIS University, Tirana

SEVERIN FILEK — Managing director of designaustria, board member of BEDA, lecturer at various Austrian universities
HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE POSITION OF DESIGN IN YOUR OWN COUNTRY, BOTH AS A PROFESSION BUT ALSO AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF OUR EVERYDAY?

RAYA STEFANOVA — Design in Bulgaria is not recognized as valuable both in the professional and everyday context and in this sense the role of the designer is underestimated. Design here is still seen as something that affects us only visually, not culturally or socially. This is something that I would like to challenge and change.

BORUT VILD — Well, as a profession: most of the people know that there is something called design. But except the usual use of the word as a tool for making things look “nice” (which is doubtful anyway) they actually do not know almost anything about it. As an integral part of our everyday: we are far, far from the role of design in the developed societies like Scandinavia. I am afraid it is too late even to take that path.

ARAN KAYAR — Design and innovation are two issues that all the industries focused on for the last ten years. There is a huge development in all sectors in the whole of Turkey. The development of the cities and the contemporary lifestyle are directly focused on the Design Culture in daily life.

ANA MÁTIČ — The profession of graphic designers is relatively young in Montenegro. Mostly, educational institutions are trying to do their best, with limited resources (human and financial), to expose young designers to the best contemporary practices, and give them the opportunity to acquire necessary skills so that they can become design professionals. In the last fifteen or twenty years, design as a profession became more visible in society, creating the opportunity for designers to design. However, given the overall visual literacy level in society, and the overwhelming amount of vernacular design or corporate branded design, even the visual impact of the designers’ work is hardly noticeable. There are, of course, good examples in all areas of design, especially in cooperation with cultural institutions and publishing, but they are only emphasizing the need for more substantial work to be done.

SAIMIR KRISTO — Formerly, in the context of ideological propaganda, design lost its power and influence in a period where things were the consequence of emergence and design was not included in this case. After democracy was reinstated in 1990, situations of quick adaptation and improvisation evidenced that design was left behind, either non-existent or struggling to grow. During the last 15 years, due to a younger generation of professionals educated abroad, design started to re-emerge and slowly but steadily create a platform for operation where the need for functionality and aesthetics was in demand. Passing from emergence to a clear level of sophistication, the Albanian consumer and public created an interesting overlap. Designers in Albania have an open market in which to practice graphic and interior design means battling in a field traditionally occupied by architects.
IN YOUR OPINION, IS THERE A COMMON DENOMINATOR THAT COULD DESCRIBE THE STATE OF THINGS IN DESIGN IN THE BALKANS, ESPECIALLY IN THE BROADER EUROPEAN CONTEXT? WHAT IS BALKAN DESIGN? AND WHAT IS THE POSITION OF THE BALKANS IN DESIGN TODAY?

ARHAN KAYAR — Design is a global thing in our life but there are many local differences in each region of our world. In our contemporary life, the Balkans have great importance, especially in the Creative Industry. Europe and the Balkans are connected on many levels and interact in everyday life. The Balkans have a unique identity in creativity and a brave appearance in the design world.

SAIMIR KRISTO — The Balkans are an integral part of Europe, expressing characteristic cultural flavours, in particular in the field of design due to a different historical evolution. Design in the Balkans is diverse, primarily expressing the variety of the different cultural fragments of this region, emphasizing the concept of locality. Balkan design is a local and not a global issue at the moment, even though the potential it has is as interesting as its reputation. The Balkans are a colourful mosaic of retro cults celebrating the trappings of the Communist era alternately as kitschy and comforting. A natural phenomenon that reflects the instability that followed in a series of political and geographic separations. Such reflection can either provide excellent examples of design or even in some cases unfortunately veer off into the field of “turbo-design” and “turbo-culture”.

SEVERIN FILEK — Although there is a manifold diversity within the creative industries in the Balkan region, all sub-regions have an enormous potential for more creative output. An emphasis should be put on the enhancement of design awareness, not only in the business sector but also among policy makers, educational institutions… A common deficit among designers from the Balkan region is the ability to administrate and manage design. Balkan designers have the possibility to find a niche for their ideas and work and contribute increasingly to the flourishing scene.

RAYA STEFANOVA — This is something that I would like to find out as well. I think Balkan Design is still finding its true identity – unlike the Balkans themselves, which have very strong and distinguished identities. The area we live in is quite unknown and even an exotic part of Europe – an inspiring playground for designers and their work.

BORUT VILD — It is the state of transition from “we do not know what” to “we do not know what”, just like the rest of Europe. A lot of talented people in the region, just trying to survive…

ANA MATIĆ — Besides overall visual clutter, the design around us can be characterized by a chaotic battle for our attention. Most of the design we can see is serving its purpose in the consumer society we live in, and while some of it can be called ‘good design’, it neither adds any cultural value nor has a substantial impact on quality of life in our societies. Often, design is either visually appealing and has design qualities following contemporary norms of good design but serves only the purpose of selling products (or on a higher level, promoting CSR of the companies involved) or it does not even appear designed, while trying to sell something to the consumer. In a sense it is ‘imported’ in style and polished or it can be categorized as vernacular. So it seems that in the region and in Europe, we are following global trends.
WHAT SHOULD BE THE ROLE OF DESIGN IN THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGION? HOW DO YOU SEE ITS POTENTIALS IN TERMS OF POSITIVE CHANGES, AND WHAT ARE THE STEPS OR DIRECT ACTIONS THAT SHOULD BE TAKEN TO ADDRESS THOSE POTENTIALS ON THE POLICY-MAKING LEVEL?

RAYA STEFANOVA – Design can help on many levels of policy making, but before that, it should be recognized as a force for change. The first step is developing the education. In Bulgaria we lack schooling that keeps up with the context of the times. The programs are not attractive to students because they do not offer future realization or more free and experimental courses. Events as ONE DESIGN WEEK aim to provoke young designers by providing them with a platform to present themselves, giving them confidence on the international stage. We try to involve our public in participatory events, such as workshops and discussions, and show good practices from abroad. Nevertheless, there needs to be other, more substantial activities throughout the year.

BORUT VILD – Since there is no sign that we will play any significant political or economic role in the future, and the whole region is already colonized, I would suggest using design as a tool of resistance. Coming out of our comfort zone, forgetting terms like creative industry, start-ups, etc., at least for a while. I do not see any point in improving the current state of things. The role of design should be more “Papanek” than “Apple”. But let us be optimistic: we, the designers, are probably the ones best prepared for any sort of change. Manually skilled. We shall survive. And be the leaders.

ANA MATIĆ – Evolving design from a discipline following the development of society to a discipline leading the development. Improving education, establishing better exposure of the best design processes, developing the theoretical background of design, developing critical thinking in society. Non-corporate design in development policies, devising a framework (strategy, action plan, metrics for evaluation, funding) for design education, design research and design exchange (meetings, festivals, exhibitions, guest lectures, etc.).

ARHAN KAYAR – The Balkans have a big, strong, young creative potential in many sectors. In design we can mention “the new power generation” of design. We have many problems in our daily life but we can only solve them with the development of design culture. If we are talking about the future, we can put the “creative industries and design” in the centre of cultural and social development.

SAIMIR KRISTO – The role of design has a clear purpose – to identify the needs of society and central/local governments to educate the public on aesthetics, as well as to respond to practical needs, enhancing local products and services. Its challenge, through initiatives like “Young Balkan Designers”, “Mikser Festival”, “Tirana Design Week”, etc., is to create local movements where entrepreneurs come together with professionals and respond to the initial role of design for the Balkans. Albania needs to improve urgently in these aspects and be competitive with other EU countries in the region regarding goods and services, using its originality and strengths. I firmly believe that this open way of communication and contribution is necessary for Albania to respond to the direct needs of fields like tourism. However, relying on our resources and some professional consultancy, we need to make sure to institutionalize these initiatives in a broader way, adding to our experience and promoting young designers in the broader European context.

SEVERIN FILEK – Design has an inclusive character, which is particularly important in the diverse Balkan region. Design is also a structuring instrument that combines analytical thinking and practical methods with creativity. Thus, it has to be accepted by local public authorities as well as private organizations if they would like to successfully achieve the objective of enhancing sustainable prosperity and growth.
**HOW CAN DESIGN AND DESIGN NETWORKING INFLUENCE THE REAL LIFE PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES WE ARE FACING ON A REGIONAL LEVEL?**

**RAYA STEFANOVA** – I believe growing a design network is crucial, especially in the context of the Balkans. It carries great potential and opportunities for future collaboration and development. Although the networking needs to work toward the goal of becoming substantial enough to go beyond the designer’s realm and reach people, especially those who have authority.

**BORUT VILD** – I am not sure. Any kind of collaboration and networking helps. We feel that we are not alone, that it is easier (but more complicated) to fight together, that we accomplished something. But then, why gather if not to follow utopia?

**ANA MATIĆ** – By exposing the essence of problems, proposing solutions made using a solid and ethical design process and initiating/developing dialogue in society. The role of networking is essential in terms of all forms of design exchange.

**ARHAN KAYAR** – Today we have different kinds of problems and borders in our life. Design, innovation and design networking are very important in order to move towards a positive future. We must focus on a peaceful future with the “power of design”. I am thinking very positively and optimistically. The Balkans have big potential in the design world. I believe that if we continue the development of “cooperation and networking” we will look to the future of the world more positively.

**SAIMIR KRISTO** – It is important to highlight that common problems in the field of design are evidenced in different countries, both in the Balkans where the topics are very similar, but also in a broader European context. To face this common issue, it would be more pragmatic to act in a strategic way, coordinating collective actions respectively but also bringing international experience and knowledge to cover all aspects of problems related to design. We can start by understanding case study examples and how solutions were found to problems similar to the ones we face, but we can also jointly address challenges that might be involving more than one city or country at once. Design networking, multidisciplinary and multicultural platforms should aim to affirm the region’s cultural industry and creativity and design in the Balkan region. They can create spaces for education, culture and entertainment. Such a platform can provide solutions and opportunities for debate and discussion for all kinds of creative activities, educating the new generations using design to address the problems of tomorrow through design culture.

**SEVERIN FILEK** – As design can have an enormous influence on current issues, like the creation of jobs, migrant integration, saving public money, etc., the management of design has to be strategically used. The question of how design can be used might be answered by methods like Design Thinking. Design Thinking shows that design is both a strategy and a process and therefore universally applicable. It should be integrated in every field of business and authorities to provide the best practice of regional, national and international policy implementation. Social Design is the expression of our responsibility as designers to make a societal change towards a sustainability-orientated future.
Young Balkan Designers is a regional talent open call initiated to promote young talents of the Balkan in the field of design. The main goal is to give young creative people an opportunity to express themselves, to realize their concepts, learn about the production processes and broaden their network through educational activities, exhibitions, events and festivals.

Young Balkan Designers evolved from an internationally recognized project Young Serbian Designers initiated and led by Mikser in 2009 and 2010. The growth of the project from national (Serbian) to a regional (South-East Europe) level came naturally, due to an intense interest of many young designers to participate in open calls. Since 2014 Croatian Designers Association and Public Room Skopje officially joined the organization of the YBD project, which became one of the main first activities within Balkan Design Network.

Young Balkan Designers 2015, organized around the Common Grounds theme, challenged the designers to think about heritage in the broadest sense – from their own personal heritage – ancestry and culture – to our collective heritage as a society, including the places we live in. In their pursuit to define what universal values lie at the intersection of common interest and passion of traditional and progressive urban population, designers have activated the value of cultural assets in and incorporated tangible and intangible heritage in their work. Design concepts, products (furniture, lighting, interior elements, everyday objects, home accessories, stationary, aid products, urban services, recycled materials, fashion garments, etc.) that offer innovative yet rational solutions to everyday problems became part of the YBD 2015 collection.
27 projects from Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Greece and Turkey have been chosen among 160 applicants from all over the Balkans by an international jury of renowned experts: Jan Boelen, designer and curator (Design Academy Eindhoven, Z33, Belgium), Nikola Radeljković, designer (Numen / For Use, president of BDN, Croatia), Jelena Matić, designer and professor (Faculty of Forestry, University of Belgrade, Serbia) and Konstantin Grcic, designer (KGID, Germany, president of the Jury).

The winning projects were became part of the YBD program consisting of an international touring exhibition (June 2015 – January 2016) and a designers mobility program: travel, educational seminars and practical workshops hosted by key regional design festivals, followed by a series of mentored residency workshops (February 2015 – April 2016) tailored for the final nine winners selected by the Jury, pursued in cooperation with the leading regional manufacturers from Croatia (Prostoria, Regeneracija, Spin Valis), Macedonia (Urum, We and Nature, Dizajn DN) and Serbia (GIR, Metalac).
Mikser, Belgrade
June 3 – 6, 2015

One Design Week, Plovdiv
June 19 – 28, 2015

D’Day, Zagreb
July 3 – 5, 2015

Tirana Design Week
September 21 – October 11, 2015

Vienna Design Week
September 25 – October 4, 2015

Istanbul Design Week
October 14 – 18, 2015

Skopje Design Week
November 26 – 29, 2015

WAMP Festival, Budapest
December 20 – 23, 2015

IMM Cologne, Pure Talents Zone
January 18 – 24, 2016
D DAY, ZAGREB
July 3 – 5, 2015

IMM COLOGNE, PURE TALENTS ZONE
January 18 – 24, 2016

ONE DESIGN WEEK, PLOVDIV
June 19 – 28, 2015

SKOPJE DESIGN WEEK
November 26 – 29, 2015
MIKSER, BELGRADE
June 3 – 6, 2015

ISTANBUL DESIGN WEEK
October 14 – 18, 2015

VIENNA DESIGN WEEK
September 25 – October 4, 2015

TIRANA DESIGN WEEK
September 21 – October 11, 2015
## Winning Projects

### YBD 2015 / Common Grounds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Designer(s)</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Granny's Shelf</strong></td>
<td>Milena Stanojević, Marijana Milošević</td>
<td>Serbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Birdie</strong></td>
<td>Anesia Grkov Mervcich</td>
<td>Croatia</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Carso</strong></td>
<td>Tvrtko Bojić</td>
<td>Croatia</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dedicated to Skopje</strong></td>
<td>Filip Koneski</td>
<td>Macedonia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leveling Floor Lamp</strong></td>
<td>Zoran Mojsilović</td>
<td>Serbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Triangle</strong></td>
<td>Staša Doblanović</td>
<td>Croatia</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Kredenca</strong></td>
<td>Jernej Koželj, Matic Lenaršič</td>
<td>Slovenia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tablić</strong></td>
<td>Sonja Rajić</td>
<td>Serbia</td>
</tr>
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BRAINBLENDER
Pika Novak, Aleksandra Prole, Ivan Jelačić, Neja Bizjak, Aleksandra Tomč, Blažka Jurjavčič, Slovenia

THE BLACK BOX
Olivera Petrović, Serbia

DESISNER BAKING STAMPS
Studiolav, Greece

MANDO COFFEE TABLE
Vedran Erceg, Croatia

SHARKA TILES
Elena Vassileva + Funkt, Poststudio, Gergana Stankova, Rada Dicheva, Gergana Stankova, Bulgaria

NANA DALA
Andelko Kaser, Bosnia and Herzegovina

OBJECT WITHIN AN OBJECT
Marko Petrić, Croatia

TEXXXTURE
Angeliki Sioliou, Greece

DŽIVĐAN
Maša Stevanović, Serbia

SPACE HEATER
Katerina Trpkovska, Macedonia
Toys from long ago
Niko Crnčević, Croatia

Music Box
Sara Pavleković Preis, Croatia

WellBeing garment design
Aleksandra Stoyneva, Bulgaria

Tripod
Jovan Stanković, Monika Jovanović, Predrag Rajković, Serbia

Wrap-lamp
Ana Janjić, Serbia

100% Ethno scribbling
Ana Babić, Serbia

Hirundo
Lola Perović, Slovenia

Tikvan
Ante Krizmanić, Croatia

NOMADic shelving system
Filter, Bosnia and Herzegovina

100% Ethno scribbling
Ana Babić, Serbia

Hirundo
Lola Perović, Slovenia

Tikvan
Ante Krizmanić, Croatia

NOMADic shelving system
Filter, Bosnia and Herzegovina
Nine YBD 2015 designers, chosen by the international jury took part in the residency program realized in collaboration with production companies and assigned expert mentors from Croatia, Macedonia and Serbia. The residencies have proven to be beneficial both for designers and companies, as they provided much needed practical education for designers, but also delivered insights into the designerly ways of thinking and design strategies for the companies.

The following pages are offering an insight into the design processes, concepts and collaborations that took place during a one month period.

**CROATIA**
*Companies*: Prostoria, Regeneracija, Spin Valis  
*Mentor*: Nikola Radeljković  
*Co-mentors*: Nataša Mihaljčić, Simon Morasi Piperčić, Grupa (Filip Despot, Ivana Pavić, Tihana Taraba)

**MACEDONIA**
*Companies*: Dizajn DN, Urum, We and Nature  
*Mentors*: Aleksandar Velinovski, Tamara Georgievska

**SERBIA**
*Companies*: GIR, Metalac  
*Mentor*: Jelena Matić
The visual appeal has been a major topic and aim in carpet design. The aim pursued by *Haptic* is a bit different. The design combines the utility with the physical sensation using a great number of nerve endings of one’s feet, which help to connect with the surroundings. In other words, the carpet is going to be a haptic one. Haptic communication refers to the ways in which people and other animals communicate and interact via the sense of touch. Therefore, regardless of the carpet’s looks, a combination of textures and materials is used to create a relaxing, irritating or natural experience for the person who walks over the carpet. After all, carpets are a part of interior design, why not use them to contribute to our state of mind and body.

**DESIGNER** — Aleksandra Stoyneva received a BA in Textile Design from the National Academy of Art, Sofia in 2015. Her first personal exhibition with clothing design projects took place in Targovishte, Bulgaria in 2010. In 2012 Aleksandra took part in the Erasmus exchange at the Accademia di Belle Arti di Macerata, Italy. There she had taken various design classes (textile, fashion, package and graphic design). Since then she has exhibited at various design exhibitions in the region and won several design prizes, including the YBD prize for “Well-being garment design”.

**COMPANY** — Regeneracija was founded in 1954, dealing in the gathering, sorting and processing of textile waste. In 1964 the first production line was installed for the production of nonwoven fabrics made from recycled textile fibres from their own production. At present, there are three areas the company deals in: recycling of textile waste, nonwovens and carpet production. Regeneracija deals in recycling textile materials and the production of insulation and protective floor coverings, the use of which speeds up and facilitates the construction process by increasing the energy efficiency of the facility. They base the creation of high quality carpets on the extraordinary quality of the designers and architects, which enables the personalization of carpets in the frame of spatial requirements for each individual project where the carpet promotes the said interior design. Regeneracija is one of the first Croatian companies to have opted for electricity from renewable sources. In this manner recycling textile materials and other production processes that require electricity are entirely propelled by green electricity.
What do you consider to be the main benefit of concentrated actions, such as YBD, and what is your plan with the specific YBD winning project in the future?

I feel the main benefits from these activities are helping to create work relationships, starting conversations and provoking actions towards the establishment of a Balkan design language. About my design: I will try to improve it and bring it to the attention of the people it was created to serve.

What would you describe the companies and project/s you have developed during the residency – its concept and potential for future development?

The people from Regeneracija are open-minded and assisted me in the first steps of my project development. The concept I started working on takes a look at carpet design from a haptic communication standpoint instead of a visually appealing standpoint. However, it requires a lot of experiments and testing. Therefore, we will continue working together on it also after my residency is over.

How would you evaluate the presence of designers and their connection to the production environment in your country? Do you feel that designers have many opportunities to participate in the creation of products and services in their local environments? If not, what are the reasons?

As a recent graduate of the Textile Department at the National Academy of Art, Sofia, Bulgaria, I can share what the situation in Bulgaria looks like from a designer-to-be’s stand point. While studying, I had a chance to work in the laboratories the department provided, but there was not much collaboration with textile companies. Future designers need to face the challenges that a real production environment gives them. In my opinion the reason for this is the lack of textile companies we had some years back. These days, there are businesses that are putting in the effort, but it is hard to develop after such an interruption in the industry. Hopefully, the companies in the region will turn their attention to the importance of assisting design schools in forming the designers as such.

Coming from a specific cultural background – one that is geographically and historically rooted in the Balkans, how would you evaluate the presence of designers and their connection to the production environment in your country? Do you feel that designers have many opportunities to participate in the creation of products and services in their local environments? If not, what are the reasons?

After participating in the YBD 2016 contest, exhibition touring and residencies organized within the Balkan Design Network, how would you evaluate the young design potentials coming from this region? In your opinion, is there a potential for the development of a unique language of design specific to this region? Is there such a thing as Balkan Design in your mental map? If so, what are its characteristics?

I really enjoyed the projects my young fellow Balkan designers made for the competition. I do believe that we have potential and the energy to develop our own language in time. We share similar languages, traditions and a mentality that gives us a particular approach to life, and thus design, compared to the rest of the world.

During your residency, how was your working process and what are your experiences with the production companies? Do you intend to continue collaborations with your design mentors/colleagues and the production companies?

The working process with Regeneracija is a real pleasure. Their designer Marija Gradčak shared her experience with me. I had the chance to observe and experiment with the techniques they use in the production, which is a huge advantage while working on a design.
FILTER, BIH
AT SPIN VALIS, CROATIA

Slavonik — Slavonik is conceived as a concept that combines local identity through natural landscape characteristics of Slavonia region with technology and experience of Spin Valis company. Slavonik coat hanger, as the first design in a batch of products for Slavonik collection is made out of two typical timber battens, each one repeated three times over triangular grid. The long battens create a main structure ending with pinnacle, while short reinforcing battens are left as visible hangers. While simple and repetitive, this structure requires precise joints.

Lampik — How to produce an object needed for everyday life without a workshop in a foreign country? 1) Do not design (draw). 2) Pick available materials. 3) Ask your local friend to bring some tools. 4) Use your bare hands. 5) Produce! Lampik is a simple DIY bedside lamp, created by designers in response to not having one in the apartment during the residency. Instead of creating a formal ‘original’ design, this product is a fast response oriented towards practical qualities.

DESIGNERS — Filter (Nedim Mutevelić, Ivica Medić, Kenan Vatrenjak) is an internationally renowned studio for architecture and design, based in Sarajevo. Along with a number of international awards and exhibitions held in many European cities, Filter is considered the most award-winning studio in Bosnia and Herzegovina today. Some of the awards include the Collegium Artisticum Grand Prix, the biggest prize for architecture in Bosnia and Herzegovina; Bunk-Bed Design Competition, first place by Shuma and Networks Sarajevo; Himalayan Mountain Hut Competition, honourable mention by HMMD and Samarth – Nepal Market Development Programme; Young Balkan Designers 2015, ‘Common Grounds’ by the Balkan Design Network; Monument and Scenography to the Erased Citizens, first prize by Prešernovo gledališče Kranj; concept design for the re-development of the Badel Site Zagreb, second prize by DAZ; Memorial and of May 1992, second prize by ASAS Sarajevo; Quercus 2013, design of innovative wood products with market potential, third place by USAID, Sida FIRMA B&H.

COMPANY — The “Spin Valis d.d.” company is located in Požega, the heart of Slavonia. The company finds its inspiration and quality production material in the beauty and richness of the centuries-old beech and oak forests. The company started its business in 1950 under the name “Lipa”, having ten employees at the time. After many ups and downs, much invested effort, knowledge and work, in 1978 the “Lipa” company became “Spin Valis”, a state-owned company and a leader in solid wood furniture production, operating successfully on the domestic and international market. In 2002 “Spin Valis d.d.” founded a daughter company “Valis Fagus d.o.o.” with 85 employees. In 2009 and 2010, “Valis Fagus d.o.o.” was awarded the prestigious “Gazela” award for a rapidly growing company with transparent business, proven as an excellent business partner. Centuries-old oak and beech wood, modern technology, design, hardworking hands of 500 employees and 60 years of tradition have turned the strength of natural wood into a high-quality line of Croatian products. Owing to its excellence and quality, “Spin Valis d.d.” exports more than 85% of its products to foreign markets in approximately 30 countries, and its business partnership with the most prestigious European furniture manufacturers and furniture chain stores proves that the company is a serious, trustworthy and competitive business partner.
What do you consider to be the main benefit of concentrated actions, such as YBD, and what is your plan with the specific YBD winning project in the future?

Concentrated actions, such as YBD, force the exchange of ideas and experiences among selected designers and help them focus on further development of individual projects as well. Our winning project has already passed through a few phases of prototyping, and it could eventually become available on the market.

During your residency, how was your working process and what are your experiences with the production companies?

The first part of the residency was left for the gathering of information on-line and from local designers that we met. A single visit to the factory helped a lot with the process of shaping the concept for the design intended to be done during the residency. After some close connections that were made during the process, we do intend to continue collaboration. An additional reason is the relative proximity of the company Spin Valis, and the similarity of the process we already experienced through collaboration with another company from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

How would you describe the companies and project/s you have developed during the residency – its concept and potential for future development?

Spin Valis could be described as a company with advanced technology and experience, but enclosed in a circle of low-quality design production for familiar clients in the lower price range. One meeting has shown that there is a sense of strong local identity and responsibility present for the small town in Slavonia (Požega) where almost 20% of the population depends on Spin Valis. Our concept of Slavonik, combines the local identity through the natural landscape characteristics of Slavonia, with the technology and experience of Spin Valis. The Slavonik Coat Hanger, as the first design in a batch of products for the Slavonik collection, is designed by using the simple construction of Slavonian oak, which still requires the technology of a company like Spin Valis.

Production companies and designers in Bosnia and Herzegovina are generally disconnected from each other. One of the main reasons could be a common misunderstanding of “design” and “designers” from the position of production companies. However, in past two years small steps forward are becoming more evident, there are more designers connected to the production environment and the “design value” is being appreciated more.

It is hard to define a common language from one year’s selection. But among some designs there is an evident coherence. Some abstract categories can be defined, by materials used or by the approach in production. Contests like YBD can accelerate the development of a common language, but it is questionable to what level. Balkan Design could be a more general category that includes a variety of approaches.
Sloj is a modular sideboard system inspired by a study of the architectural and historical layers of the city of Zagreb and how they overlap. A series of functional parts suspended from a light frame slide across its length appearing to float over the floor below while exposing or concealing the contents of each unit. The collection of parts can be enriched with different functions that allow for the system to be customized. Materials and colours have been carefully considered to evoke feelings of lightness, contrast and flexibility.

**DESIGNERS** — Loukas Angelou and Vasso Asfi founded Studiolav in 2011, a product and interior design studio in London. Research is central to its work, which often focuses on the emotional connection between people, objects and their environment. They draw inspiration from heritage, tradition and everyday encounters to create and tell new exciting stories through their collections. Studiolav was nominated for the prestigious Elle Decoration International Design Awards in the category of Young Talent Designer of the Year 2013 and shortlisted for the BIO23 Design Biennial Award in Ljubljana in 2012 under the category Back to Crafts. The year 2015 found them selected among 12,000 entries to exhibit at the Royal Academy of Arts Summer Exhibition and among the winners of the Young Balkan Designers competition. In 2016 they started collaborating with Metalac on the design of a new breakfast range of enamelware and with the Archaeological Receipts Fund for the design of a wide range of souvenirs to be distributed in various museums across Greece.

**COMPANY** — Prostoria, situated close to Zagreb, operating in a factory of 5000 m², employing 85 people and currently present in Europe, USA, South America, Australia, the Middle and Far East markets. Prostoria is formally a young company, but well recognized locally, regionally and internationally. In a 5-year period the company has launched a mixed portfolio of sofas, sofa beds, armchairs, chairs, coffee tables, hangers and accessories. Prostoria has a yearly growth of 20-30% in sales. This growth is mainly due to fresh and innovative design. Design is integrated with business from the very start of production thanks to the design competition and the collaboration with Croatian Designers Association and Croatian designers that have helped us launch a couple of runner products that brought the company great recognition. These collaborations that embody cooperation and knowledge exchange have proven to be the best path for the continuous growth of the company. Prostoria pursues quality and long-term profitable business growth in an ethical, financially responsible and sustainable manner.
After participating in the YBD 2016 contest, exhibition touring and residencies organized within the Balkan Design Network, how would you evaluate the young design potentials coming from this region? In your opinion, is there a potential for the development of a unique language of design specific to this region? Is there such a thing as Balkan Design in your mental map? If so, what are its characteristics?

At the moment it still seems hard to recognize a unified design language that could represent the Balkan region. However, there are reoccurring typologies, research directions and themes that, with central curation, could potentially lead to a consistent design identity for the Balkans. Undoubtedly, there is enough creative power that could produce results with the right structure and mentorship and also help to build new bridges between the creative world and the industry. On the other hand, the industry should be informed and become aware of the strong tools they could have available and how they can use design as a competitive tool. Design similarities in the different Balkan regions could potentially be identified via traditional production techniques and craftsmanship but also through common cultural references and rituals around food and daily activities (e.g., sharing is a strong cultural reference in Balkan societies, in various forms and mediums).
During your residency, how was your working process and what are your experiences with the production companies? Do you intend to continue collaborations with your design mentors/colleagues and the production companies?

We had a very positive experience. We have visited the factory in various stages of the project, to explore the different production capabilities, meet the team and discuss initial ideas. We also received great support during the development of our design from both our host designers (Simon and Nikola), with constructive feedback sessions taking place in different stages of the project.

How would you describe the companies and project/s you have developed during the residency – its concept and potential for future development?

At the moment we are working remotely with the Prostoria team to translate our concept into a working prototype. The initial feedback was really positive and we are aiming for this project to evolve into a small collection and become part of Prostoria’s range in the near future. We are also very excited by the potential of continuing our collaboration with Prostoria for new design briefs outside of the design residency program.

What do you consider to be the main benefit of concentrated actions, such as YBD, and what is your plan with the specific YBD winning project in the future?

YBD program presented a great opportunity for us to explore and get familiarized with the various local design scenes, through physically visiting and participating in exhibitions and festivals across the region. We were able to network and initiate potential collaborations that could flourish further in the future, not only with fellow designers but also with companies/new clients. Designer Baking, our winning YBD project, has since been exhibited at the Milan Design Week in 2015 and has been selected for the “Sempering” exhibition at Museo delle Culture during the 21st Triennale di Milano. Our future plans ideally include finding a manufacturer that would be interested in including Designer Baking in their collection, but also develop the project further and enrich the specific range with additional tools and accessories. We are also exploring commission-based projects for private clients (patisseries, bakeries, food festivals) which could include workshops and custom designed products.
The motivation is the endless way of showing creativity through light as an imperative of human living. The multifunctional, sculptural, decorative, designer lighting fixtures are exquisite, with strong geometrical shapes, yet soft and pleasant lighting. The other distinctive fact about the lamps is the way they shine. The sculptural lampshades that give off unique lighting which reflects off the walls, is an additional decoration in the space. The materials are carefully selected in order to insure the product's durability and quality. Most of the models are made of walnut wood and an iron construction.

**DESIGNER** — Katerina Trpkovska’s first design experience was in her student days. After her studies and four years of working as an interior designer she found herself more attracted to details. Since then she has started working on different types of furniture, like restorations and redesigns of old chairs for her friends, making small lamps and paintings. Two years ago she reflected her passion for good design on the sculptural lighting fixtures and has established the brand Rinocca, where she designs and works on lamps in cooperation with an experienced craftsman.

**COMPANY** — WE have formed this brand to offer the best ecologically sound furniture. The range of products consists of furniture pieces that will not only be used for the rest of one’s life, but can proudly be left to the next generations. WE and Nature’s orientation embodies: handpicked timber from the most remote places in Macedonia, knowledge excellence, superior technology and virtuous carpentry which results in modular furniture of timeless aesthetics. NATURE is still the biggest reservoir for materials and inspiration for designers and artists. The people in WE and Nature are carefully researching, testing, exchanging ideas and knowhow, all in order to create products that can be used for generations.
For the past few years, there has definitely been more initiative from designers to work together with manufacturing companies in order to achieve better products that would become synonymous with good design and be exported from this country, which is a part of the Balkans, in order to create a better “picture” for what we call “Balkan design”. Unfortunately, the feedback from the companies has not been as enthusiastic as the designers had expected. So most of them decided to start their own brands, with small productions, which is the longer and very often an impossible way to success in terms of market positioning. Still, I hope that in the future the companies will become more open-minded and we will create great things together.

After participating in the YBD 2016 contest, exhibition touring and residencies organized within the Balkan Design Network, how would you evaluate the young design potentials coming from this region? In your opinion, is there a potential for the development of a unique language of design specific to this region? Is there such a thing as Balkan Design in your mental map? If so, what are its characteristics?

If we are talking about the present situation, from my personal experience we are in a phase where we are trying to rethink, recreate and redesign in order to create something Unique. From this point of view I still cannot find the exact characteristics of Balkan design. That is why I am strongly convinced that there is a need for a gathering of designers from this region. We could help each other in creating a remarkable Balkan design brand.

What do you consider to be the main benefit of concentrated actions, such as YBD, and what is your plan with the specific YBD winning project in the future?

An organization such as YBD is very helpful in the introduction between designers and improves the process of developing a unique design from this region. It helps each designer improve their work in every way.

During your residency, how was your working process and what are your experiences with the production companies?

During my residency I came up with several products, so I find it very productive. In the future I will definitely continue the collaboration with production companies in order to complete the developed concepts and prepare for selling the products.

How would you describe the companies and project/s you have developed during the residency — its concept and potential for future development?

We have developed several concepts for decorative floor lamps. During the design process, we had to keep in mind many aspects, such as balance, by picking the right materials along with certain shapes so the production companies could produce it. We also had to make something pleasing, modern and more commercial in order to be accepted by many different target groups on the market.
Table — Developing a height adjustable table was an experiment on how to get these adjustments as easy and intuitive as possible and also make it innovative and appealing. The table adjusts with rotation. The dining table is turned all the way to the highest position and then further on the other side where it stops at bar table height. Heights where the table stops are defined by hinge movement limitation.

Salad set — The salad set consists of two parts, reminiscent of a fork and spoon. We noticed that this association is not necessary. What we need is two shovels that can be used separately when mixing and joined together for serving. There is a lot of products on the market so we decided to design it in a simpler form. We used widespread rubber bands to join the two pieces together. That way we avoid complex joints. We pointed out this distinctive spacer with colors that connect the locally made product with Macedonian tradition. Wood makes it nice to use and is environmentally friendly.

Salad bowl — We present two different concepts for a salad bowl made out of wood for the local manufacturer Lukasware. Both concepts are developed with sustainability in mind and minimum processing. The first concept is to develop a round bowl with as little waste as possible, positioning one circle inside another on a flat plate. Pre-cut circles are then glued together in vertical layers. The second concept is to attempt to get a CNC-milled bowl with minimum waste and minimum processing. The process is more expensive but makes the product reach a higher final price on the market.

TAK KOLEKTIV, SLOVENIA
AT WE AND NATURE AND
DIZAJN DN, MACEDONIA

DESIGNERS — Jernej Koželj was born in 1990. He works in the fields of industrial design and interior design. He received a master’s degree in Florence, Italy at the Academy of Design. Before that, he got a bachelor’s degree in industrial design at the Academy of Fine Art and Design in Ljubljana. After Florence, he came back to Ljubljana where he is now working on his second master’s thesis in industrial design. His works have been exhibited in Ljubljana at the ‘Oko za oko’ 2011 exhibition, ‘Top Ideje’ 2011 and 2012, ‘Povezujemo oblikovanje in industrijo 2012’ and in Belgrade as part of the ‘Ghost Project’ in 2012.

Matic Lenaršič, born in 1991, studied aeronautics at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering in Ljubljana where he worked on projects inside the Laboratory of Aeronautics. In 2015, the University of Ljubljana team won the AIAA DBF competition organized by Cessna and Raytheon in Tucson, Arizona. Matic was the team leader and coordinator. After his BA degree in aeronautics he is now working on his master’s thesis in industrial design in Ljubljana. Since late 2014 they have worked together on several project, first under the name Kredenca, and now as part of a larger collective – Tak Kolektiv. Today, the collective works in the fields of product, graphic and web design, user experiences, photography and video production. Beside Matic and Nejc, the team consists of graphic and UX designer Sara Mlakar, photographer and director Gasper Jager and web developer Jan Novak.

COMPANY — Dizajn DN was founded in 1997. Over time Dizajn DN has become a leading manufacturer of wooden kitchenware in Macedonia under the renowned brand LUKASWARE, exporting all over the world. The product range covers standard items for daily use, from cutting boards, serving trays or bread boxes to decorative items and more sophisticated products with glass or other choice components. Function, Quality & Design are the key elements inherent to LUKASWARE products. Our wooden items are available in birch wood and walnut wood.
What do you consider to be the main benefit of concentrated actions, such as YBD, and what is your plan with the specific YBD winning project in the future?

It is a great chance to meet new people with same interests, to work with some of the world’s best designers and to make some connections for the future. We do not have any plans to produce or sell our product, but we consider it a great reference.

During your residency, how was your working process and what are your experiences with the production companies?

We always use the same process, starting with research, briefing, re-briefing and later developing solutions, testing them and adapting so that they fit the challenges we encounter. So far, we have met with manufacturers and discussed some of the technologies and possible solutions to get the best out of our designs. We are currently waiting for the first prototypes. We hope to get a chance to work with Public Room and all manufacturers again in the near future.

How would you describe the companies and project/s you have developed during the residency – its concept and potential for future development?

A great way to get in touch with local manufacturers, work with great mentors and deliver some interesting designs.

We think that the production environment in our region does not fully understand design and its benefits yet. The most successful productions and brands in the world are design driven, and are therefore using design on every level of the brands structure, all the way from the operational level up to top management. We have to present that to every client we work for so they can learn and see the benefits for themselves.

Of course, the design characteristics of each part of the world are different. This is coming out of tradition and culture, but that language of design was never forced and came up spontaneously. So we have to do good design projects in order to get better design culture and therefore more recognizable around the world.

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Wall-mounted ashtray — The ashtray that can be mounted onto a wall was made in response to the ban on indoor smoking in Macedonia. Smokers tend to gather in front of cafes, restaurants and institutions in order to smoke. The ashtray is vertical, with an opening in the upper front part so that the cigarettes can be extinguished on their own, due to lack of oxygen. The opening is large enough to allow for cigarettes to be put out and flicked into the ashtray easily. Simultaneously, it prevents users from dropping other kinds of waste into it. It is tilted forwards to facilitate emptying. The idea is to raise the ashtray and rotate it down and forward so that the cigarette butts fall out through the opening. The ashtray is connected to the wall with a metal part that has a hinge on its end. It allows for rotation while staying on the wall.

Flip-hooks — Flip-hooks are a functional and aesthetic complement to the hanger, but they can function on their own as well. Their playful shapes and colours, as well as added texture contrast the simple, minimal form of the hanger. The hooks were constructed from powder coated steel wire that was then pulled into polyester laces of different colours.

Flip-hanger — This hanger came into being in order to suit the Public Room space with its typology and functionality. Since the Public Room is a multifunctional space, the hanger’s use was multiplied by adding plastic furniture pads on several of its sides, so that it could be rotated and adjusted to users of different ages. It was constructed from square pipes that were welded into three segments and powder coated. The segments are joined using screws, so that their transport would be simplified.
Coming from a specific cultural background – one that is geographically and historically rooted in the Balkans, how would you evaluate the presence of designers and their connection to the production environment in your country? Do you feel that designers have many opportunities to participate in the creation of products and services in their local environments? If not, what are the reasons?

Although we have schools for design, the presence of designers is hardly noticeable. There is a small number of production companies that use design and designers wisely. In my country design is mostly used for promotional purposes, there is a very limited number of opportunities to participate in the creation of products and services in the local environment. Before transition, we had big manufacturing companies that did not survive the transition because of bad financial management and bad political decisions. People who were unemployed at the time started their own small companies, with small numbers of employees, mostly without a plan or knowledge of financial planning, marketing, etc. Because of that, many of them did not make it. Those that did, now produce parts and half-products for big international companies (car, ship, airplane manufacturers, etc.), partly because this does not require them to invest in planning, design, marketing, etc.
During your residency, how was your working process and what are your experiences with the production companies? Do you intend to continue collaborations with your design mentors/colleagues and the production companies?

The work process was slow at the beginning because I did not have a clearly defined work project. After discussions with project managers, we decided that I would work on several projects, not just one major project. During the second week of my stay, we finalized our decisions regarding the projects that I would be working on. The first one was a wall ashtray which can be developed into a full collection of objects. The second one was a self-standing hanger with additional hooks, both of which can be used separately. After a week of generating ideas, I started going to the production company where we began the production of the first prototypes. We ran into some problems, such as the lack of tools and materials, so we needed to make some compromises. In the end, we managed to finish some prototypes, and my overall experience is positive, but I think that there is still work to be done, which is why we agreed to continue developing the projects we started.

I started a collaboration with two small companies. The first one was Urum, a company dealing with metal fabrication (they produce small metal parts for their partners, and have worked on production of school furniture and urban equipment, to name a few). The second company – Dizajn DN – was Urum’s collaborator that manufactures wood products. They produce small home items like plates, bread bowls, boxes for wine bottles, etc. Their owner was familiar with the work of companies like Artisan, Gazzda and Prostoria, and was interested in learning how they use design to their advantage, as well as in cooperating with designers. As I had already started to work with Urum, and I was limited in terms of time, we decided that we would try to cooperate in the future, making a full re-branding process one of our priorities. I believe that the projects I have started with Urum have the potential for future development if we continue to work on product quality and promotion.

How would you describe the companies and project/s you have developed during the residency – its concept and potential for future development?

I started a collaboration with two small companies. The first one was Urum, a company dealing with metal fabrication (they produce small metal parts for their partners, and have worked on production of school furniture and urban equipment, to name a few). The second company – Dizajn DN – was Urum’s collaborator that manufactures wood products. They produce small home items like plates, bread bowls, boxes for wine bottles, etc. Their owner was familiar with the work of companies like Artisan, Gazzda and Prostoria, and was interested in learning how they use design to their advantage, as well as in cooperating with designers. As I had already started to work with Urum, and I was limited in terms of time, we decided that we would try to cooperate in the future, making a full re-branding process one of our priorities. I believe that the projects I have started with Urum have the potential for future development if we continue to work on product quality and promotion.
With its elementary design and contemporary appeal the 103/stotr1 table set provides an adaptable function for different environments and needs. It is designed to complement the diverse and eclectic approach in contemporary interior design. A simple and compact interconnection system can reduce its footprint if needed while maintaining its basic form. Unlike most three table sets, 103 gives an appearance of a single coffee table when stacked together. Made entirely of oak wood, it is designed to be low impact, cost effective, and easily mass-produced.

DEISGNER — Jovan Stanković is a 3D visual graphic designer at “Arhinaut” in Belgrade, Serbia, where he creates computer generated representations of architectural plans. He has considerable experience in 3D modelling with more than 30 finished projects in Russia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Serbia. Jovan has designed award-winning urban furniture, lamps and interior decoration elements. With extensive knowledge in several programmes for computer assisted drawing, 3D modelling and graphic design he tries to develop his ideas directly through the use of computers, streamlining his design process and also producing some ideas typical to computer methodology and new technologies. His favourite tools of the trade are 3ds Max, AutoCAD, Solidworks, Rhinoceros and Photoshop. He is currently completing his Woodworking Technologies, Management and Furniture Design studies.

COMPANY — GIR is a company that was founded in 1993 in Kraljevo and in the last 23 years it has positioned itself as the leader in the region when it comes to production, development and import of wood furniture. With over 420 employees and a Belgian partner with whom it produces the brands Ethnicraft and Universo Positivo, GIR is dedicated to the search for innovative techniques in working with wood and metal, designing simple, authentic and functional furniture, as well as processing and using wood for the purposes of bettering the life in the modern age. The FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) certificate, ISO and OHSAS standards, as well as the continuous investment in people and technology speak volumes of the high level of professionalism, doing business in accordance with the highest world standards and the fact that this company belongs to a group of people that understands that wood is the most renewable resource, provided the timber is sourced from forests that are properly and responsibly maintained. The furniture that is created by the joint efforts of the people of Kraljevo and Belgium is exhibited at all relevant furniture fairs in the world, and the attention it draws has led to new initiatives, one of which is the opening of the GIR Store in New Belgrade. This space will house the brands Ethnicraft, Universo Positivo, Notre Monde, GIR, Ferm Living and Omelette-Ed under one roof, as well as the complementary Muuto, Normann Copenhagen, Innovation Living, Lampe Gras, Vertigo Bird and others.
What do you consider to be the main benefit of concentrated actions, such as YBD, and what is your plan with the specific YBD winning project in the future?

The main benefit is the opportunity for the designer to learn, grow and experience the entire process of product development. My plan is to learn as much as possible from the feedback.

During your residency, how was your working process and what are your experiences with the production companies?

It was a great experience. Yes, I plan to continue collaborating with my mentor and the production companies. I feel we could develop the Balkan Design brand.

What are your experiences with the production companies?

During your residency, how would you describe the companies and project/s you have developed during the residency — its concept and potential for future development?

The residency program is a brilliant idea that could change the map of Balkan Design. By infusing the existing infrastructure with fresh and eager minds, it would maximize the potential of both the company and the designer involved at no cost to either. Further popularization of the concept and promotion at design oriented schools and fairs and expos are necessary for further progress.

During your residency, how was your working process and what are your experiences with the production companies?

After participating in the YBD 2016 contest, exhibition touring and residencies organized within the Balkan Design Network, how would you evaluate the young design potentials coming from this region? In your opinion, is there a potential for the development of a unique language of design specific to this region? Is there such a thing as Balkan Design in your mental map? If so, what are its characteristics?

There are many young energetic designers who are in a continuous search for new, inspirational and economic design. They are trying to merge traditional with contemporary and produce unique design typical for these areas. Yes, there could be such a thing as Balkan Design. It would be new, bold, environmentally conscious, natural, simple, functional, and personal.

Coming from a specific cultural background — one that is geographically and historically rooted in the Balkans, how would you evaluate the presence of designers and their connection to the production environment in your country? Do you feel that designers have many opportunities to participate in the creation of products and services in their local environments? If not, what are the reasons?

There are not many opportunities to participate in the design of products in the local business environment because the design scene is mostly centralized in the capital. Also, the industry is afraid to take steps into the unknown and invest in new ideas.
The **Collective Memory** project was created as a collaboration of designers and manufacturers in order to redesign the existing Metalac cookware products and find a new visual solution and innovative new products and accessories that would represent the modern identity of Metalac cookware. The collection **Collective memory** explores feelings, time, culture and community that we are part of, or we encounter in the home environment. The very fast modern life moves us away from emotion and communication in the community and makes us a part of the global consumption in which every form of emotion disappears. Precisely this lack of emotion is the collective memory. The first part of the collection, consisting of the existing forms of products or dishes, received a new, archaic appearance due to graphic interventions. It is these archaic vistas that are transferred to textile and kitchen accessories. **Collective memory** is adapting to new forms of community and restores lost emotional space.
Coming from a specific cultural background – one that is geographically and historically rooted in the Balkans, how would you evaluate the presence of designers and their connection to the production environment in your country? Do you feel that designers have many opportunities to participate in the creation of products and services in their local environments? If not, what are the reasons?

The specificity of Balkan design and the designers themselves have in recent years increasingly come to the fore at the regional and global stage. Of course, one of the reasons is the better connection between the designer and manufacturer, which is due to the transition and a suddenly imposed globalization that had stagnated and waited to be awakened. I believe collective action and boosting mutual cooperation can completely revitalize the current situation in which we find ourselves and thus meet the creative and economic goals on both sides.

After participating in the YBD 2016 contest, exhibition touring and residencies organized within the Balkan Design Network, how would you evaluate the young design potentials coming from this region? In your opinion, is there a potential for the development of a unique language of design specific to this region? Is there such a thing as Balkan Design in your mental map? If so, what are its characteristics?

Working for some time outside of the Balkans, I have often seen the “consumption” Balkan identity of the designer. Their visual solutions were brilliant but without feeling. Here, I asked myself the question: why do we, the actors of the Balkan society, not recognize the value of our cultural heritage? So, we understand that, and not just visually, but socially and emotionally. And here, today, as a young Balkan designer, I am very happy and proud to finally revive the advantages and qualities that make us so specific. Indeed, we come from very authentic areas and cultural heritage provides a huge range of options for creating unique designs recognizable not only locally but also globally.

What do you consider to be the main benefit of concentrated actions, such as YBD, and what is your plan with the specific YBD winning project in the future?

Projects like YBD give a chance to designers from the region to show their creativity and ability, and that is important for the cultural identity and heritage of the community to which we belong. Shortly after the presentation of the project Object in Object at the Mikser Festival, I was invited to show my collection at the Mercedes Fashion Week in Budapest and Berlin, and soon after that to buyers. I think that it says a lot about the project, and also the YBD, without which it would very likely not have been possible.

During your residency, how was your working process and what are your experiences with the production companies? Do you intend to continue collaborations with your design mentors/colleagues and the production companies?

During the residency, I had excellent communication with the whole Metalac team. I was surprised by their openness and understanding for new ideas and future visions. This is my first experience where I am this thrilled, and again convinced that there are people who appreciate ideas and vision and realize how important this segment is for further progress. Unfortunately, time sometimes does not allow everything getting done in the first round, but that has its advantages. The collaboration will continue very soon.

How would you describe the companies and project/s you have developed during the residency – its concept and potential for future development?

Our common idea was to redesign the existing Metalac cookware products and find a new visual solution and innovative new products and kitchen accessories that would represent the modern identity of Metalac cookware. The first part of the project, consisting of the existing forms of products or dishes, received a new, archaic appearance due to graphic interventions that were also transferred to the textile kitchen accessories. This first part of the project will be presented at the Mikser Festival. In the near future, we will continue the realization of the project, which contains a good deal of new solutions related to business.
Rhizome (in botany) is a modified subterranean stem of a plant that is usually found underground. It is characterised by a continuously growing net which puts out lateral shoots and adventitious roots out of its nodes at regular intervals. The Rhizome shelving system was conceived as a versatile, modular and user-customizable storage space that can also be used as a dynamic/ever-changing space divider in open-plan living or office spaces. The system consists of one basic building element and the connecting mechanism. The basic building element is a wooden prism “lifted” out of a 22 cm side rhombus base, connected via a set of simple metal connectors of different colours that clasp the elements together. The prisms are finished in natural wood with every seventh prism being coloured with a light grey, pastel red, pastel green or pastel yellow hue on the inside.

**DESIGNER** — Monika Jovanović is a young architect based in Belgrade. With her interests spanning further than her primary field of education, she enrolled in an interdisciplinary studies programme in the theory of arts, with an aim to immerse herself in exploring different ways of approaching the design process. During her studies, as well as after graduating, she was a participant of numerous exhibitions and competitions, one of them being YBD 2015, where she participated as part of the Tronožac team.

**COMPANY** — GIR is a company that was founded in 1993 in Kraljevo and in the last 23 years it has positioned itself as the leader in the region when it comes to production, development and import of wood furniture. With over 420 employees and a Belgian partner with whom it produces the brands Ethnicraft and Universo Positivo, GIR is dedicated to the search for innovative techniques in working with wood and metal, designing simple, authentic and functional furniture, as well as processing and using wood for the purposes of bettering the life in the modern age. The FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) certificate, ISO and OHSAS standards, as well as the continuous investment in people and technology speak volumes of the high level of professionalism, doing business in accordance with the highest world standards and the fact that this company belongs to a group of people that understands that wood is the most renewable resource, provided the timber is sourced from forests that are properly and responsibly maintained. The furniture that is created by the joint efforts of the people of Kraljevo and Belgium is exhibited at all relevant furniture fairs in the world, and the attention it draws has led to new initiatives, one of which is the opening of the GIR Store in New Belgrade. This space will house the brands Ethnicraft, Universo Positivo, Notre Monde, GIR, Ferm Living and Omelette-Ed under one roof, as well as the complementary Muuto, Normann Copenhagen, Innovation Living, Lampe Gras, Vertigo Bird and others.
What do you consider to be the main benefit of concentrated actions, such as YBD, and what is your plan with the specific YBD winning project in the future?

The main benefits of concentrated actions such as YBD can again be seen from two perspectives. One is from a perspective of an individual – a young designer, who is given a chance to break through on the market, meet colleagues, collaborate, and grow, while the other benefit is an infusion of fresh ideas to the (until recently) dull and sleepy crisis-ridden design market in the region, giving it a wake-up call and, after all, working precisely towards that Balkan design identity itself.

During your residency, how was your working process and what are your experiences with the production companies?

During our residency, we had a chance to learn a lot about the production process, aims, motives and goals of the production company that we collaborated with, as well as a chance to feel the strong determination of our mentors to push young people to give their best in order to achieve the best. We certainly do hope to collaborate further.

How would you describe the companies and project/s you have developed during the residency – its concept and potential for future development?

Through our work and cooperation, we had a chance to witness that rarely seen drive and optimism in the production field, and a glimpse of how and by whom that Balkan design identity is being built. The project that I developed was imagined as a versatile, modular and user-customizable storage and sitting space that can also be used as a dynamic/ever-changing space divider in open-plan living or office spaces. As a multifunctional modular set, it has a wide application in everyday life, which is why it should have potential for future development and broad use.

Coming from a specific cultural background – one that is geographically and historically rooted in the Balkans, how would you evaluate the presence of designers and their connection to the production environment in your country? Do you feel that designers have many opportunities to participate in the creation of products and services in their local environments? If not, what are the reasons?

While answering this question, I must state that I am answering from the point of view of a young architect that is included in the design sphere mainly through collaboration with designers from other spheres. Therefore, I am certain that I might not be as thoroughly informed about the opportunities for young designers on the local level as a designer would probably make sure to be. But from what I could see, it seems that there are two answers to the question, depending on the perspective. On the one hand, it seems that there is a constant upward trend in demand on the market for small scale, short-term, on-demand jobs (including competitions and exhibitions), giving young designers a chance to break through with their design, but on the other hand, there is a diminishing number of long-term jobs offered (though that is not only applicable on the local environment, it is a global trend). I feel that in most of the cases, young designers have to rely on themselves if they want to have a chance to be a part of a production process and that they succeed only if they push themselves into creating their own environment (co-workers, companies that they collaborate with) for production. Meanwhile, the already mature companies are rarely open to letting in young blood and letting it actually think, like we had the rare chance to do now. Maybe they are smart not to do now.

After participating in the YBD 2016 contest, exhibition touring and residencies organized within the Balkan Design Network, how would you evaluate the young design potentials coming from this region? In your opinion, is there a potential for the development of a unique language of design specific to this region? Is there such a thing as Balkan Design in your mental map? If so, what are its characteristics?

I think that contemporary Balkan Design has an enormous potential that is yet to be explored. With such a rich cultural, historical and social background of different, yet similar cultures, if nurtured, it can emerge as a strong design identity. Characteristics of Balkan Design are currently in the process of being redefined, passing through a transition from traditional to contemporary. It seems that there are more and more design companies (in the field of wood furniture especially) that are specifically aiming not to lose that core Balkan identity, while adapting it and accepting contemporary technologies and aesthetics, resulting in a fun, warm eclectic style.
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