

FORM

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AGIDEAS 2013

BY DANIELLA CASAMENTO

AgIdeas International Design Week held in Melbourne from April 29 to May 3 provides industry, business and students with the opportunity to gain valuable insight into designers' creative thinking at events such as the Futures Forum, Research Conference and design workshops. This year, the International Design Forum has attracted 40 of the world's leading designers and design researchers who will speak at the three day event from May 1.

Leah Heiss is a Melbourne designer who practices at the cutting edge of science and therapeutic technologies. Her aim is to destigmatise the use of medical devices by reducing their scale and adding a design sensibility to the product in a way that normalises their use, much like the acceptance of eyewear.

After completing her Master of Design from the Spatial Information Architecture Laboratory (SIAL) at RMIT University,

Heiss undertook a 12-month residency with Nanotechnology Victoria. It was here and in collaboration with scientists that she developed diabetes jewellery to administer insulin through the skin via thousands of micro needles on a concealed patch. The designs were well received both locally and internationally and this proved to be a pivotal project in many ways.

With a background in communication theory and interior design, "A key idea of my practice," she says, "is that when designers and artists are brought in early on in the process it is very much then that the human side, such as the emotional experience of the user, gets considered." Heiss has learnt enough of the scientific languages, nanotechnology, materials and microelectronics to have a positive conversation with scientists, engineers and medical teams. Each project leads to new collaborations such as her current projects surrounding hearing loss, emergency jewellery and the use of conductive textiles in the diagnosis of health conditions.



Leah Heiss



Robert Foster



Leah Heiss



Robert Foster

“ This new font is Calligraphic in look and very complex in design: “It’s almost like I am inventing a new style in Arabic.”

F!NK + CO is Foster's silversmith studio and workshop where he and up to six designers produce high-end homewares, lighting, jewellery and accessories which are sold in retail outlets and galleries around Australia and overseas. The workshop provides Foster with the opportunity to work on production objects as well as commissioned pieces in an environment where collaboration is valued as a mutually beneficial opportunity to share knowledge.

Aside from his work as a silversmith, Foster won the commission for 'The Journey', a large interactive light sculpture in the ground floor of the ACTEWAGL building in Canberra. It is the largest of his commissioned pieces and was designed in collaboration with Frost* and Coolon LED Lighting. "Projects such as this provide me with the opportunity to develop new ways of making things, new objects and aesthetics."



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Nadine Chahine

Typeface design is a discipline that has the ability to cross-pollinate with different cultures and languages, and reach an inestimable number of people. It is at this intersection that Nadine Chahine is making her name as a multi-talented Arabic typeface designer.

Born in Lebanon and currently working in Germany, Chahine earned a degree in Graphic Design at the American University of Beirut (AUB) and a Masters Degree in Typeface Design at the University of Reading in the UK. The

Arabic typography course at AUB and taught by master Arabic calligrapher Samir Sayegh "infused in me a love for Arabic type design," she says. On her graduation from AUB, "a commencement speech by Edward Said opened my eyes to the relations of cultural exchange," she adds. Her career to date is a testament to those events. It is therefore no surprise that one of Chahine's most satisfying projects is her involvement in the transformation of Lebanon's Arabic language daily newspaper An-Nahar, the newspaper that she grew up reading.

Her current project and her most challenging typeface design to date is that of Zapfino Arabic, a companion to the Zapfino typeface designed by the legendary Professor Hermann Zapf in 1998. This new font is Calligraphic in look and very complex in design: "It's almost like I am inventing a new style in Arabic." Chahine's work is also informed by her PhD research which, she explains, "looks at the effect of the complexity

of Arabic Naskh style on legibility using eye tracking as a method."

Throughout Robert Foster's early development as a craftsperson and silversmith in Canberra, his constant aim was to challenge and question his approach to design. Foster explains that knowledge gained through the process of making, improves understanding of materials which is

invaluable when combined with a designer's cognitive ability to visualise in 3D. His anodised aluminium F!NK Water Jug was designed in this way in 1993 and is proof that "the mind is a muscle that exercises a lot. The combination of material manipulation, form and shape appeared from my subconscious into conscious thought and from there it was a matter of refining it. But it doesn't always happen that way," he comments.

The agIdeas International Design Week will be held at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, NGV and ACMI from April 29 to May 3.

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