

# OTHER / SELF

Foreign & Foreignness

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M.A. Strategic Design  
Integrated Innovation Project  
Design Akademie Berlin

Summer Semester 2017

*For the sake of all beings.*



With this magazine, the accompanying issues, and the interactive projects we developed we wish to bring more attention to the untapped potential of the strategic designer and the design thinking process.

Design Thinking relies on investigation, empathy and the practice of failure.

Indulge into the creative journey we took in the course of the second semester of the *Master in Strategic Design at Design Akademie Berlin*.

We hope you enjoy this publication.

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# Thank You. Grazie. Danke.

We say thank you, grazie, danke, gracias, 謝謝, شكرًا, धन्यवाद to everyone with whom we have had the pleasure to test our projects during the course of the spring/summer semester 2017.

Exhibiting our projects at the Biennale in Venice has taught us a great deal about human-centred design. The execution of the projects was made possible with relentless support and powerful motivation from Prof. Katrin Androschin and Prof. Julia Leihener. We would also like to thank Design Akademie Berlin, SRH Hochschule für Kommunikation und Design for this incredible opportunity and specially Prof. Gilbert Beronneau to initiate the possibility of being part of this remarkable event. Much thanks to Serena and Mattia from Biennale di Venezia. They were a great support to us during the entire journey at Venice. A special thanks to Poli.Design students for bringing their ideas and energy into our projects during Biennale Sessions.

## FOREIGN & FOREIGNNESS

This publication is a reflection of Strategic Design in its interactive sense, of us as designers and our passion for individuality, identity and our expression of distinctive points of view.

We are twelve international M.A. Strategic Design students, from diverse cultures, languages and perceptions. In the course of our second semester we engaged in a long term project on the topic of foreign & foreignness. What is familiar? What is unfamiliar? What is SELF? And what is OTHER?

After conducting user research and pre-concept iterations in Berlin, we engaged at the Biennale Sessions in Venice in June 2017. The challenge of the Biennale workshop was to create an impact on society by making use of strategic design skills.

We asked ourselves: In a society flooded with information and imagery, what creates a lasting impression? How do we make our voice heard and presence felt in the large numbers of refugee projects and attention-seeking Biennale art?

We ran public design thinking activities, dealing with aspects of identity, habits and borders. Results were interactive designs that rough up our perception of the familiar and strange to allow us to see the world as potentially OTHER. We applied strategies like redefining, contextualizing as well as relieving foreignness. Within these magazine issues we share our ideas, which all were conceptualized from the vast potential of strategic design thinking.

la Biennale di Venezia  
57. Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte

# BIENNALE SESSIONS

- Università Ca' Foscari Venezia
- Università degli Studi di Trento
- Università degli Studi di Perugia, Dipartimento di Ingegneria Civile e Ambientale
- Design Academy Berlin, Berlino
- Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts, Portland
- Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Ca' Foscari School for International Education
- Università Commerciale "Luigi Bocconi"
- Escuela Moderna, Barcellona
- Sotheby's Institute of Art, Londra
- University of History, Stockholm
- University of Ottawa, Department of Visual Arts, Ottawa
- Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, MA in Intercultural Development of Tourism Systems
- Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera
- Universität für angewandte Kunst, Vienna
- University of Applied Arts, Vienna
- Australian Catholic University, Sydney, NSW
- Accademia di Belle Arti di Venezia
- Fondazione Centro per la Conservazione e il Restauro dei Beni Culturali "La Venaria Reale"
- Universität für Kunst | Bühnen
- University of Applied Arts, Vienna
- SRH Hochschule für Kommunikation und Design, Master M.A. Strategic Design
- Venice International University
- Università "La Sapienza" di Roma, Facoltà di Architettura
- University of Applied Arts, Vienna
- SRH Hochschule Berlin
- Università IAU/V di Venezia
- Accademia di Belle Arti di Venezia
- University of Applied Arts, Vienna
- SRH Hochschule der populären Künste (höpk)
- Summer School of Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy
- Università degli Studi di Venezia, Dipartimento di Architettura
- University of Applied Arts, Vienna
- Instituto Europeo del Design Venezia
- Università per Stranieri Ca' Foscari Venezia
- University of Applied Arts, Vienna
- Accademia di Belle Arti di Verona



# A JOURNEY OF STRATEGIC DESIGN

## Understanding Foreignness

'We are nothing', expressed the rector of the Design Akademie Berlin, reflecting the role a design class might have trying to catch attention at the vibrant Biennale di Venezia.

But the challenge to perform in this setting was just right for the Strategic Design Master class, trying to answer questions on 'foreign & foreignness', which is a topic for an extensive ongoing research that came out of the current refugee crisis.

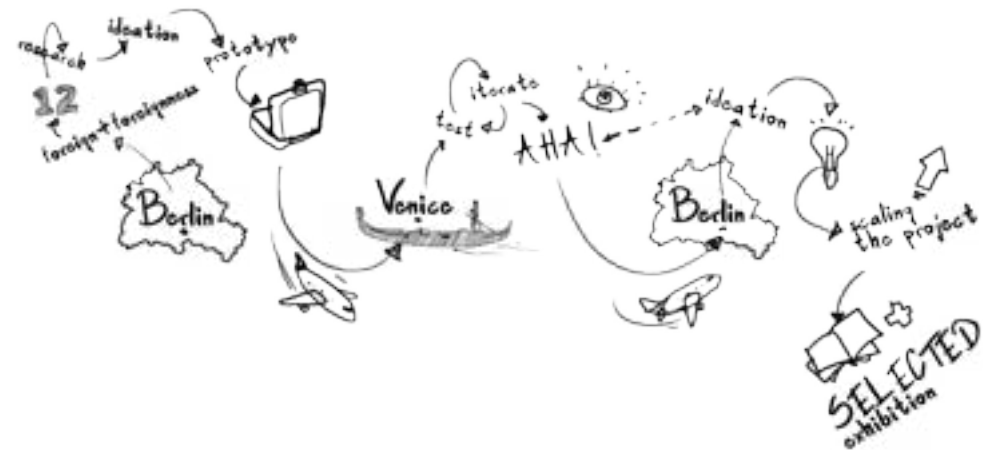
We would even ask: Is there anybody out there who could be more suitable than this group to tackle this challenge? The twelve Strategic Design Master students of the Design Akademie Berlin come with a profound graduate design education, and they belong to six different countries. During the project testing phase at the Venice Biennale, they were joined by Strategic Design Master students of the Politecnico

di Milano, and the group then became bigger: 2 Australians, 2 Austrians, 1 Chilean, 1 Chinese, 2 Colombians, 5 Germans, 4 Indians, 1 Indonesian, 1 Italian, 1 Jordanian, 1 Lebanese, 1 Filipina and 1 Turk.

## Contextualising Foreignness

In the competitive art context of the Biennale di Venezia, the students had to reflect on their project's USPs (Unique Selling Propositions) as Strategic Designers:

How would they be able to catch the attention of visitors? How could they make their voices heard and create an impact? The students took the approach of critical Design Thinking, which combines the provocative element of art, the creative methods of Strategic Design and the great stories of thinkers. They applied the specific designers' mindset and used participatory design approach.



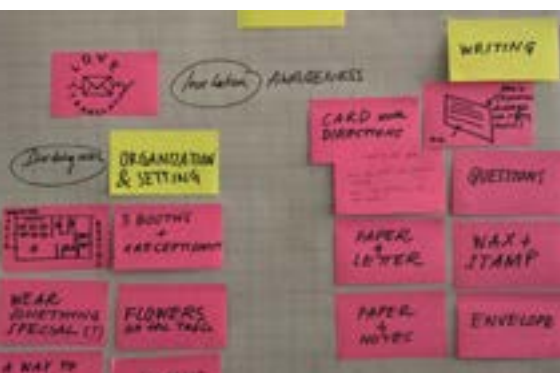
## Redefining Foreignness

With three Design Thinking iterations from April to July 2017 the students developed five interactive installations. At the Arsenale, the heart of the Venice Biennale premises, where the second iteration took place, the students had the opportunity to fully engage the exhibition visitors with their installations. Just as the Biennale curator Christine Macel's wish for human centered projects, the conversation and the involvement of the visitors were key elements to all the students' projects.

## Overcoming Foreignness

In the beginnings of the project, in order to understand the complexity of 'foreign & foreignness', the students first

went through the experience of being foreign themselves – in Berlin, in Venice, at the Biennale. Stepping into the shoes of the user in order to gain empathy is usually one of the first steps of a Design Thinking approach. Not as refugees though – as one might assume at first sight of the topic – but more on a global societal level, looking at individual stories in reference to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie with her talk on 'The danger of a single story'. She reminds us, that if we hear only a single story about a person or a country, we risk a critical misunderstanding.<sup>1</sup>



Throughout their very reflective journey, the students claimed criteria for the outcome of the project to have a joint vision and developed different participatory formats, where strangers interact with each other in an emotional and adventurous way. A short or even long-term relationship between visitors was to be established, to foster an open mind when it came to define borders, identities, habits and presumptions. To make the impact of these interventions sustainable, the students were encouraged to imagine the bigger picture after the successful installations in Venice. Once the projects are scaled up to reach a larger audience, the projects would have the potential to make a difference in the lives of the people leading to positive impact on the society.

the information to create this documentation and final exhibition at the 'Selected' Berlin.

To sum up the project, looking back at the journey and on the result, we have come to the conclusion that this has been a unique opportunity: Not just because of the people involved and the challenges we tackled but also because this project has been a very exceptional mix of ingredients. It is our personal ambition to make the M.A. Strategic Design program an important milestone in the professional development of our students. We are happy that they can leave our university claiming that they have stood up amongst the most famous artists of the world at the Biennale di Venezia 2017 with their Strategic Design approach.

The shared project management, which was a Strategic Design journey in itself, gave the group a high learning curve besides academic exposure. It included organising the travel to Venice, raising money with a Pecha Kucha event, gathering

And we believe that strong emotions and an intense immersion in a project is the key to create an unforgettable experience and this project was by far exactly that.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_adichie\\_the\\_danger\\_of\\_a\\_single\\_story?language=en#t-247572](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=en#t-247572)



– The Team –

# A CREATIVE INTERDISCIPLINARY GROUP



**Katrin Androschin**  
Director M.A. Strategic Design  
Austria



**Julia Leihener**  
Professor M.A. Strategic Design  
Germany



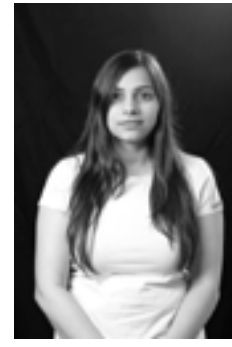
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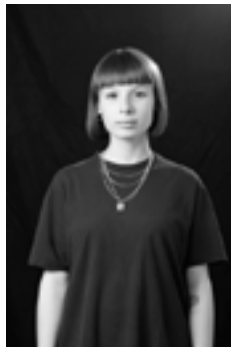
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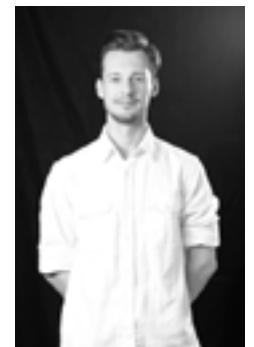
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Visual Designer  
Germany



**Juan Useche**  
Industrial Designer  
Colombia



**Eugene Vasilenka**  
User Experience Designer  
Australia



Tavola Aperta with Latian Xie

**What is  
strange  
and what is  
familiar?**

– Viva Arte Viva –

## THE HUMANIST VISION

With Christine Marcel's chosen theme "Viva Arte Viva" for this year's Biennale, she highlights an exclamation, an expression of the passion for art and for the state of the artist. In her words: "In a world full of conflicts and jolts, in which humanism is being jeopardized, art is the most precious part of the human being. It is the ideal place for reflection, individual expression, freedom and fundamental questions. More than ever, the role, the voice and the responsibility of the artist are crucial in the framework of contemporary debates."

For us, our projects perfectly fit into this mindset, finding inspiration in a humanist vision. We provoked conversations between the visitors and ourselves and gained a number of insights.



**Art –  
in whichever format,  
brings you closer  
to someone  
you might otherwise  
never encounter  
or connect with.**

## **ESTRANGEMENT IN AESTHETICS**

During our first brainstorming sessions in Berlin, most of us connected the term 'foreignness' with rather negative thoughts and images. The experiences we made in Berlin and Venice and the Artwork we saw helped us in understanding different perspectives.

When we bring estrangement into aesthetics it no longer has negative connotations but changes into a different aspect. We cannot imagine something without context. How would we know what something is without the ability to compare it to something else?

Art and Design can show ways in which the familiar becomes unfamiliar. Ways in which the things that operate in the back-

ground of our everyday life take on the possibilities of becoming Other.

We had the privilege to join the Tavola Aperta, to sit with the Dubai-based Chinese artist Lantian Xie for lunch, who presented his work in the UAE pavilion.

Lantian Xie brought up the dialogue about the idea of home, belonging and unbelonging. His approach to 'homeliness' shared parallel perspectives with our topic of 'foreign & foreignness'.

Art as an alternative to individualism and indifference. Strategic Design as an extension of aesthetic provocation.

# How can we address the issue of foreign and foreignness in society?

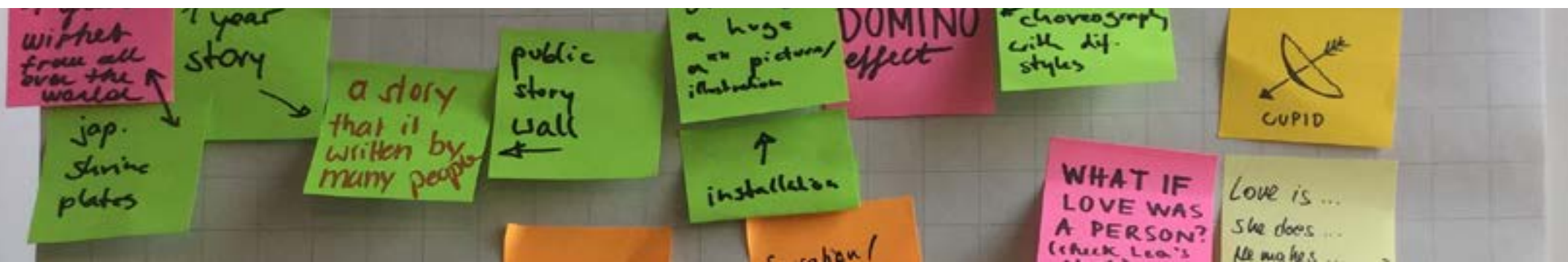
## FIRST INVESTIGATIONS

The design thinking process enables Strategic Designers to gather exhaustive information for a topic, followed by opening up the possibilities and exploring new opportunities to see what lies underneath and beyond the obvious. At the same time it guides us across different phases that help us synthesize the information we gathered helping us in making decisions for our projects.

Our research starts with a specific challenge: How can we address the issue of foreign and foreignness in society? This question led us to innumerable thoughts, references and personal experiences. We noted

them down on a whiteboard where we were able to understand how each one of us perceived the feeling of foreignness.

As our team comes from different parts of the world, and even most Germans are not from Berlin, it seemed that the topic was perfect for us. Suddenly the board was full of words such as 'outsider', 'otherism', 'nostalgia', 'stories', 'courage', 'language' and 'curiosity'. Starting with these words the project began to take shape. Our key areas of primary research were the following:



## 1. Culture and Language

We understand culture as a system of behaviors. Characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, defined by everything from language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts. When it comes to cultural diversity, there is always a big risk of reinforcing stereotypes. Yet, we need stereotypes to recognize each other.

In particular, we studied how language defines culture. Through language we either bond with others or build barriers. How does language influence the shared patterns of behavior that form different cultures?

We learnt that cultural diversity increases the problem-solving ability. It increases creativity and innovation. The challenge lies in making people to communicate well with one another. And we can achieve this through mutual understanding and not overemphasizing cultural differences.



## 2. Politics and communication

The definitions of words like citizen, foreign, migrant, emigrant and refugee given to human beings in political context was fundamental for understanding the topic 'foreign'. In our current system, these categories help organising people in a society. Nevertheless, these definitions are evolving and are impermanent, they can change with time and situations and build the perception of a person's identity seemingly with respect to the categories.

## 3. Identity

We understand identity as the distinguishing character or personality of an individual. During our whole life we are forced to dig deeper in our identity whenever we face a challenge, and at the same time we are looking for relievers that help us in facing these challenges. They also help us overcome the fear of the unknown. This leads to questions on what influences our identity? Is it race, ethnicity, religion, exposure to variety & education or is it psychological, influenced by one or more of the above. Is foreign only unfamiliarity? Is foreignness only strangeness? We set out on this journey to find out.



## 4. Integration

We set out on a task to define how an organization can think about their integration process and how can an individual better plan in order to integrate well. An organization needs to keep in mind that first impressions are very important. We need to look at our processes, provide support to new arrivals, make them feel valued they are here. Usually it is helpful to provide an immersive experience of your social culture so new arrivals can better adjust their senses. Lastly communicate, communicate, communicate it is a critical part of the experience for everyone.

Now as an individual integrating you can try exploration to adjust to your new surroundings, build relationships and connect with others, be proactive by finding a purposeful goal or small tasks you want to achieve. Finally try to establish a level of independence in your new environment.



## Challenges and opportunities

What are the challenges and opportunities for our society on the 'foreign' topic? Maybe, it is time for us to start focusing on similarities rather than differences, give people a purpose to be involved in the activities of their community and use the environment to facilitate the acceptance of foreigners in a positive way. It is also time for us to search for strategies that we can use in order to interpret the topics and raise awareness.



In a society  
flooded with  
information and  
imagery, what  
would create  
a lasting impression?

## OUR FIVE PROJECTS

The beauty of our profession lies in the opportunity of exploring different ways to approach the same topic. Our team of designers are portraying their own selves and experiences in each of the solutions. The projects are the result of innumerable discussions, agreements and disagreements to understand each other's thoughts, realities, cultures, identities and opinions.

The general understanding of the topic was only a kick-off for a deeper exploration of who we are as a team and what is our role as strategic designers when we design projects regarding complex problems like foreign and foreignness.

There are five projects, presented in separate issues of the magazine. We invite you to take a look at each of them.

### Projects:

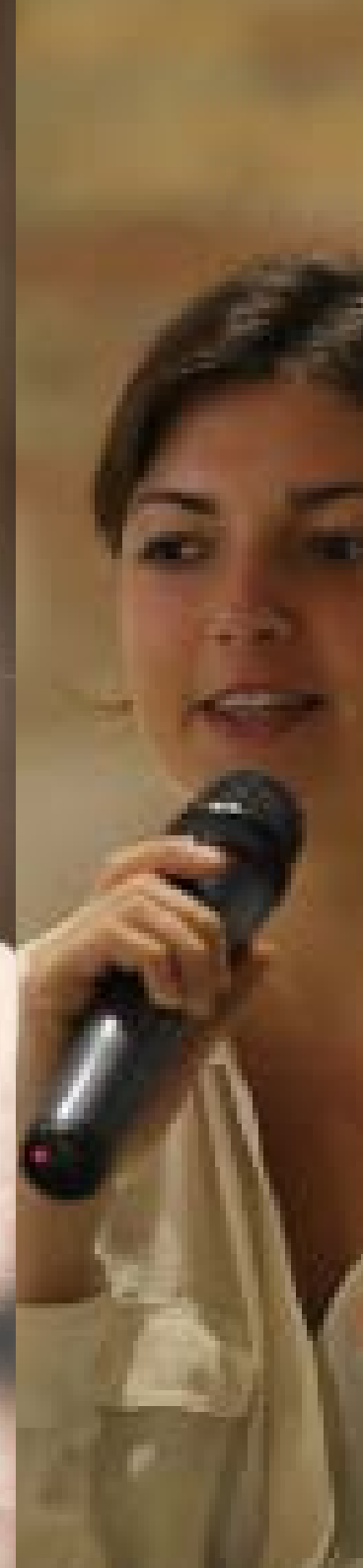
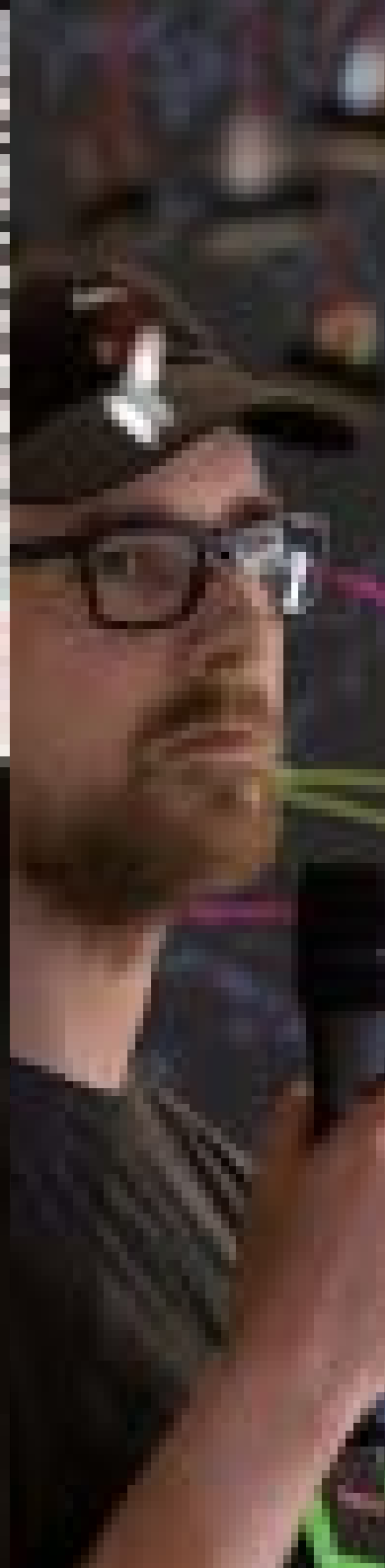
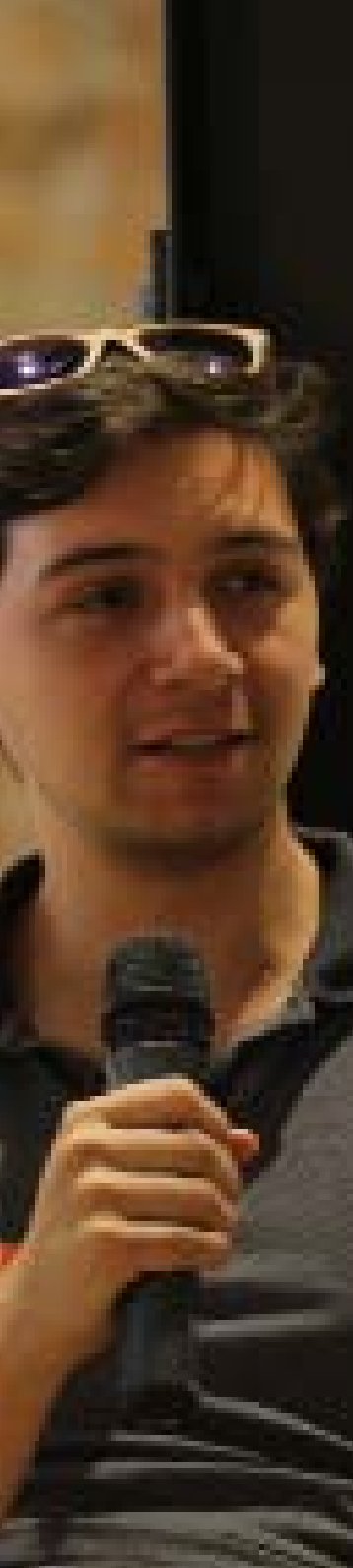
**Love in Translation**  
*Show some love today*

**Lock and Key**  
*Challenges comfort zones*

**Mapamelt**  
*Shapes unique identities*

**Model3**  
*An interface that challenges your own identity and its perception*

**Multiply Unity**  
*Creates social opportunity*



# Where is the foreignness in your life?

In the context of the research project, Prof. Gilbert Beronneau tried to find out what foreign and foreignness means personally for each of the 12 masters students. During the process, he conducted partly structured one hour interviews with each student. Prof. Beronneau got close to the students by understanding what has influenced them in life and consequently their perception of foreignness. These interviews led to very intimate and constructive results. Foreignness has a lot to do with one's own path in life, particularly in those phases where one feels separated from the world, for example when facing loss in any form.

## 12 IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

by Prof. Gilbert Beronneau

Especially regarding the refugee issues where many people come to Germany that are dealing with devastating traumas and loss when the only things that they have left is hope.

Besides all the new and exhausting experiences and challenges the students gained throughout the process, Prof. Beronneau not only inspired through a totally different way of getting closer to what foreignness means but also stirred up loads of emotions.

– Prof. Gilbert Beronneau

Since we are all constantly growing and are in a permanent phase of changing, the questions that he was asking were helping us in going deep into our thoughts. He forced us to open up and trust. He made us think about things we normally keep to ourselves and we try to avoid discussing with others. One could say that these questions were making us realize how strange we are even to ourselves but at the same time brought us closer to our core again.

– Lea Roth, Student

# PECHA KUCHA

The night of the 26th of July, the students of the Strategic Design Master organized a Pecha Kucha event in order to bring the Design Akademie Berlin community together. The invitation was extended to everyone who had interest in sharing any work, project or topic that could be relevant to inspire our creative group.

Pecha Kucha 20x20 is a simple presentation format where speakers show 20 images, each for 20 seconds. The images advance automatically and

you talk along with images. This format was great fun for the audience, it allowed them to follow quick talks with different topics. The event was an amazing opportunity for networking, enhancing relationships between students and professors and to take a look at things that others were doing in the real world.

Special thanks to the speakers who embraced the Pecha Kucha format and presented on stage to made this event come alive.

## Speakers and talks

### Katrin Androschin

*Who owns a city?*

### Dörte Schultze-Seehof

*Openness and Meaning: The beauty of abduction*

### Viktor Bedö

*Street games as in-situ laboratories*

### Samir Hanna

*Unconsciously Agile Tales from Uganda*

### Benjamin Schwenn

*Killing and Resurrecting the concept of brand identity*

### Bettina Borchardt

*The beauty (aka: the perfect or not so perfect design) of words*

### Nadja Rauch

*Hooked - How to build habit-forming products*

### Julia Leihener

*eE - a never ending story*



# VENICE BIENNALE TOP PAVILIONS

Germany | Italy | Austria | Russia | South Africa

## Germany

“No queue was longer or more violent than the one to access the German Pavilion. Chaos ensued. Social norms were temporarily suspended in this usually civilized context. People wanted in, no matter how long they had to wait in the queue. Some stairs lead up to the open white house with glass windows and a glass floor has been installed across the span of the pavilion. Underneath the glass, there are a series of objects arranged in clusters: a leather mattress, cuffs, spoons, chains, and bottles of liquids. In one of the small rooms, an industrial sink and a hose. The pavilion reeks of sanitary disinfectant, the type of smell that reminds you of hospitals and nursery. Imhoff’s crew of performers wear tattered sport clothes and dirty jeans, and can be found all over the space. The entire time, the performers move, holding strong eye-contact with the audience who are documenting each of their steps. They stand on plinths, sing, dance, and

then move into the claustrophobic spaces below the glass floor, where they engage in activities like checking their mobile phones, to masturbation.

It is almost like the artists want us to document everything. They seem to be animals in the zoo, partly separated or locked away from us through a glass window or floor. It is ridiculous to see how everyone is reacting, taking endless pictures and videos of some people who act weirdly. I leave the performance with a strong impression and asking myself if this is really the situation I am living.’ Lea

## Italy

‘Italy’s Pavilion surprised me with one of the most intensive feelings I’ve ever had towards an art piece. The room was dark, cold and damp. In the middle of it was an inflated igloo and inside it there were weird rotten body sculptures and a smell that nearly knocked me out. The longer I was in the

Pavilion, the more the smell felt like it was sticking to my skin, hair and nose. Loud industrial voices and the gloomy light even amplified the grotesque and disturbing impression. But in fact, I realised it wasn’t just the smell itself, it was also what the smell reminded me of deep inside myself. I could not tell what it reminded me of and that deeply unsettled me.’ Lea

## Austria

Outside the Austrian pavilion Erwin Wurm has installed a semi truck vertically, which seems to be balanced on its grill. The title is: ‘Stand quiet and look out over the Mediterranean sea’. Visitors are allowed to enter the structure through a dark staircase to arrive at a viewing platform. Overlooking the landscape of the giardini and the other national pavilions, viewers are invited to experience the ‘one minute sculpture’ by following Erwin Wurm’s instructions. Today’s global migration movements, psychological and political dimensions of space become more relevant and this is what Erwin Wurm addresses in his piece. The sense of being imprisoned or the feeling of freedom.

‘My favourite pavilion was the Austrian one. I have especially loved the “one minute sculpture” because as a visitor you are invited to join the artwork, yet you are guided. You don’t feel lost, but actually a part of it.’ Giulia

## Russia

After descending the stairs, visitors will pass through a labyrinth of rooms and stairs. Sculptures, figures and video art aim to explore and depict the immorality of contemporary society. The Pavilion presents Grisha Bruskin, Recycle Group and Sasha Pirogova with other Russian composers who provide the visitors with a culturally relevant narrative of contemporary issues.

‘The setup of the Russian pavilion was very intense and amplified the reality of power play in the world. It was almost like being a pawn in a deadly game of Chess.’ Ekta

## South Africa

‘I really liked the South African Pavilion due to the strategy they used to get attention on social issues.’ Nadja



# QUICK TIPS FOR BIENNALE

1

Wear good and comfortable shoes

2

Bring a bottle of water to refill

3

Don't forget a big bag to collect flyers

4

Have with yourself an extra cellphone battery

5

Get a €1 coffee from the Biennale bar, it's Illy, one of the most famous Italian coffees

6

Bring a little book to make notes about the things you like

7

If you want to get a Biennale souvenir, buy the poster, it is cheap and special edition

8

Take your time for the German Pavilion. The performance will start at 12.00, but make sure to be there at 11.15, the line is gonna be pretty long!

9

Stop at some collateral exhibitions outside the Venue, they are for free and you may be surprised!

10

Go to the supermarket in Via Garibaldi, take some food and enjoy your lunch under the trees at Sant'Elena



## QUICK TIPS FOR VENICE

1

Don't attempt to see all the sights – pick a few and see them well

2

Don't pay tourist prices (+€5) for coffee – spend under €1.00, like the locals

3

Don't take a Gondola ride – take a Vaporetto ride instead

4

Don't climb San Marco Campanile – ascend San Giorgio Maggiore for the best views in Venice

5

Don't linger around San Marco – head to Canareggio for crowd-free Venice

6

Go to the supermarket and get a couple of bottles of wine and some finger food, don't forget to glasses and walk to Punta della Dogana to enjoy your night!

7

Don't go for a Bellini at Harry's Bar – have a spritz with the locals

8

Don't order pizza – have risotto or seafood instead

9

Don't sweat away your day in crowds – see Venice at night

10

Forget Google maps and get lost!





Illustration by Florian Knape



Scan to see our journey

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Giulia Hartz, Oan Alhindi

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**design akademie berlin**

SBH Hochschule für Kommunikation und Design