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## **CROSS-BORDER PROJECT *DESIGN & INNOVATION* HAS BROUGHT MANY IMPORTANT THEMES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

Since July 2018 Slovak Design Center (SDC) had been working on the project *Design & Innovation, Cross-border Cooperation of Design Institutions in Digital Age* in cross-border cooperation with partners from both Slovakia and Austria: Museum of Applied Arts – MAK in Vienna, Academy of Fine Arts and Design (AFAD) in Bratislava, University of Applied Arts Vienna (Die Angewandte), and strategic partners: Ministry of Culture of Slovak Republic, The Bratislava Self-Governing Region, Cvernovka Foundation, Kunsthalle Wien, Architekturzentrum Wien and Austrian Institute of Technology, and various other institutions and experts from both European and non-European countries. The project was realised with the financial support from the European Regional Development Fund – cooperation program INTERREG V-A Slovakia – Austria 2014 – 2020.

The project was based on the development of **cross-border research cooperation** of various institutions and experts in the design and associated fields, with a large number of activities presenting the research outputs to both professionals and common public. As the abbreviated title of the project *Design & Innovation* implies, the fundamental themes of the project were **innovations, strategies, sustainable solutions** and concepts, which reflect important questions and challenges of contemporary design such as social design, innovative materials and digital technologies. Certainly one of the most important outputs in this regard was international conference *Changing Values*, held in September 2019 as an expert event within the Vienna Biennale for Change 2019. Architects, designers, artists, and entrepreneurs discussed core topics such as valuable data, innovative materials and transformation design. The focus lied on possible synergies for the common quest for sustainable strategies, ethical production conditions, and ecological justice.

The project *Design & Innovation* enabled Slovak Design Centre to broaden its expert activities in the form of **newly established research and development department named INOLAB**. The department develops several long-term research projects.

The **research of the School of Arts and Crafts in Bratislava** (Škola umeleckých remesiel – ŠUR, 1928 – 1939) is definitely worth mentioning. Sometimes called „Bratislava Bauhaus“, this school reflected all most contemporary trends in the applied arts of the period and co-created **Bratislava as important place on the map of modern (and modernist) Europe**. Within the project *Design & Innovation*, we tried to outline the importance of this school in the context of art school reform in the interwar period. During the international symposium *School as a Laboratory of Modern Life*, together with various experts, we were researching the forms and

radius of the **European movement for modern art education**, which involved also ŠUR. In the summer 2020, Slovak Design Centre will publish the international version of proceedings from this symposium.

The research of materials and development of the **Library of Materials** named *LOMA* certainly are among the most up-to-date research activities of INOLAB. Regarding *LOMA*, we can speak of really unique and long-term project, emerging in the cooperation with Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava, Slovak Academy of Sciences, and various foreign experts and institutions. The final output of this cooperation is an expanding database of materials, varying from the „classic“ ones to those most innovative and biodegradable, including information on their use and properties.

Among other outputs of INOLAB we definitely would like to mention **software H.U.R.B.A.N. selector**, available for free download on SDC website, based on the use of the digital 3D objects overlaps combined with new shape compositions. The longterm aim of SDC is the development of the interface and new functions of the software.

We also realised a number of events, which were all focused on presentation of research outputs of the project to the common public. The **exhibition Human by Design** presented concepts, case studies, innovations, solutions and projects, all aim on the current issues and challenges regarding the role of the designer in the contemporary world. *Human by Design* was exhibited in Satelit Gallery (Slovak Design Centre) in Bratislava in autumn 2019, and also in MAK Wien in the spring 2020. It reached great visiting rates and reviews. The exhibition is still available at least online in the form of online commented exhibition tour – finnisage on the youtube channel of SDC (in English). The exhibition catalogue is available for free download on the SDC website in Slovak-English language version.

With the start of summer holidays, Slovak Design Centre prepared **special didactic material for children aged 10+** (and their parents). The set of 6 receipts can be used directly at home to make 6 new and biodegradable materials, all from common and easily accessible ingredients. Also this special publication is available online for free in Slovak and German language versions.

There were also numerous important outputs in Austria. We definitely recommend **MAK DESIGN LAB** in MAK Wien. This exposition was completely rebuilt as a part of the project, and now across approximately 2 000 square meters, demonstrates the many ways design can contribute to positive change. Contemporary projects by designers, artists, architects, programmers, activists, and idealists react to the challenges of the 21st century and visualise problems, suggest alternatives, or offer solutions and are contextualised with historical approaches from the MAK collection.

Very important output of the project was **cooperation of AFAD and Die Angewandte**. The project enabled not only cooperation of these two universities in the form of seminars and workshops focused on the most up-to-date themes and challenges of the design and associated fields, but also direct connections with various collecting and research institutions in applied arts and design. The students were thus provided with the opportunity to participate on the research and also present their own works. The **exhibition In Machine We Trust**, opened on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 in MAK Wien as another activity of the project, presented a really unique experience in this regard.

All above mentioned activities and events can be seen as the key outputs of the project *Design & Innovation*, but we also have to mention plenty of other outputs ranging from expert papers and publications to complex products. All outputs of the project, documents, videos, online outputs and much more are available in the so-called **White Papers Database**, which is available on the website of Slovak Design Centre (<https://www.scd.sk>).

In the centre of the project and the wide array of its outputs, one key idea had been present all the time – cross-border cooperation as the core. Precisely this moment of the project provided all partners with really unique opportunities to realise research, activities and events, long-term cooperation, to develop a network of cooperating experts and institutions and much more. The key themes of the project definitely have a **long-term potential for (applied) research**, as well as for collecting and presenting activities of all partner institutions.

Our aim is to continue in thematising the key focus of the project, to develop its outputs and thus to strengthen our positions in the contemporary discourse on the role of the design and designers. To reach such intentions, the cross-border or broader international cooperation will be inevitable.

For more information on the project, please visit <https://www.scd.sk/dizajn-a-inovacie>.

The *White Papers Database* is available at <https://www.scd.sk/wpd>.

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