

2012 SURVIVAL KIT PROJECT a preview

CO-CREATING THE FUTURE

a project by code magazine and many partners

2012 SURVIVAL KIT

CODE

According to some predictions 2012 is going to be the year of the apocalypse. While we expect, and hope, this to be proven a myth, another kind of apocalypse is already upon us. Our global system is being uprooted, something which is clear to us all. Heralded by 9-11 and accelerated by the recession of 2009, it's clear that 'times are changing'.

Emerging economies are rapidly becoming leading economies. Mega cities that were once regarded as 'third world cities' have become hotbeds for innovation and design. So-called 'developing' countries have witnessed the rise of new, wealthy and well-educated elites. Urbanisation is happening everywhere.

At the same time, the internet is giving creative entrepreneurs access to the world at large and a new virtual megapolis is arising. The apocalypse – 'the end of the first world as we know it' – may be upon us, but at the same time a new global landscape is arising that is defined by new and fluid organisational systems, and loose professional networks. This is the world we are part of.

The upcoming 2012 socio-economic apocalypse is being interpreted by many worldwide as a much-needed change in existing structures. It's time to embrace that change.

Global creative call

CODE magazine documents style and trends of, and for, the creative generation. This October 2011 issue of CODE is themed 'the Survival Kit 2012 issue' and the kick off of the 2012 Survival Kit creative call. CODE invites artists, creative professionals and labels to take part in an exciting and inherently optimistic project. Product designers, fashion designers, architects and musicians are invited to submit work for this penultimate survival kit via our website. This call is open for entries until the end of 2011. The best submissions will be selected for publication. An exhibition due spring 2012 is in the making.

For more info on the project, the latest updates and to find the briefings, visit 2012survivalkit-project.com. On the next pages a first taste of what to expect.



The Philosophy of Dust: the contents of a Mongolian sweater is far more important than its look.

A garment saturated with dried sweat and ingrained with dust may not sound like the epitome of luxury, but according to Tschagsalmaa Borchuu, it can be just that. Selected by Survival Project fashion curators HTNK, Borchuu's embryonic knitwear brand THOS – conceived while working towards her Masters degree in fashion strategy at ArtEZ Institute of the Arts in Arnhem, the Netherlands – embodies a fresh fashion concept born of an intensely personal experience.

As a child, Mongolian-born German Borchuu would spend summers in the Gobi desert, where the climax of the country's New Year celebrations is the national horse race. Towards the end of this sweeping course through the parched desert plains, a crowd of observers will run frantically behind the leading horse. As they near it, they start to push each other out of the way, desperate to be the closest to the winner.

The reason for this hue and cry is the desire of the participants to be drenched in the sweat of the winning horse and to be showered by the dust kicked up by its hoofs. The essence of luck in Mongolian folklore, these rudimentary substances are believed to bless the spirit of those who receive them, upon whom great luck and good fortune is bestowed.

Interestingly, it wasn't until the Mongolian New Year of February 2011 that Borchuu witnessed such a horse race for herself. Compelled by the myth of her motherland, she had transported a sweater made from Mongolian cashmere ('which is, of course, a luxury material in the West') to a race taking place in the middle of the Gobi desert. There she became acquainted with a captivating young child jockey named Dashgombo, who agreed to wear the sweater during the race, which he duly won. 'That moment, being in the middle of the crowd around the winning horse, touching its sweaty fur, breathing the earth's dust became one of the most unforgettable experiences of my life,' she recalls.

The pilgrimage was documented by Tschagsalmaa's sister, Uisenma, a student at the University of Television and Film in Munich, Germany, in a brand video that visualises Thos for the purposes of promoting of a spin-off collection. In the film, footage from the horse race is interspersed with images of a model luxuriating in the 'lucky sweater' in Paris: 'That piece is the perfect embodiment of the whole brand philosophy, but small elements of the traditional garments, such as an adaptation of the traditional Mongolian cuffs that are shaped like a horse's hoof, are incorporated into a ready-to-wear collection,' says the designer of her main line's aesthetic. 'The idea is that the content of the sweater is far more important than the actual look.'

Back in Munich, where she, too, now lives, Borchuu remains fascinated by the extent to which the idea for her project has polarised opinion in her native Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia's rapidly developing capital: 'The champion horse riders understand instinctively why a garment soaked in sweat and dust might become a highly prized object of desire in the West,' she reports. Others are entirely dismissive of the notion; 'it was as if they found the very mention of it embarrassing.'

She notes with a wry smile that the naysayers are quite likely to be the urbanised patrons of stores such as the city's recently erected Louis Vuitton store, built in the image of its Paris flagship and other temples to what she refers to in her thesis as 'the conventional norms of Western fashion.' She finds this duality deeply ironic: 'Aren't Western brands promising the same ideas and values?' she wonders, 'not within dust, but embedded within the purchase of their luxury clothing?'

Another such irony resides in the question of whether Borchuu is going to hold on to the prototype sweater, as a talisman to aid her burgeoning label. 'Of course,' she replies, without hesitation.

www.thos.mn



The hand-made eyewear specialist's design director looked to science fiction and tribal tradition for this bright idea.

With his second attempt at a submission for the 2012 Survival Kit Project, Mykita design director Philipp Haffmans decided to give peace a chance. His initial reaction to the dystopian brief had been to create a battle-ready design 'that incorporated a weapon, for the purposes of self-defense,' according to the handcrafted eyewear specialist. That first device never saw the light of day: 'I was imagining horrible scenes of panic, and people harming each other indiscriminately. But I'm against violence, so I had to reassess that idea,' he recalls.

Going back to the drawing board meant re-imagining the conditions that might prevail post-apocalypse. Instead of pre-empting some kind of horrendous mob rule, 'which is all too easy to imagine in these times of social upheaval and financial insecurity,' Haffmans started to think more about the purely environmental factors which might be at play: 'more specifically, I started to look at how different cultures have dealt with hostile conditions, such as the issue of very bright light.'

The result was a sheet metal design inspired by the Inuit tradition of slatted eyewear, originally crafted from bone or ivory, to shield the wearer from the punishing, and potentially blinding effects of harsh sunlight: 'I wanted to make something that could protect the senses in the aftermath of, say, a nuclear catastrophe, so you have to imagine returning to basics in terms of the materials that you are able to use.'

Mykita's integrated business philosophy, whereby all steps of the creative process, from design to production, happen under one roof at the Mykita headquarters in the heart of Berlin, meant that Haffmans was able to keep a close eye on his design as it took shape: 'My brief to the people responsible for laser cutting at Mykita was to shape an object that could feasibly be crafted by the layman from a piece of metal that had been found in the street. Theoretically, you could make these from the wing of a car and a hacksaw.'

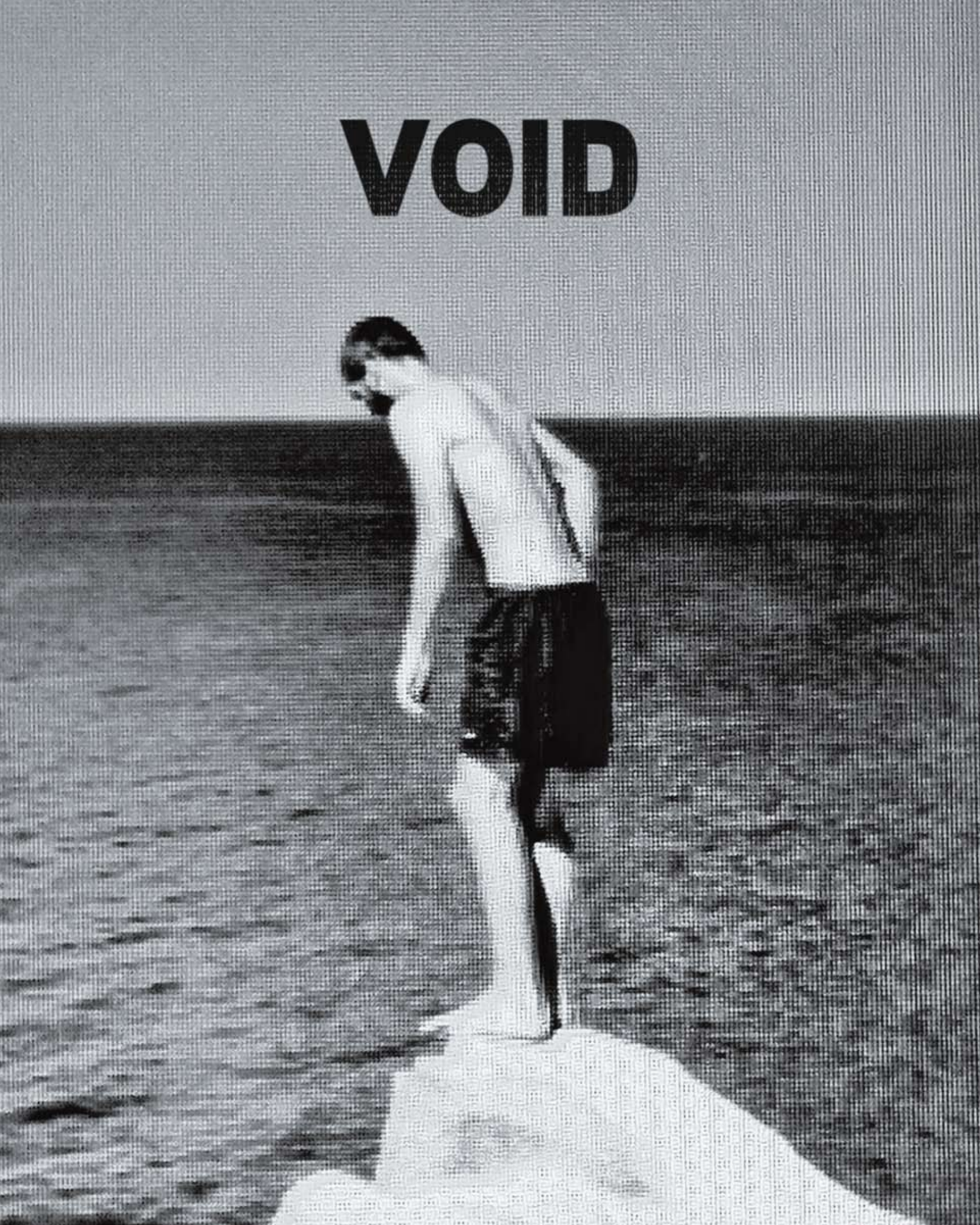
Clearly, this is a far cry from the highly finished optical design candy that has won Mykita the approval of the style press, but Haffmans is unrepentant. Of the rough-and-ready submission, he says: 'It's perhaps not beautiful in the way that we have come to understand the word, but it's well proportioned and functional. I can imagine it being easily adapted to suit many different kinds of wearers.'

An avid science fiction fan ('I've watched a lot of movies that deal with the apocalypse as a scenario, from Wall-E to Mad Max'), Haffmans drew particular inspiration for the project from one of the genre's more literary creations: 'I was actually thinking about Philip K. Dick's story "The Days of Perky Pat" when I designed these glasses.'

In the cult tale, first published in 1963, Dick depicts an underground community of survivors eking out a life amid the wastes and bunkers of California after a global thermonuclear catastrophe. Whereas the older generations spend most of their time playing with a doll (the titular Perky Pat) as means of connecting with life before the apocalypse, the younger generations have no such longings and are relatively happy: 'They have no clue what their parents are talking about,' says Haffmans, 'and they're content to crawl around in the radiation, playing with the enormous rats. It's those kids that I imagined might wear these glasses.'

Perhaps surprisingly, Haffmans tells us he does not find such images to be entirely negative: 'I think it's about pragmatism,' he explains. 'The kids are doing what they can with what they have. They're not just sitting around complaining but rather getting on with the present situation. By definition, nostalgia can be a hindrance when it comes to creating a better future.'

www.mykita.com



A leap into the void... The TodaysArt festival turns city centers into laboratories where artists tweak the urban core.

Olof van Winden is convinced that cities can use their public spaces a lot more creatively than they do now. This year's edition of TodaysArt, the multidisciplinary festival of which he is co-founder and artistic director, will see many artists out in the street attempting to reflect on the current and impending changes in modern cities, and, in a wider sense, in the world at large.

TodaysArt began in The Hague for the seventh year in September 2011, before moving on to Brussels and, in 2012, to possibly the most contemporary and hi-tech city in the world: Kobe, Japan. The festival gathers creative pioneers from all over the world for two days of adventurous visual arts, new electronic music, contemporary dance and theater, applied tech-art and lots of urban architectural novelties. In line with Van Winden's ideas about new spaces for art and culture, an entire 'Shadow City' is to be built in the streets, complete with exhibitions, shows and drinks between the traditional festival locations. Everywhere, socially engaged entrepreneurs, architects, artists and the general public are invited to envision the future of our cities. The matter seems more pressing than ever. Seldom before has the world seemed to change so quickly, and on such a wide scale. It seems that this past year alone, economies, regimes and the environment were morphing or crashing everywhere. There's no escape: we have to think forward, and fast. This year's festival theme, 'Leap into the Void', addresses the complexity of city life in a rapidly changing world. 'I don't have an answer to what the future is going to bring. However, I can bring all these different groups from different cultural backgrounds together to see if we can get closer to shaping it,' says Van Winden. 'All over the world, I see initiatives sprout that in some way want to anticipate great economic and ecological shifts. It seems the people are taking back the power, and fill those gaps that governments often can't.'

The Living City

In the run-up to its 2011 edition, TodaysArt put out a special call, inviting entrepreneurs to combat what Van Winden refers to as social poverty. 'People used to flock to city centers to interact, to chat, to create and experience culture. Now, for example, The Hague's central square Spuiplein has turned into an empty concrete place surrounded by hideous architecture, cold and unwelcoming lights and surveillance cameras.' He has seen the city he once fell in love with for its underground treasures push creativity out of the urban center. 'It's as if the only thing the city core is for these days is shopping and consuming. And I see this as a problem of the Western world in general.'

Van Winden describes TodaysArt as a global showcase of the endless possibilities people are coming up with to reshape their urban lives. 'It's actually quite simple to bring some life back into the city: create some places to sit and have a drink, light a couple of candles and put up some art.' Indeed, money is not always a necessity.

Great urban projects are coming from all over the world, according to Van Winden. 'Look at the Vertical Gardens created in Madrid. I can't think of a better way to adorn gray concrete.' He adds that cities such as Berlin, Bucharest, Warsaw and Detroit, which don't have the infrastructure or the riches to be high-end shopping Valhallas, are better at keeping their centers vibrant. 'It's fascinating to see that Detroit, a city literally in ruins, relentlessly keeps coming up with community-based urban ideas,' says Van Winden, referring to a city currently romanticized for being so bustling with creativity despite – or because of – its economic devastation. The conundrum seems to be that a lack of city planning and policy creates more room for unbridled cultural entrepreneurship and an increase in community-based grassroots projects supporting such sustainable activities as recycling, urban agriculture and, yes, art.

The Shadow City

The Shadow City, TodaysArt's positive response to the scent of stale office buildings, desolate nighttime streets and shopping centers, should be a welcome surprise for unwitting passers-by. It will be constructed from urban waste material and cast-offs offered by the local community. From this reinvented rubble, a group of artists and architects will build spaces for exhibitions, presentations, workshops, performances and parties. It is meant to inspire people to question how they use their city.

This conglomeration of various temporary artist abodes is called 'pet architecture': cute, comical and mobile buildings placed in seemingly useless public spaces, often nudged up against other buildings. They are reminiscent of the temporary shacks one sees tucked in between shiny new apartment blocks in overcrowded cities such as Mumbai. And this is the whole point, according to Denis Oudendijk, one half of pet architecture pioneers REFUNC. 'Because of the modest size of the buildings, we can utilize urban space that's otherwise considered useless, while at the same time we create space for social activity.' The message of TodaysArt couldn't be clearer: this is the time to start questioning everything. We are the generation that has to leap into the void.

<http://todaysart.org>

TodaysArt is one of CODE magazine's partners for the 2012 Survival Kit Project. Illustrative work submitted for the project's creative call (see p. XX) will be beamed on 50x90 meter surfaces throughout all of the festival's editions as it moves from The Hague, Netherlands and Brussels, Belgium in 2011 and through to Kobe, Japan in 2012.