

Democracy Bench: A commission

Melissa French presents

Urban Upholstery

An upholstered bench for our urban surroundings:

Urban Upholstery is a concept I started to develop for my MA in Design for Textile Futures.

The idea is to enliven public urban spaces using the power of textile design and processes. Heavily influenced by traditional interior textiles, my aim is to find a new approach to using these textiles and free them from the constraints of button backed chairs and window treatments. Combining these ideas together has resulted in the upholstered bench. I weave the fabric myself from strong cotton with copper and silver metal yarns. The metal will tarnish and patinate over time creating new patterns and colour. I wanted to make something that will not stay the same, that will change with it's environment sustain interest. I use existing benches and create the fabric specifically for them.

Working with an area such as Chumleigh Gardens would provide a wealth of design inspiration. I would create a fabric to echo the history and range of garden styles and as the gardens naturally change, so will the bench.

Budget:

Loom Hire: £300

Bench: £50

Upholstery sundries: £100

Yarns: £200

Time: £500

Total: £1150

Biography: Melissa French

Girl About Town, Urban Futures, Contemporary Designer, Melissa is a passionate weaver and designer, and questions why furnishing fabrics should be stuck inside. The Urban Upholstery concept explored her dream of covering the entire city with her bold patterns: combining floral ornament and geometry. Beyond just a great surface pattern, this time-based work uses various metals in her weaves to enable them to endure time and weather whilst evolving gorgeously through natural rusting or oxidising. Inspired by graffiti, urban guerrilla movements and traditional interior textiles and design, she wants to bring an element of beauty, pattern, design and ultimately surprise to the urban landscape.

Having grown up heavily involved in the family textile business Melissa's creative life has been about exploring textile design. From cutting fabric samples as a teenager through a BA in Woven Textiles to an editorial career in interior magazines to her Masters in Textile Futures, Melissa firmly has her feet in the world of commercial and conceptual textiles. This allows her to produce work informed by the industry yet with a new perception, engaging people to re think textile design and it's uses.

As one of the founding members of textile collective Puff & Flock, Melissa has exhibited with Designers Block at Interiors Birmingham 2009 and will be showing at Milan's Salone Internazionale del Mobile. She is currently freelancing and working on a project with Brent Council to 'embroider' and 'upholster' some benches located within a run down urban area.

Links:

www.melissafrench.co.uk

www.puffandflock.com

www.verydesignersblock.com/

<http://thedesignmole.wordpress.com/2009/02/22/puff-and-flock-textiles-collective/>

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