

# FLOWERS FOR SLOVAKIA - HANDLE WITH CARE

*"Young Slovak Design Narrates Folk Stories"*

## WHAT IS FLOWERS FOR SLOVAKIA?

Bringing flowers to someone means sharing beauty – building upon this idea, the project Flowers For Slovakia aims to support Slovak design education. "Flowers for Slovakia" is an extraordinary project for extraordinary design students. The concept is based on the idea of giving special possibilities to selected students who highlighted themselves with their attitude, talent and skills in the field of design.

The first deliverance of this laboratory is the collection "Handle with Care". A unique glass design collection presents twelve conceptual objects inspired by Slovak folk legends and fairy tales. Having been translated into the language of signs, each of the objects tells a different story. As once the traditional treasure boxes in Slovak households used to hide the wealth of their owners - twelve plywood boxes highlight unique pieces of young design creativity.

In the "Handle with Care" collection, each metaphor that was melt into the glass evokes curiosity to learn more. The jar with grips from a handbag updates a story of a girl who chose love over money, unlike nowadays gold-diggers who hunt after millionaires, with expensive handbags as their signal sign. Chained duck leg prefers freedom over wealth, imprisoned ball embodies blind hunt for profit and tight corset unveils sick understanding of beauty. An attentive observer decodes the meaning quickly – designers update old stories and bring their timeless message back to our lives.

The collection is a result of one year of educational process. Twelve most talented design students, who were chosen on the ground of portfolio submission, were awarded not only worthy practical experience but as well a unique chance to tell exceptional story and showcase their design thinking. During two workshops students went through both concept building under professional design consultancy and prototyping in Ajeto Glassworks (Nový Bor and Lindava, Czech Republic).

## WHY FLOWERS FOR SLOVAKIA?

While creating connections between school and industry, our goal is to present Slovak design talents to wide international audience - thanks to Flowers for Slovakia the selected students get the chance to experience the cooperation with established manufacturers, they have possibilities to present themselves in special expert media and to exhibit at international design and art shows.

Last but not least, the goal of the project is to export Slovak quality abroad. Thanks to the topic the collection "Handle with Care" becomes an exceptional representation of the Slovak cultural heritage. The project does not only present young Slovak designers, but as well Slovakia itself - speaking the words of the masses.

## WHO IS FLOWERS FOR SLOVAKIA?

Authors of the initial idea of the project “Flowers for Slovakia” are Peter Olah and Lars Kemper. Their willingness to help young talents at the Faculty of Architecture /Slovak University of Technology/, where Peter works as hosting lecturer, merged together with their experience with glass design. The platform has bridged school and practice already since 2009, under the auspices of doc. Ing. arch. Lubica Vitková, PhD., the Dean of FA STU in Bratislava.

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The project develops under auspices of the dean of the **Faculty of Architecture of the Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava.**

## Featured Designers and objects:

Elena Bolceková – Duck Tarn  
Ondřej Elfmark – Well of Love  
Kristína Chudíková - Bathory  
Zuzana Labudová – Water Spirit of the River Hron  
Michala Lipková – The Black Lady of Kežmarok  
Michala Lipková – Jánošík  
Jakub Pollág – The White Lady of Levoča  
Ján Reháč – Tom Thumb  
Peter Simoník – A Girl That Went to Fetch Water  
Michal Sloboda – Brodské Village  
Ľudmila Žilková – Hidden Treasure

## Handle with Care Stories

### **Elena Bolceková – Duck Tarn**

There was a maiden living on the shore of a tarn in the Tatras. One day the spirit of the mountains came to her, saying: "Be my wife, I will keep you safe in my caves. You will have all the wealth of the world". The maiden turned down his offer, for she valued fresh air and freedom more than wealth. The spirit didn't understand and got angry and turned her into a wild duck. The object is a glass on a duck leg, burdened with its material wealth. Wealth always comes at a cost.

### **Kristína Chudíková - Bathory**

Known as "The Bloody Countess", lady Báthory lived in the Čachtice castle in the middle ages. The legend says she used to kill virgins so that she could bathe in their blood. She believed it would save her beauty from ageing. The object updates the legend to a parallel of what contemporary women are willing to undergo to stay attractive - plastic surgery as a way of killing their own bodies. The object shows an unreal "barbie-like" silhouette tied up in a corset to exaggerate the illusion of a perfect body. By putting a flower into this vase, one makes a statement that it is the inner beauty that counts, not the looks.

### **Ondřej Elfmark – Well of Love**

One of the oldest and most beautiful slovak legends is the one about omar and fatima - related to the Trenčín castle. Fatima was a prisoner in the Trenčín castle. Omar, being in love with her, promised to dig a well into the rock. After 3 years he finally found water. He said to the lord of the castle, "you have the water, but you have no heart," and he took fatima away. The object plays with the strong and gentle structures of the glass. The rough rocky surface of the outer shape contrasts with the fragile and light beauty of the inner one.

### **Zuzana Labudová – Water Spirit of the River Hron**

You would recognise him by his greenish hair and bulging cheeks. One day he came for Eva, who once while washing laundry in the River Hron promised his wife she would become their maid. The water sprite's wife ordered Eva to tidy a chamber full of glasses turned bottoms up. Hidden in the glasses were spirits of the drowned; even the little spirits of her children that she managed to rescue.

### **Michala Lipková – The Black Lady of Kežmarok**

There was a female guard at the castle of Kežmarok who was always dressed in black. Instead of protecting, she was stealing the treasure. One day the lord found out about it. he put a spell on her, "you'll never find peace!". They still hear her walking there, searching for the treasure to steal. The small ball locked inside the balancing bowl destroys the golden paint of the inner dish: reflecting our blind hunt for money, missing the true mission in the meantime.

### **Michala Lipková – Jánošík**

Juraj Jánošík is a legendary Slovak hero, a forest robber who lived in the woods. He took from the rich and gave to the poor. People praised him, the rich kept following him in hate. one day he

got arrested and he was sentenced to death. In public execution he was hanged on a hook pierced through his left side. The object is a symbol of his sacrifice in the fight for equality.

### **Jakub Pollág – The White Lady of Levoča**

According to the legend, the white lady of Levoča is the only woman in the age of the Hungarian monarchy who committed treason. After her husband had left her and joined the anti-habsburg movement, she became a spy for the emperor. Delegated to Levoča – a town sieged by the emperor's army - she became a lover of the leader of the rebels. She stole the keys from the town and let the monarch's army in, leaving the town plundered. The balloon, frozen in the moment of the blowout, represents the moment of the great betray.

### **Ján Reháč – Tom Thumb**

"Johnny the Pea" is the classic Slovak folk tale with a clear message of how a tiny little man can achieve what seems to be impossible. It encourages confidence and reliance in one's own capabilities. In the object - the bubble (johnny) is "on the top of the mountain". A symbol of a big achievement for a small being. The edge of the bowl is showing an average level. johnny is small, but outstanding.

### **Peter Simoník – A Girl That Went to Fetch Water**

The full title of this short ballad is the girl went for some water. walking through the royal garden, a girl met a prince who broke her jug. "girl, don't cry. I'll pay the damage, I'll give you money for the jug." The idea of the story is that the girl chose love over the money. The object wants to reflect upon the attitude of girls, nowadays called "gold-diggers", who seek fortune rather than love and there is no happy end for them. They keep trying their luck until they screw up.

### **Michal Sloboda – Brodské Village**

A set of drinking glasses with sand blasted motif of dogs chasing their own tails tells a contemporary urban legend. There is one village in western slovakia called "Brodské" where people are believed to eat dogs. There is a bunch of jokes about the feasts of Brodské and about dogs running fast through the village trying to escape. There's no proof or evidence, only honest statements of some witnesses. Do you believe it?

### **Ľudmila Žilková – Hidden Treasure**

The object tells a story of inheritance. Three sons inherited a vineyard. Their father told them there was a hidden treasure only time would reveal. Desperately looking for gold, the sons could not find anything. After the harvest had come, they realized what kind of treasure their father had had in mind. Organic violet shape of the object with surprisingly reflective surface inside tells the story of true, hidden values which we are blind to recognize.