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## Style surprise



Padmaja Krishnan is a designer with a difference. With a degree in fashion designing from NIFT, Delhi, she set up her own studio lab called Transit on Sarat Bose Road in Calcutta in 2005. Padmaja was selected by British Council to be part of London Design Festival (LDF) from September 19 to 25 this year. She also showcased her *kantha* work at the Festival of Quilts 2007 in August. Here's what she had to say to **t2**:

**At LDF, you shared the stage with designers from Slovenia, South Africa, Mexico and Brazil. How was the experience'**

1. Padmaja's brilliant take on the common jhola. The side-bag is an upside down shirt and the sleeves form the shoulder strap

It was enriching to see different skills and techniques. But yes, one thing struck me. If our country takes pride in our skills, we can make a significant contribution. In India, most products tend to be driven by function while internationally it is both form and function.



It's also important not to differentiate between national and international design sensibilities. My work is both local and global.

**Tell us something about your collection at LDF...**

2. A *kantha*-stitched diary

LDF showcased designs from all parts of the world and because I was representing Calcutta, I had to display local tradition with global appeal. It was an assimilation of my collections.



I work with lifestyle leather accessories and office stationery like boxes that are hand-painted. I also make *kantha* pieces of different sizes that can be framed but it will take some time before they are made into garments.... The process is slow and painstaking and takes up to five-six months for a small multi-layered piece.

3. A piggy bank in the shape of a taxi

**What kind of fabrics and colours do you work with'**

Ninety-eight per cent of my work is on hand-woven fabrics but sometimes I combine it with some amount of power-loom fabrics. Hand-woven is the future of fabrics as it gives maximum comfort to the skin. My work is colourful, also because a lot of it is *kantha*. In the past two years, I've used a lot of beige and browns but it depends on the collection. I'm not bound to any specific shades.

**Some of your creations are unique... a shirt bag, a piggy bank in the shape of a leather mini-bus and *kantha* work in the design of mobile phones...**

What I make is inspired by what I see around me. A designer's job is to question what exists already and make people think differently. Why does a piggy bank always have to be in the shape of a pig, why can't it be a bus'

**Your work speaks volumes about being socially responsible. Why'**

I'm not just a fashion designer. If I'm running a set-up, it automatically becomes a social responsibility...

**Where do you retail'**

Transit in Calcutta, Taj Khazana, Melange in Mumbai, Grasshopper in Bangalore and People Tree in Delhi.

KARO CHRISTINE KUMAR



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