



EVENT REPORT: THREAD BRISTOL

## HARD GRAFT

Rosie Hilder discovers the value of manual labour at Thread Bristol

**T**he two speakers at the latest edition of Thread Bristol are certainly no strangers to hard work. Both paper artist Hattie Newman and Hey Studio's founder, Veronica Fuerte, talked of days spent working on fiddly projects that verge on the ridiculous. Newman told stories of having to paint a model's breasts at a photo shoot as she didn't have time to finish the paper dress she'd crafted, and how her eight-second Lacoste advert was a year in the making, while Fuerte spoke of spending a week on a 2x2cm illustration for Monocle, sticking ribbon onto hundreds of handmade invitations, and creating an illustrated map of an entire Chinese district with only Google for reference.

But despite all these hours of labour, both women delight in the handmade. "I don't really use a laser cutter," admitted Newman, who confessed to being "not very good with computers." Doing things by hand does have its perils, however. "My assistant cut her finger off and put it in the bin!" exclaimed Newman, before assuring the audience that another assistant dealt with it while she was "trying not to faint over the blood." Real physical work also takes up a lot more space than files saved on the computer, and Newman is often stumped as to what to do with her paper models once they've served their purpose. "I decided to sell the buildings from my Canon City installation," she said, "but the profits go to War Child, so I'm not making any money!"

Not making any money or having any space are both things Fuerte is all too familiar with. "Our old studio was very small!" she laughed. "We did photoshoots in there but there wasn't any space."

"At the beginning, it's not easy," warned Fuerte. "You need to work a lot, with all kinds of clients, even if you don't like them or the work. But over time, you can start to choose what you do and who you work with." And as someone who began designing in her flat with a baby, Fuerte certainly knows the benefit of having that choice. ■

**Clockwise from far left:** Rap collective Freestyle Love Supreme sum up the day; Marko Ahtisaari debates the curative power of music; guitarist Kaki King joined Giorgia Lupi on stage (see page 52); Duolingo founder Luis von Ahn.



and the Things Unsaid, a VR theatre experience filmed in 360 degrees. "Context changes content," she declared. "Reality is highly fallible."

Uglow saluted fellow speaker Kate Moross, who had earlier described herself as nonbinary and gender-fluid – "I live life in the middle," she declared. Refusal to conform makes you unique, Moross said. Blend that with talent and you have a potent combination.

Others reaping the benefits of thinking differently included Marko Ahtisaari, former head of design at Nokia, who co-founded the Sync Project: an exciting start-up dedicated to exploring the physiological effects of music.

According to Ahtisaari, music can affect the brain in a similar way to certain pharmaceuticals, stimulating emotion, arousal and social affiliation, as well as having

an impact on sleep patterns, relaxation and even pain control.

His ambition? To prove, in the face of a cultural dependence on medication, the value of "non-drug modalities with drug-like effects."

what3words founder Chris Sheldrick revealed the bold thinking behind his Black Pencil-winning project, which splits the globe into a grid of over 50 trillion three-metre squares, each with their own unique three-word identifier, while Duolingo creator Luis von Ahn discussed how the language app turn conventional education on its head by gamifying the process.

According to von Ahn, more people use Duolingo to learn a foreign language in the States than in the entire US public school system, a staggering statistic that shows just how effective game-changing innovation can be. ■