

FL@33 Annual badge design competitions... and B.I.O.



Johann Chan meets two designers for whom badges are a passion, though only one aspect of a much bigger portfolio of projects they initiated themselves

FL@33, as the London-based duo of the French Agathe Jacquillat and Austrian Tomi Vollauchek style themselves, are dab hands when it comes to exercising their initiative. For the past few years, the two have had their hands full running an online 'graphic art and fashion boutique', *stereohype.com*, and producing their own graphic design books.

One of their most fun undertakings is an annual competition to design a button-style badge, open to all comers. The winners receive assorted Stereohype goodies and, more importantly, the chance to have their designs manufactured, with the possibility of earning royalties should sales take off. In parallel, FL@33 operate an 'ongoing badge initiative' called B.I.O. – as in 'By Invitation Only' – for which they hand-pick people to submit badge designs. The ninth series of badges under this banner has just been released, and Tomi says there's a huge backlog of designers they would like to work with in future.

So what makes a great design for a badge? "We always write that we welcome witty, humorous and beautiful designs – that pretty much is the point I think," says Tomi. "Badges that surprise and make you smile and feel good are definitely my personal favourites." He adds that they have now produced 567 badges, all available to buy.

Do Agathe and Tomi, who both graduated from the Royal College of Art in 2001, find that there is more chance to flex their joint creative muscle in self-initiated projects, or is it all more hassle than it's worth? "While this could potentially all sound very romantic to younger designers and students just about to enter the creative industries, it does indeed involve a lot of hard work, often at weekends too. Juggling all this with private family life is the real challenge. It's doable though, and extremely satisfying." ■

flat33.com, stereohype.com



Above A selection of badges from B.I.O. 9

Far left Badge by tottwo, winner in the single badge category in FL@33's 2010 competition

Left Winner in the set of three badges category, by Tunde Varga

Below Postcard and Made & Sold, FL@33 books published by Laurence King



Above FL@33 photograph for the cover of *The Graphic Eye: Photographs by International Graphic Designers* (Rotovision)

