

Art takes flight

Hobart-based artist Jacob Leary's "Bubblegum Dystopia" (on the left) and Melbourne-based artist Liam Snootle's "No Queen Blues/Unwind" (on the right), are two of the 16 kits developed in the Qantas Curates program



In an attempt to avoid entering the “typical” territory of amenity kit design, airlines and suppliers are taking a more creative approach by teaming up with artists to add a little charm and personality to the inflight offering **BY MELISSA SILVA**

With only so many colors, materials and designs to source when developing amenity kits, it is often challenging for airlines to develop a new concept and suppliers to deliver a fresh and unique design. One such method for adding some creativity and personality to the look and feel of a kit, is for airlines and suppliers to team up with artists — ideally regional, local artists hailing from the airline’s country of origin — to have their artwork displayed on the kit and select contents.

This practice has become somewhat of a trend as of late, with several airlines in various regions launching kits featuring work from a range of artists, which have inadvertently become collectable items and simultaneously increased the artists’ visibility on an international scale.

Australia’s best

Departing from the more standard design elements, Qantas Airways announced earlier this year that it had teamed up with some of Australia’s leading artists, photographers and digital influencers to feature their work on the airline’s international Business Class amenity kits.

The initiative, entitled [Qantas Curates](#), sees the airline work with professional

contemporary art curators in the country to select artworks from 16 Australians specializing in a variety of different styles including: pop culture, photography, fine art, abstract landscape, Indigenous art and textile design.

Since May 1st, the new range of amenity kits — eight types for men and eight for women — have been offered to passengers, with two designs launching every few months.

Qantas Group Executive Brand, Marketing and Corporate Affairs Olivia Wirth says that fuelling the project is the airline’s vision, which is to grow awareness of contemporary Australian art and give travelers a collectible piece to take home with them. “As the national carrier, we’re pleased to support talented Aussies telling uniquely Australian stories through their artwork and share them with a global audience,” she says.

Qantas worked with long-time partner — of more than 12 years — [Buzz](#) to ideate and facilitate the Qantas Curates program for the new kits. Buzz’s headquarters was transformed into an art gallery to workshop the various artists, narrowing down a selection that would best demonstrate the breadth and depth of the artistic talent in Australia. Managing the process of

artist identification, Buzz engaged curation experts [Lucy Feagins](#) from [The Design Files](#) and designer [Emma Elizabeth](#) to help the Qantas’ Curation Panel — which included representatives from the [National Gallery of Australia](#) and [Oroton](#) — to curate their final selection.

“Celebrating the creative spirit of Australia, the Qantas Curates program is important as it is designed to recognize the remarkable diversity of contemporary Australian art,” says Leonard Hamersfeld, Director at Buzz. “This program will ultimately help to lift the profile of the artists and give them a platform to showcase their talent.”

The amenity kits include [ASPAR products](#) by [Aurora Spa](#) — hand cream, lip balm and face moisturizer — a wrap-around eye mask in the same artwork as the kit, Colgate toothpaste, toothbrush, earplugs and travel socks.

“It’s really exciting to be part of an art exhibition at 38,000 feet,” says Melbourne-based artist Billie Justice Thomson, whose artwork entitled “Fairy Bread” will be featured on an amenity kit for women. “This is a powerful way to share contemporary art, particularly alongside some of Australia’s most talented artists.”

Qantas has a long history of providing

opportunities for Australian artists. Most recently, Qantas joined [Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art](#) and [Tate](#) in the U.K. in an [International Joint Acquisition Program for contemporary Australian art](#) made possible through a corporate gift from the [Qantas Foundation](#).

Omani heritage, elevated

Echoing the belief that amenity kit design has become somewhat homogeneous, Oman Air felt it necessary to take the design of its amenity kits in a different direction by bringing a touch of Omani heritage and storytelling to its inflight offering.

"It is probably not known that Oman has rich arts and crafts and architectural roots and many designs are uniquely Omani," says Abdulaziz Alraisi, Executive Vice President, Product and Brand Development for Oman Air.

As a means of showcasing this Omani craftsmanship and innovation to an international audience, Oman Air introduced [The Oman Air amenity kit competition](#). Invitations to enter the competition were issued to Omani craftsmen registered with the Public Authority of Handicrafts, members of Sidab Women's Group and [Omani members of the Omani Society for Fine Arts](#), which is affiliated with the [Diwan of Royal Court](#). Contestants were instructed to design an amenity kit that would provide an ideal selection of amenities within a bag or box that best expressed Omani culture and innovation.

"We introduced the competition in order to showcase Omani craftsmanship and innovation to an international audience," says Alraisi. "Oman has some exceptionally talented artists and we wanted to

work with them to produce unique and attractive Omani designs for our guests to enjoy. Amenity kits play an important part in the guest experience and we take great pride in ensuring ours are some of the very best."

The competition was judged by an expert panel drawn from a range of Oman Air's departments, including CEO Paul Gregorowitsch, Executive Vice President Product and Brand Development Abdulaziz Al Raissi and his team of product development specialists, and Executive Vice President Corporate Services and Business Development Dr. Abdulrazaq Alraisi.

The winning design was created by Ahlam Hamad Al Mahrouqi. Artist Issa Saleh Al Sabagh's design came second and artist Jokha Abdullah Al Barwani was awarded the third place prize. All three winning designs incorporate traditional Omani patterns and forms inspired from



JetBlue Mint amenity kits from Hayward and Hopper, illustrated by Californian pop artist, Alia Penner

Oman's strong architectural heritage. The three specially designed kits will soon be available in First class and Business Class.


"We are very proud of our Omani heritage at Oman Air and feel this is really what makes us stand apart from other carriers," says Alraisi. "We are also very involved in supporting the community through local corporate social responsibility initiatives and gaining recognition for the huge amount of talent that we have in Oman."

When brands and art collide

Elevating an artist's work even further, [Clip](#) is currently collaborating with American luxury brand [Hayward and Hopper](#) for the [JetBlue Mint](#) amenity kits for 2017 and 2018. For the second half of this year — launching this month — contemporary Californian pop artist [Alia Penner](#) will illustrate the Hayward and Hopper-designed kits, the production of which will be managed by Clip.

"Alia's illustration offers charm and personality to an item that can be easily overlooked," says John Goldstone, CEO of Hayward and Hopper. "As a result of Alia's involvement, the kits are transformed into whimsical collectibles. Who doesn't want that?"

As opposed to offering yet another branded kit, Clip and JetBlue Mint are taking amenity kit design in a different, more unique direction by way of Alia Penner, and increasing the kits' collectible factor in the process.

"Who needs another generic kit? Items of this kind are simply left behind," explains Goldstone. "A keepsake from your travels that elevates or inspires is something worth keeping." 

Ahlam Hamad Al Mahrouqi (center) was named winner of The Oman Air amenity kit competition

