

Object Project



As far back as 4000 BCE, umbrellas (or parasols) were considered as a stamp of nobility, wealth, and respectability in many cultures including ancient Egypt, China, and the UK.



Today, they are regarded as no more than ordinary, replaceable objects and with a sole purpose to keep one from getting wet.



Resurrect the forgotten value of the umbrella.

Parasoul

Parasoul is a fashion brand whose aim is to rekindle the status and value of the once highly regarded umbrella. They provoke a movement that draws appeal to the art of wielding these “mundane” objects.

The greatest constructional improvement of the Umbrella was made during the early 1850s: a light-weight steel construction inspired by the Britannia Tubular Bridge.



Taking the form of the tubularities of the bridge and extracting the shape of springs, I designed a set of alphabets with varied styles as graphic elements for the brand.

A B C D E

H I J K L

O P Q R S

T U V W X Y Z

PARASOUL

Regular

A B C D E F G H I J K L M
N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Heavy

A B C D E F G H I J K L M
N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Condensed

A B C D E F G H I J K L M
N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Condensed Heavy

A B C D E F G H I J K L M
N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z



Parasoul

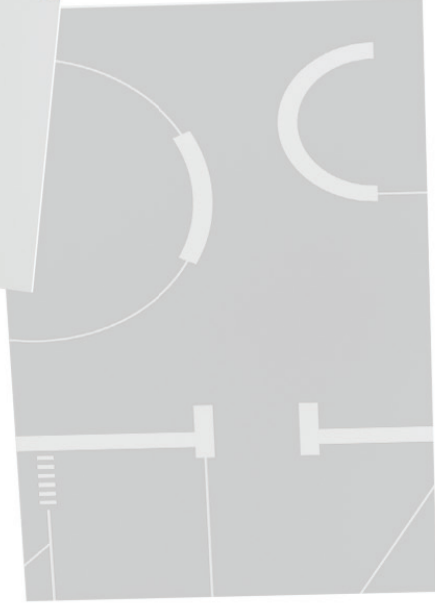


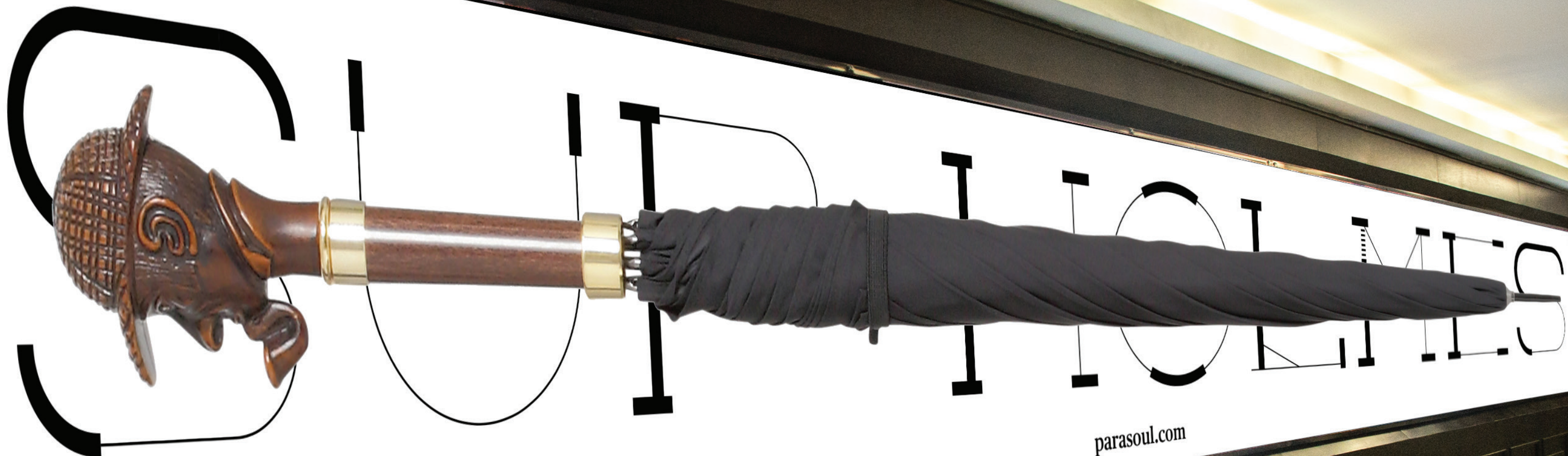
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"Who doubts that you are a respectable character provided you have an umbrella? You go into a public-house and call for a pot of beer, and the publican puts it down before you with one hand, without holding out the other for the money, for he sees that you have an umbrella and consequently property. And what respectable man, when you overtake him on the way and speak to him, will refuse to hold conversation with you, provided you have an umbrella? No one. That respectable man sees that you have an umbrella and concludes that you do not intend to rob him, and with justice, for robbers never carry umbrellas. Oh, a tent, a shield, a lance and a voucher for character is an umbrella. Amongst the very best of friends of man must be reckoned an umbrella."

— George Borrow



Parasoul

MARK OF DISTINCTION

As in many countries, umbrellas were mostly associated with king-ship. In 1905 Samuel Purchas wrote of the Great Mogul, "of kittasols" or state, for to shadow him, there be twenty. None in his empire darted in any sort have any of these carried for his shadow but him." Only monarchs (and even then, only on special occasions) were permitted to use the nava-danda: a seven-tiered parasol of scarlet and gold dresses in thirty-two strings of pearls, with a pure gold frame, ruby handle and diamond knob. Cochin rajahs required postage stamps to include an outline of an umbrella.



Kittasol is a variation of 'quitasol,' the Spanish word for "sunshade"
 Cochin 3R foreign bill revenue stamp
 Set of Cochin postage stamps

2 Left
 Right

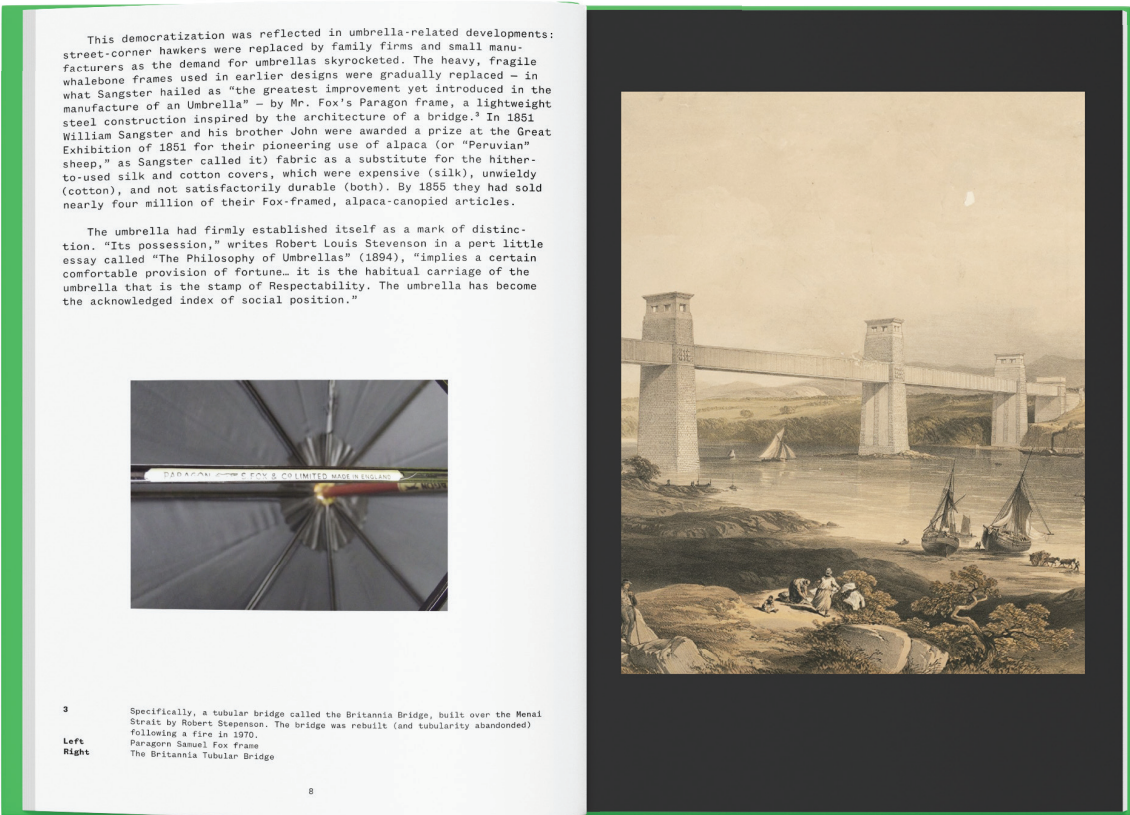




Left
Right



Left
Right



This democratization was reflected in umbrella-related developments: street-corner hawkers were replaced by family firms and small manufacturers as the demand for umbrellas skyrocketed. The heavy, fragile whalebone frames used in earlier designs were gradually replaced – in what Sangster hailed as “the greatest improvement yet introduced in the manufacture of an Umbrella” – by Mr. Fox’s Paragon frame, a lightweight steel construction inspired by the architecture of a bridge.³ In 1851 William Sangster and his brother John were awarded a prize at the Great Exhibition of 1851 for their pioneering use of alpaca (or “Peruvian” sheep,⁴ as Sangster called it) fabric as a substitute for the hitherto-used silk and cotton covers, which were expensive (silk), unwieldy (cotton), and not satisfactorily durable (both). By 1855 they had sold nearly four million of their Fox-framed, alpaca-canopied articles.

The umbrella had firmly established itself as a mark of distinction. “Its possession,” writes Robert Louis Stevenson in a pert little essay called “The Philosophy of Umbrellas” (1894), “implies a certain comfortable provision of fortune... it is the habitual carriage of the umbrella that is the stamp of Respectability. The umbrella has become the acknowledged index of social position.”



3
Left
Right



CONSTRUCTIONAL EVOLUTION

Improvements in the late 1770s helped umbrellas to become more common. As mentioned, they had originally been made from oiled silk, but in the late 1770s they started to make them from silk, cotton, or alpaca. The umbrella’s frame also became lighter, which made them easier to carry. They were also more readily available and therefore more accessible to the common person. Before long the umbrella was so accepted, one writer noted “that a man is known by his umbrella.” Additionally, between 1780 and 1920 there were 450 English patents to improve or change the umbrella, and soon it came in every “conceivable hue... from the Napoleon-blue silk of the Parisian exquisite to the coarse red or green cotton of the Turkish rayah.”



Bamboo rib



Fortified spring



Stainless runner



Right



An Umbrella Retrospective, 2020