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Family reunions and a fresh new year

Christos visited Shanghai for the first time during the Spring Festival. Today he lives in Shanghai, and each Spring Festival he experiences how the city transforms into a magical place. In the midst of preparation for this year's festivities, we talked to him and his colleague Miranda about next year's SOLGLIMTAR collection.

"You have to live it to understand it," says Christos when we ask him to describe the Spring Festival in Shanghai. Eight years ago he came as a tourist to the Chinese megacity with its population of 24 million. He was charmed immediately and decided

to stay. Today Christos Stefanoudakis works as a Creative Leader for IKEA Spring Festival collection SOLGLIMTAR—a Swedish word for sunlight peeking through clouds. Right now he and Miranda Zhang, Product Development Engineer, are working on next year's collection.

Chinese New Year, also called Spring Festival, is the time of the year when many families gather for an annual reunion feast, but also a time to thoroughly clean the house making way for a new year and welcome good luck.





Miranda was born and raised in Shanghai where she has celebrated many New Year's.

"We prepare gifts and a lot of food for family and close friends, eat pickled pork and the dessert tangyuan, play majiang and share a lot of laughter together. If the weather is good, we go outside. There are no traffic jams at all during the Chinese New Year here in Shanghai, and you can get anywhere within 30-45 minutes," says Miranda.

When Christos and Miranda started working on the next SOLGLIMTAR collection they wanted to make sure to design what the customers wanted. Before any pen had hit

paper, they workshopped with people to get a better understanding of what Spring Festival means to them and how they celebrate today.

“We wanted to know what brings our customers joy, frustration, and what they would like to improve, and of course, the expected price tag. That gave us valuable insights to specify to whom we want to speak with SOLGLIMTAR 2021,” says Christos.



Christos Stefanoudakis, Creative Leader at IKEA.

Chinese visual heritage is built on a great number of auspicious symbols and illustrations, which have different meanings depending on their colour scheme, placement and combination. These products are layered with positive symbols and graphics in a way that they may not be obvious at first sight, but reveal themselves over time. Some of the geometric patterns are associated with wealth and health, while some articles have special connections to IKEA.

"We had only one option; to start this journey with great respect to the Chinese culture and heritage for Spring Festival and a lot of research.

For this collection, we selected symbolic graphics that are related to the start of the lunar calendar and depict what people most wish to come for the next year. Using those symbols in unexpected ways adds the playfulness we wanted," says Christos.

"And most of the products are designed not only for use during the Chinese New Year, they are also appealing to be used throughout the season. That makes the life of products last longer, and has a positive impact on the planet. At IKEA, we are striving for a more sustainable future with conscious material choices, we know that our customers like it as well," says Miranda.

The stresses of travelling are some of the biggest frustrations for people before and after the festival. For many it is a long journey with heavy bags to get back home to their families.

"…which is all worth it in the end! But how can we make their journey more comfy and with style? That is why we also make sure to design lightweight flat-pack gifts that you can easily carry in your luggage," says Christos.

Miranda, do you have a favourite product?

"There are many products I love in next year's SOLGLIMTAR. If I have to choose one or two, then it would be the hanging decorations and the heart-shaped cushion," says Miranda.

Christos, how do you prepare your home for the festivities?

"As locals do! Even for those of us that can't spend time with family, a friend reunion can be equally important. The whole country is in such a festive and decorative mode that you feel left out if you don't do it!