

february
2024

Livingetc

LEADING BY DESIGN

THE YEAR OF COSY

DECOR SCHEMES TO WARM YOUR SOUL
FURNITURE AND LIGHTING FOR PERFECT LIVING ROOMS
PLUS STORAGE, EXTENSIONS AND THE ART OF
THE PLASTER FINISH

8u+yU2x6L81/vV1eKUVwKQ=#



hope for the future

Nearly two years on from the invasion of their country, Ukrainian designers are rebuilding for the future – and finding optimism through their work

When the Russian invasion of Ukraine began in February 2022, the design industry, of course, came to a halt. For the country's creatives, dreaming up beautiful things was an impossibility while their cities and towns were under attack. Almost two years later, however, designers have pressed on, innovating in the face of continued threats – and daring to imagine what the future might hold for their industry once war is over. It's a story of the optimism of design in the face of an immense challenge.

'It's quite complicated to practise design when you're being bombed,' say Dmitry Sivak, Alexey Gulesha and Maksym

combine warm, natural materials with the opulence of metallics and stone – the invasion necessitated the swift relocation of their team members to Warsaw. 'It allowed us to maintain our commitment to design supervision and client meetings,' explains Artur. 'It wasn't just about safeguarding our vision and the essence of Yodezeen; it was also about preserving the livelihoods of our team.' Today, the studio operates from two primary hubs, Kyiv and Warsaw, where their creative teams reside.

Thanks in part to the pandemic and the resultant boom in remote working, some designers have been able to diversify their portfolio to take in projects across

after the onset of the invasion, nearly half of our projects, all based in Ukraine, came to an abrupt halt,' says Artem Zverev. 'Yet, in these challenging times, we reached out globally. It's been a transformative journey. In just 18 months, we've forged strong ties in Europe, the UAE and the USA. Today, Ukrainian projects form a mere 10% of our portfolio, but they're nothing short of exceptional. The world will soon witness the culmination of our dedication in the form of Sierra House, a jewel in our architectural portfolio.'

What helps these designers and architects continue to move forward is their adaptability – and their determination to remain innovative where some might retreat into a more insular approach. 'We are rather worried about trying to make traditional national motifs in modern interiors and design on a wave of patriotism – it always looks a bit artificial and vulgar,' say Dmitry Sivak, Alexey Gulesha and Maksym Iuriichuk. 'Luckily, most Ukrainian designers are looking to the future and are not afraid to create interiors in an international style. [In our practice] we aim to offer every client an exceptional and individualised design journey. It is hard to say that our design is traditionally Ukrainian: it's better to say that it is unique and we take pride in highlighting our country in this area.'

'We're always on the move, constantly exploring and learning,' says Artem Zverev. 'We strive for excellence, pushing boundaries to make designs >

EVENTS LIKE THIS ARE LIFE-CHANGING FOR EVERY HUMAN INVOLVED – YOU RETHINK ALL THE VALUES YOU HAVE FORMED DURING LIFE

Iuriichuk of Sivak+Partners, who create interiors and architecture rich in texture and unexpected pops of colour, of the immediate impact of the invasion on their work. 'Aesthetics immediately go on the bottom and safety and function become more important. Events like this are life-changing for every human involved and especially for artists. You rethink all the values you have formed during life, even the basic ones.'

For Artur Sharf and Artem Zverev, co-founders of Yodezeen – a fast-expanding studio whose designs

other countries and continents – something interior designer Rina Lovko, whose work is grounded in sensual minimalism, was particularly grateful for. 'We have experience in managing projects in the USA, Great Britain and Austria because we can work remotely, so we did not feel any significant changes – except in mental health,' she says. 'Sure, this is not a normal life – but we continue to work with projects in Ukraine and all over the world.'

Still, the impact on projects close to home was swift and significant. 'Right

Sivak+Partners' BT project in New York demonstrates how to transform a white-walled developer apartment into a layered, characterful and restful home



that are superior, contemporary and cutting-edge. There's this inherent drive among Ukrainians to evolve and grow continuously. We've mastered the art of assimilating the best from various cultures and intricately blending them. It's probably why our European work approach resonates so well with our American clients.'

Instead of those overt expressions of patriotism, designers are turning to more subtle and considered ways to bring Ukrainian influences into their projects. For Rina Lovko's recent project, a Gallerist's Apartment in Kyiv, the team incorporated elements of the country's abundant cultural heritage into the design. 'We used paintings and sculptures by such well-known Ukrainian artists as Nazar Bilyk, Mykola Kryvenko and Oleksandr Babak,' Rina explains. 'This blending of tradition and modernity [creates] unique and culturally rich design aesthetics.'

'On occasion, we love integrating Ukrainian motifs into our designs,' says Artem Zverev. 'It's not just a nod to our roots – it truly inspires our team. For instance, we recently designed a spa salon concept in Dubai where we melded both Arabic and Ukrainian motifs. Drawing from our rich culture, we incorporated elements like wheat ears and imitations of red clay. It's our way of weaving a tapestry of diverse cultures into a cohesive design narrative.'

Recent events have brought home the importance of design to wellbeing for Sivak+Partners. 'We think that calmness and focus are essential for people nowadays, so the interior design should serve as a safe and calm place,' they say. 'We tend to minimise or completely exclude all the unnecessary distractions from the spaces we create. It should be all about balance and harmony, focus and recovery.'

In spite of it all, there's hope and optimism to be found – for the future of Ukraine, and for its design industry. 'We're ardently hopeful for the war's conclusion and, more importantly, for Ukraine's victory. I genuinely believe that Ukraine will undergo an unprecedented surge of development,' says Artur Sharf. 'The projects that will emerge from our homeland will undoubtedly captivate the global audience.'

'Despite the challenges back home, Ukrainian businesses are making significant strides on the international stage,' agrees Artem Zverev. Yodezeen alone has opened new offices in Dubai and Miami, and is due to open a flagship store at 70 Brompton Road in London, YDF Living Concept, which will showcase furniture, lighting and design brands under the YDF banner – and double up as the studio's London office. 'It will be a testament to Yodezeen's bespoke solutions and our unwavering commitment to serving both design professionals and customers,' he adds.

Rina Lovko takes inspiration from the Ukrainian people to see her through difficult moments. 'We are a very talented nation,' she says. 'The last eight years especially have shown our authenticity and pride for our country. Our history goes back a thousand years: we have our special language, folklore and culture. Ukrainian designers and architects are very creative and hardworking. Everything that was destroyed, we will build 100 times better, more beautiful and more efficient. A few years will pass and we will surprise everyone with what talented people we are.'

— x —
yodezeen.com; rinalovko.com;
sivakpartners.com



DESIGN STARS

In addition to beautiful interiors, Ukrainian designers are creating stunning furnishings – here are some names to know...

1 GUNIA PROJECT

Drawing from folk crafts and inspired by traditional ethnic cultures, Gunia Project is leading the way in beautifully made ceramics and glassware: we're convinced its plates are future collectors' pieces. guniaproject.com; Still Life plate, \$105

2 SVOYA

Exploring interiors, architecture and product design, Svoya is a real triple threat. Produced by none other than Donna, the Ripples coffee table is a favourite of ours. svoya-studio.com; Ripples coffee table, price on request, Svoya; available at Donna Furniture Studio

3 FAINA

The minimalist designs of this furniture, lighting, and decor brand by Yakusha Design tap into the mood of the moment; we love the highly textural Soniah table lamp, available in a range of colours. faina.design. Soniah table lamp, £2,644

4 SIVAK+PARTNERS

As well as spaces, Sivak+Partners designs incredible modern furniture and lighting; its Daily 11 table was designed for a cafe project in Odessa before being released to the world. sivakpartners.com. Daily 11 table with marble countertop, \$1,200

5 DONNA FURNITURE STUDIO

This furniture studio creates unique ranges in collaboration with famous Ukrainian designers, and its Konyky chairs – designed by Natalia Filonenko for Kyiv Design Week – are as playful as they come. donna-furniture.com. Konyky chairs, price on request

