

R.E.D. project

ROOTS OF THE EUROPEAN DESIGN RESEARCH

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AZE Studio – In-between the old and the new

The AZE Design Studio is formed by two designers: Anna Kotowicz-Puszkarewicz (b. 1978), a graduate of Graphic Design at the Strzemiński Academy of Fine Arts in Łódź, and Artur Puszkarewicz (b. 1976), a graduate of the Faculty of Architecture at the Białystok University of Technology.

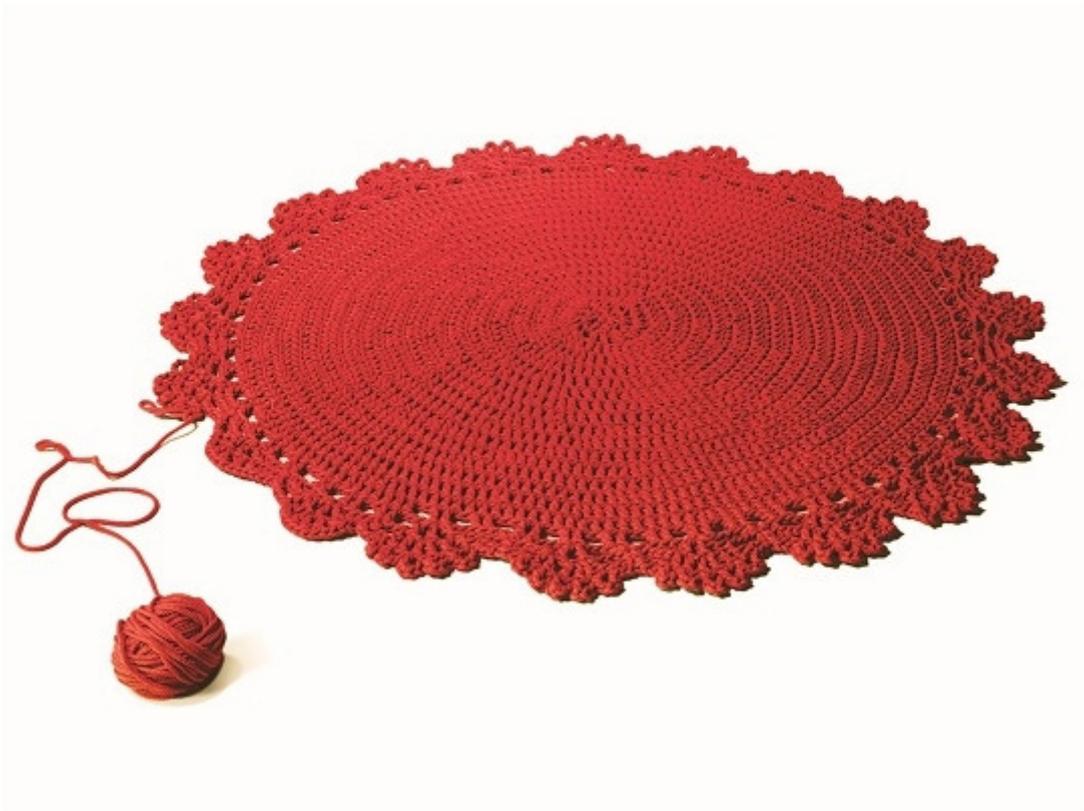
Their design studio, founded in 2006, is mostly concerned with interior furnishings. They left Warsaw in order to get closer to places where traditional folk handicraft still exists. The village of Czeremcha, where they now live, and the Southern Podlasie region inspire them to create objects that are modern, and yet rooted in the handicraft tradition of these parts. They use ancient techniques of weaving, pottery, plaiting, and tanning, which, in turn, makes them look at the things they create in a more in-depth way, closer to nature.

A great advantage of AZE designs is the fact that their authors shun superficial borrowing of ornamental motifs. Drawing on the Podlasie handicraft rudiments, they create their own language and, at the same time, contribute to the maintaining of dying traditional crafts by commissioning local artists to implement their designs.

'AZE is an attempt to find the balance between what is old and what is new. It's the realization of an idea of a dialogue between dying crafts and modern design. We'd like the objects we design to bear all the hallmarks of handicraft and surprise with their quality and modern design. We think that handicraft techniques can be living, effective tools of creation. We believe that continuity is connected with constant evolution, while respect for the past doesn't exclude openness to modern inspirations,' say the artists.

To them, observing nature and men becomes an impulse to create objects combining tradition and the present time. They have an ambition to design functional and practical objects, the form of which conceals or exposes certain qualities, discretely suggesting additional content related to the roots, identity, and hierarchies of values.

1) “Nodus” carpets



The “**Nodus**” (2006) and “**Nodus 2**” carpets are large-scale crocheted tablecloths, drawing on the folk crochet art, including its rich ornamentation and elaborate weaves. The Nodus carpet imitates crocheted tablecloths which – in much smaller sizes – still can be found in the homes of grandmas and grandpas, where they are used as decorations of furniture, protecting it against scratches. The carpets are made with the use of over 1,500 m of a cotton string by a group of craftswomen – BERDO.

The NODUS carpets are a transposition of historical and ethnographic folk crochet. Its rich ornamentation and elaborate weaves were results of highly skilful processing of a simple material, i.e. thread. By changing the material, size and the way structures are formed, the object receives a completely new context, purpose, and extremely surprising aesthetic quality.

MATERIAL: cotton string, polypropylene felt (anti-slip underlay).

COLOURS: yellow, red, green, blue, black.

SIZE: 170 cm in diameter.

2) “Folk” carpet



Designed in 2007, it reached the final of the “Śląska Rzecz 2007” competition organised by Silesian Castle of Art and Enterprise in Cieszyn. It draws on the still alive melting pot, where Byelorussian, Ukrainian and Baltic patterns merge. However, the ornament was simplified and geometricized, referring to early computer patterns. “**Folk**” combines the traditional technique of clothmaking (fulling) with screen printing. It is produced by Sztuka Beskidzka.

3) AYU SOFA



The sofa is an effect of a combination of computer simulations of form with the use of handicraft plaiting techniques. Its steel frame was formed with the use of CNC tube benders. A two-level wavy seat is made by hand of red wicker – a material traditionally used by weavers.

The design makes use of wicker – a basic material in our culture, which is socially desired and offers great aesthetic potential. Soft lines of the sofa were created thanks to computer simulations, but they also make use of the natural pliability of wicker.

4) “TOD” ceramic set



A bit of cuisine, religion, fair, and totems. Everything is mixed and ambiguous. This is a description of the multi-cultural landscape of Eastern Poland, which inspired the creators of the “Smak różnorodności” (“Flavour of diversity”) seasoning set. ‘Everything is mixed and ambiguous just like the Podlasie cuisine,’ say the designers from AZE Design. ‘The shapes of ceramic elements of the set resemble temples from the Białystok panorama. Only a synagogue was substituted by a matzeva, as the only traces of the Jewish community are numerous, often neglected and destroyed, Jewish cemeteries.’