

Panorama - Up-and-coming Czech designer: The only limitations are in our heads

[2015-01-22] By Daniela Lazarová

Michaela Hořejší is a young Czech designer whose ambition it is to bring a breath of fresh air into people's homes. Her design studio Natureza provides customized interior design solutions that combine quality, beauty and a simple elegance. But, talking about her work she says that sometimes it is an uphill struggle to make her clients accept an unconventional solution. When I met up with Michaela I started by asking about her love of design and Nature.



Michaela Hořejší, photo: archive of Michaela Hořejší

“I wanted to live my dream and my dream was to do interior design. So I studied at the design school and now I work as an interior designer. I recently designed a pillow and sheet line with motifs inspired by Nature.”

Those are two things that you love and have combined –interior design and Nature.

Can you explain what kind of things you do and where you seek inspiration?

“I like nice surroundings, generally. I love simple, useful and beautiful things and all that you can find in Nature. It is important for me to feel the magic of space and I want to bring Nature into the interior.”

When you say that you have a line of pillow cases – what kind of motifs do you chose – I noticed things like cobwebs and dew drops...how do you go about selecting them?

“I spend a lot of time in Nature and I like to focus on details. So I have a concrete idea in my head, but then I need a photo. And when I searched the internet for suitable photos of the given motif I could not contact any of the authors – except one, Frank, who is now my colleague from England.”

So he takes photos of what you need?

“Yes, I say to him that I need as many pictures as possible say of a cone and he'll send me a hundred pictures of a cone. From that I will select one or two, sometimes nothing because it is necessary to capture the correct perspective, light, mood etc.



Photo: Natureza

And then I process the picture I want with my graphic designer –and we spend hours on that.”

And is there a market for such products –do you feel that you have found a gap on the market?

“I hope that, in a certain sense, yes. I know that our market is full of interior decor and textile goods but most of them are made abroad. I have not seen an original Czech collection with more patterns which would give customers a bigger choice.”

As a young designer –what do you think of the way that Czechs furnish their flats? Do they think about what they want their flat to look like or do they just go to a big furniture store such as IKEA or SCONTO, choose what's affordable and somehow put it together?

“Unfortunately, yes, they tend to buy everything in one store, they just visit one or two big furniture shops. There they find lots of furniture, relatively cheap furniture that has been selling for a long time. The problem is that it is not original and you see it everywhere, everyone has the same pieces. I think this is a typically Czech thing –getting what the neighbors have. Interior design does not have any roots in the Czech Republic.

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Is this not changing? Is there not now a young generation of people who want to have something other than their neighbors, who want something original? Or maybe they just don't have the money for it?



Photo: Natureza

“I’m afraid that’s not the reason. I do not think that a nice interior is about money, that a beautiful interior must necessarily cost a lot. I think that the limits are only in our heads. Interior design started developing just a few years ago and so we are at the start.”

So if you were to say what the typical Czech flat looks like ...is it cluttered with lots of things that don't really go together?

“Yes, exactly, too many objects, small objects – that is typical of the middle-aged and older generation. Also, I think that people simply don't have enough inspiration.”

Are they scared of using too bright colors?

“Exactly, exactly.”

So what are the most common mistakes that people make in furnishing their house or flat?

“They buy everything in one big furniture store –one or two stores at best – so then everyone has the same thing. And their only get inspiration from catalogues.”

Are Czechs conservative in furnishing their flats then?

“Yes, they select traditional things and they do not have enough inspiration in real life. When they go to the neighbors they do not see anything special – something bold, innovative, elegant solutions – none of that. Sometimes, yes, but only very rarely.”

When you are asked to design a flat do you try to persuade the owner to follow your suggestions, to be bolder, use brighter colors than they would otherwise?



Photo: Natureza

“I try...I use a graphic programmer of course, because I know they have to visualize it. But they say “no, I’m sorry I don't really see how that would work. I can't imagine it. My neighbor has this and I would like the same sort of thing.””

So do you at least try to encourage people to use lighting in a different way in flats?

“Of course! In my presentation I never use a light in the middle of the room. But all the time I get asked –why don't we put the light in the middle of the room, the cables are there. It is difficult to convince them to choose an unconventional solution. Though sometimes it is OK, we are taking small steps...”

When you say that a nicely furnished flat need not be expensive, how do you suggest going about it?

“Visit your cellar/attic for interesting stuff and get brushes and paints. You can find very nice pieces of furniture in basements and all you need to do is renovate it, use paint and have a good idea. I live similarly myself. I do not have very expensive furniture. I ask my grandmother if she has something old, something special and I renovate it. I will buy one expensive piece and combine it with the renovated items. That is how someone can go about it if they want to furnish their place in an original way –and they do not have to go to one big furniture store. ”



Photo: European Commission

For people who want something special, who know what they want and are ready to invest time and money – are there enough designers and select designer shops in the country where they can buy the items they want?

“I think that we have a big choice. For example Vinohradská street is full of small décor shops, yes, they are expensive, but some are not so expensive and as I said, we can always scour the cellar or visit a second hand shop selling old furniture. So I think there is a big choice but it is time to find it and develop an interest in it.”

So your advice is sales and antique shops, the right materials and the right colors.....

“Yes, you know when I renovated my flat I spent two months working on it every single day. I didn’t have enough money, but I had an idea. So I bought a lot of paints and brushes and old furniture and asked my grandmother and my mother for old stuff and I put together everything! ”

And how long does the average Czech take to furnish their flat?

“One weekend! (laughs)”

What will it take for this to change – how long do you predict it will take?

“Years and years, we are at the beginning. When I compare the Czech Republic and Canada where I lived –those are totally different worlds. “



Photo: Natureza

What is it that you like most about the way that people in Canada furnish their homes? What would you like to see here?

“I can’t say exactly. I think they are just more interested in it. They are more creative and they put a lot of energy into it because they really want to live in a nice place. I think that Czech people think that a nice interior is white, expensive and shiny, but that’s not right. A nice interior is a place with atmosphere.”