

STYLE & SUBSTANCE

*Battersea resident
Dorota Szelagowska is
putting new European
design on the map*

Words: MADELEINE HOWELL

Dorota Szelagowska is the founder of Manufactured Culture, a curated collection of objects of cultural value. We caught up to find out more...

What led you to set up Manufactured Culture?

I've always been a design enthusiast and I decided to launch an e-store promoting designers from Central and Eastern Europe, who were virtually unknown.

What is unique about it?

Manufactured Culture is a platform for showcasing new works by independent studios. It offers a glimpse of a different sensibility and the discovery of forgotten means of manufacturing. For example, the RM58 fiberglass chair, designed in 1958 by yacht engineer Roman Modzelewski, was so ahead of its time that it wasn't put into production until 2012 (of course, the political situation played a part too).

Why is it important to preserve traditional methods?

It's so important in an age of utilitarian mass production, where client and designer contact is often impossible. I make an effort to meet the designers of the products we sell and I've developed a good



working relationship with them. Traditional skills make for unique products which are more valuable. Even everyday objects can be replaced by ones we can see as art.

Would you say that we don't hear enough about Central and Eastern European design?

Eastern Europe was famous for its furniture, ceramics, glassware and graphics before World War II. Even under Communism, the flame didn't die. Now, they're being unearthed again.

Could you talk me through your bestselling products?

The playful Maria S Chandelier is a homage to Marie Skłodowska Curie, who was Polish and the first ever woman to win a Nobel prize.



It uses laboratory tubes around the light source. The Tafla mirrors by Oscar Zieta are made from stainless steel using a new innovative technology called FIDU. Two shapes are cut from steel sheets and welded around the edges and inflated into a 3D object. The result is a collection of truly beautiful mirrors, metal furniture and unusual accessories.

Bolko is another great example of supreme craftsmanship. It's a response to the mass production of furniture, which renders natural materials a forgotten dream. Each chair is made from high quality oak and finished by hand by a skilled carpenter.

We are also introducing Comforty to UK market – a leading brand of upholstered furniture with an international team of designers on board including Alessandro Mendini. Mendini has made a set of stunning coffee tables from different types of inlaid wood, resulting in a composition with organic feel and abstract figures.

What is Constructivism?

Constructivism is artistic expression characterized by geometric abstraction. The principle was to move away from typical representations of reality. It originated in Russia in 1913, paving the way for other major movements like Bauhaus and

De Stijl. We have lots of products inspired by Constructivism and its simple, abstract forms, including a cube-like tea and coffee set and rectangular, block form Domus (liquid and dry condiment containers) by Modus Design and a beautiful Mond Décor dinner set designed by renowned ceramicist Marek Cecular.

I think it's important to preserve traditional methods of production

What do you love about living in Battersea?

I love Battersea Park, which is right next door to my apartment. I enjoy the proximity to the shops and the energy of Chelsea, as well as the ever growing sophistication of Battersea itself.

My favourite shop is the Hemisphere Gallery on Lower Sloane Street. The owner Raymond Paynter is incredibly knowledgeable about mid-century furniture. You can find rare originals there such as armchairs by Wenger and Juhl, Nakashima tables or even original Grand Prix chairs by Jacobsen with wooden legs, which have been out of production for decades. **r**

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