

“It’s amazing being part of a community of like-minded people”

Designer Andrei Ignia doesn’t just transform vintage objects – he’s also helping to transform his city’s creative scene

WORDS MONICA SUMA



ANDREI’S DESIGNS repurpose vintage or antique items into one-off lamps that double as works of art



When is a light not just a light? The answer, in the Romanian city of Iasi, is when it’s also a work of recycled art. “I’ve been making things since I was 10 years old,” says Andrei Ignia, the founder of Bulb27, a project of applied art on industrial and antique objects, resulting in beautiful one-off, repurposed lamps. Whether it’s using shuttles from the textile industry of the former G.D.R. or bugle horns salvaged from Ford Model T cars from the 1920s, Andrei transforms vintage items into lamps, and in doing so is raising the bar of Romanian design.

The idea first struck in 2011, while Andrei was studying for a master’s degree at George Enescu University in Iasi. A competition launched by Red Bull, entitled ‘Art of Can’, challenged students to turn a used can into something beautiful, and Andrei’s creation – a reimagining of Michelangelo’s *Creation of Adam* – was voted one of the best. Encouraged, he began thinking about what else he could make by recycling old objects,

and decided to focus his work on lighting, because “lamps serve a double function: décor and functionality.”

Today, like many innovators, 31-year-old Andrei is a perfectionist and does everything himself, from the sourcing to the manufacturing (including adding or rewiring the electrics) of his pieces, which are sold in a Bucharest design store, Dizainar, and also at





international design fairs such as London's Clerkenwell Design Week. But it is hunting for materials to repurpose into lamps, he says, that gives him most satisfaction. "I go to a lot of flea markets – even when I've been out the night before, or when I'm on holiday," he proudly admits. Some of his favourite pieces come from his travels, including to London's Portobello Road or Madrid's El Rastro. "The Grande Braderie de Lille is fantastic too," he adds. "Western European flea markets are as much about socialising as they are selling. It's amazing being part of a community of like-minded people."

That sense of community is something that Andrei craved so much that he has helped establish Hubrica, the first creative hub of its kind in Iasi. "It all began in May 2016, during the European Night of the Museums," he says. "I visited Iasi's former Moldomobila furniture factory, and fell in love with the space." Together with Hubrica's cofounders, Alexandru Paicu and Bogdan Curelariu, Andrei decided the space would be the perfect place for creatives to work and collaborate in.

Three more Romanian innovators



DARE TO RUG

Winner of Product Designer of the Year at the Elle Deco Romanian Design Awards, Dare to Rug is a Bucharest brand selling contemporary hand-tufted rugs inspired by folkloric motifs from the rural regions of Romania.
daretorug.com



AMBASADA

Housed in a former hat factory, Ambasada is the first hub in Timisoara aimed for the creative industries and NGOs, launched with the support of Plai festival. Ambasada also employs people from disadvantaged communities.
plai.ro/ambasada



LOVED THINGS

A Craiova-based creative studio offering minimalist solutions for interior design, Loved Things retails one-off abstract sculptures made of wood, created by visual artist Florin Constantinescu.
loved-things.com

HUBRICA IS A creative coworking space in an old Iasi factory building



Today, a dozen or so artists have joined the venture: architects, product designers, jewellery designers, painters, illustrators and more. Even the popular local radio station, Radio Hit, just moved in.

Envisioned as an ecosystem for creatives, the industrial renewal project – in some ways, a larger scale replication of Andrei's Bulb27 work, giving something old a new purpose – has already ticked many boxes. Since its launch in October 2016, it's become a one-stop shop for many businesses, and a generator of ideas between the artists sharing the space.

Unlike other computer-based coworking spaces in Iasi – a solid tech hub in Romania – Hubrica also serves an educational role as cultural catalyst, holding a series of workshops and events. Recently, Hubrica hosted the second annual instalment of The Gathering, which saw 50 street artists from all over Europe collectively paint 1,000m² of the workspace. Next, in early 2018, will be Hala Fix, which aims to create the biggest independent theatre in Romania. "That's the advantage of a hub," says Andrei. "It's a fertile playground for everyone."
bulb27.ro

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