

“These motifs weren’t meant to gather dust in museums. They were made to be worn”

Bulgarian accessories label Shevitza unearths forgotten textile traditions and weaves them into contemporary fashion items

WORDS DELLE CHAN



HUSBAND AND WIFE PETAR AND GERGANA (above) founded Shevitza to revive traditional Bulgarian folk motifs and reimagine them on modern accessories



How would you like to wear a piece of age-old Balkan history? That’s the ethos behind Shevitza, a Sofia-based accessories label producing eye-catching scarves, blankets and hats that give traditional Bulgarian design motifs a contemporary update.

The brand was dreamt up in 2013 by husband-and-wife duo Petar Stankov and Gergana Stankova, who noticed a gap in the market for quality Bulgarian souvenirs. A graphic designer by trade, Gergana was struck by the intricate embroidery found on traditional

folk costumes and decided that their motifs would translate well onto contemporary fashion accessories. She set about researching Balkan textile traditions, studying books and visiting ethnographic museums for inspiration.

“While traditional Bulgarian motifs are very geometric and have a strict rhythm, they do vary a lot across regions. For example, those in the south-west are very ornate and complex, while the ones in the north-east are very graphic and minimalistic,” she explains. “They have such a rich history... these motifs were never meant

PHOTOS: ANETA MANOVA, VASIL GERMANOV

to gather dust in museums and books. They were made to be worn.”

Instead of merely replicating the old patterns, the duo decided to reimagine them for a modern audience, digitising and deconstructing each motif to create new shapes and silhouettes. These are then printed onto silk scarves and knitted into woolly hats and blankets.

“In the beginning, I didn’t really have a direction design-wise. I just created things that seemed nice to look at,” says Gergana, who leads product development (Petar, an economics professor, crunches the numbers). “Then, three years ago, I started trying to find new angles and concepts.”

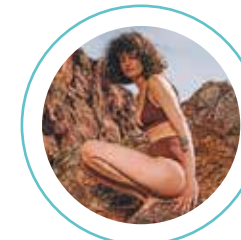
This exercise culminated in a range of abstract earth-toned prints inspired not by traditional embroidery motifs per se, but by the very anatomy of their stitches. “It was a huge departure from what we had been doing,” says Gergana, “and I figured that was where I should be going – digging deeper and finding inspiration in the underlying layers. I’ve been enjoying the design process all the more because of it.”

In a similar vein, the brand’s Spring 2019 collection, that’s due to launch this March, pays homage to the vibrant colour palette of Bulgaria’s regional costumes.



Made in Bulgaria

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It’s not just Shevitza’s aesthetic that has evolved; their product range is constantly expanding too. The new collection this spring will include a series of minimalist faux-leather bags, with clean lines inspired by the geometry of traditional motifs.

“We’re aware that the Bulgarian market is very price-sensitive, so we try to maintain a balance – offering a range of more affordable items while experimenting with a few select luxury products,” says Gergana.

While Bulgaria isn’t yet a major player in the global design scene, Gergana feels that the capital’s craft industry is slowly but surely getting on the fashion radar. “Sofia is still somewhat off the beaten track, but it’s becoming more popular – it feels like Prague at the beginning of the 90s,” she enthuses. “Plus, the fact that you can be the first person launching something here is a real incentive for designers. There’s a nice air of revival in the city.” shevitza.eu/en

✈ Wizz Air flies to Sofia