



UKRAINE RISING

By Masha Erman and Robert Klanten

What you will discover in the following pages is nothing short of extraordinary. *Ukraine Rising* showcases the pinnacle of creative culture in Ukraine, featuring talents and examples drawn from the fields of architecture, interior design, product and graphic design, crafts, illustration, visual culture, fashion, and fine art.

With the collapse of the Soviet regime in the early '90s, Ukrainians found themselves in a position of reinvention. The somber reality and monotonous certainty of Soviet rule vanished, giving way to the exhilarating unpredictability that freedom, aspiration, self-determination, and prosperity bring about.

At that time, there was no established Ukrainian creative industry—no network of design schools, influential producers, visionary entrepreneurs, existing value chains, marketing strategies, or domestic and international markets for Ukrainian creations. Everything had to be built from the ground up by a young generation eager to live life on their own terms and pursue their dreams.

A country whose most valuable resource is its creative youth must be radical, nimble, and innovative to thrive. And Ukraine has been just that: within a remarkably short span of time, the country has built a reputation among the design, tech, and start-up communities as a hub of exceptional innovation. Over the course of just three decades, Ukraine has transformed into a veritable gold mine of creativity. Individuals who previously had limited access to creative education or the

necessary resources are now showcasing their creations at international fashion and design shows and art exhibitions. Paradoxically, this Ukrainian creative evolution seems to have been nurtured by a perpetual state of uncertainty and political turmoil. The Ukrainian spirit has the extraordinary ability to transform oppression and deprivation into powerful sources of creativity and innovation. This serves as a testament to unyielding courage: in any society under an authoritarian regime—whether the Soviet Union or a modern-day dictatorship—creativity becomes the most potent weapon in the fight for self-determination and freedom. Engaging, persuasive, and contagious, culture has the power to change minds, shape politics, and even spark revolution, as was witnessed in 2004 and 2014. Today, Ukraine continues to make its mark on the global stage, with its audacious spirit and resilience acting as a perpetual rebuke to despotic systems around the world.

This distinctive subculture, born out of political upheaval and financial hardship, has learned to harness the power of creativity and to adapt various design elements from around the world. In the process they've forged new directions and national trends from scratch—often with very limited financial means. One could even argue that as soon as budgets come into play, creativity confines itself to the resources available. However, when financial resources disappear, so do the creative limits they impose. Within the following pages, you will witness the result of this intricate set of circumstances: the remnants