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**Title:** Cross continental

**Lead:** Structured in moody Moscow; coloured by sunny Sydney. Denis Zubkov's vibrant fabrics are ready to turn our chairs, cafés and work-stations into exuberant artworks.

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It's a long way from Moscow to Sydney, or from mathematics to fabric design. Perhaps it's these fearless moves in Russian-born Denis Zubkov's life that give his designs such vibrancy.

Zubkov's first range under his label Lalazu has motifs inspired by Cubism, Australian nature and the architectural jumble of inner Sydney. Colours are warm and cellophane-clear. The merriment is organized into stripes, swirls and digital grids, revealing his fascination with orderly Swedish design and the industrial Russian landscapes vaunted by 1930's Constructivist artists. "I love chaos and colour, but I need to apply logic to everything," he admits.

Zubkov's designs are largely hand-worked to ensure rhythm and flow, his mathematician's finesse evident in the computer-enhanced synthesis of elements. "I build design 'bricks' and arrange them like in maths. After, that I rely on my artistic ability. Sometimes formulas make beautiful graphs, but you need a creative touch to know what looks good," he explains.

Zubkov revels in the artistic yet affordable touch fabrics can bring to interiors. "Fabrics can create playful, warm environments and give choices; it's like being a child in a roomful of toys," he says. Last December he co-created a window display for vintage Scandinavian furniture store Mix[d] in Sydney, using a gold-and-nutmeg print for a luminous panel, deckchair cover and '50s-style lampshade. The collaboration with Mix[d] owner Don Allinson illustrates Zubkov's design procedures. "I love working with clients; customizing fabrics for individual chairs or entire spaces in cafés, hotels or offices," he enthuses.

The softly spoken 33-year-old graduated in Applied Mathematics and first worked as a computer programmer. A growing interest in art led to his

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self-taught entry into design, and flux has defined his life since. On his second date with now-wife Olga, the pair drove 1,200km to the Black Sea on a whim. They moved to Sydney not long afterwards and Zubkov completed his design studies at the University of New South Wales in 2000. The couple's six-month-old baby daughter fires his creativity most these days, as do Sydney's bright vistas and markets. "I feel inspired here. Russia is good for analysis or thinking, but Australia's sunshine is vitamins for the brain," says Zubkov.

His fabrics can be ordered by the meter and delivered within two weeks of commissioning. The current range of thirty designs on canvas, cotton drill and stretch denim is dominated by tangerine, electric blue, lime and red, offset against ripe naturals or black. There are intimately-scaled designs for cushions or bags, and undulating ones for walls or corporate sofas. A new collection will be available by March 2004. Judging by the sneak previews, it'll again cement Zubkov's reputation for elegance, savvy and invention. For details, see [www.lalazu.com](http://www.lalazu.com) or phone Lalazu (02-9331-0623).

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