

Board designers and shapers have often been tinkering away with boards for years and years. Then along came kitesurfing and a whole new type of ride landed on their doorstep. These are the guys who work tirelessly around the clock throughout the year agonising over the perfect flex and the perfect plan shape. They do this in order to make your day at the beach as good as it can be.

Meet the board designers...



EYE OF A BOARD DESIGNER

PHOTO COURTESY OF CHRISTIAN BLACK



NAME: Arek Jerzelkowski
AGE: 26
DESIGNER FOR: Xenon Boards
YEARS DESIGNING BOARDS: 3
PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: Competitor in kitesurfing national events, World Cup judge
LIVES: Poland
LOVES: The feeling when the new project is being born
HATES: Injuries, unclear rules



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PHOTOS COURTESY OF XENON

First up how did you get into kite board design and what qualifications did you gain in order to be able to do the job?

My professional technical education gave me insight into CNC machine processes.

When I started training freestyle hard i used to brake several boards a year. Often I had no choice and repaired them myself

Do you use CAD programs to design boards or do you shape them buy hand first?

I use AutoCad. It would be impossible to make our boards by hand in the technology we apply.

Can you describe briefly the process that goes into creating a new board for the season?

After the concept is born we make a few prototypes which are initially tested mainly by me.

Next we pick out THE models and hand them over to R&D team bearing in mind different levels and styles they represent.

Meanwhile we work out the details the graphic design is matched to the specific idea behind each board.

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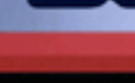
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Do you kitesurf yourself or do you rely on the R&D team riders for feedback?
Both. The opinions from riders of different styles and levels matter a lot to me. I also ride myself especially at the first stage of developing boards.

How many shapes do you go through before you are happy that a board is finished and ready for production?
It depends how well aimed was the initial concept. Usually a few of each size.

Do you shape the prototype boards yourself or do you send CAD designs off to the factories in China?
The final project goes to our factory in Europe where the prototypes are manufactured.

How long would you say it takes to go from the design concept to the finished product in a shop?
If we are talking about the new shape, I suppose it takes 6 -12 months.

What is the most important skill a designer needs do you think?
Basically you must have THE vision.

It also helps if you are a bit determined, goal-oriented and have a drive to see your project through.

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Do you have to work within budgets to create new shapes and designs, or can you call on limitless supplies of luxury materials?

There is no such thing as limitless budget but we want our boards to be loaded as much as possible.

What would you say is the overall cost for designing a whole new board from start to finish?

Confidential :)

If I told you, you would have to "burn it after reading"

Are you responsible for shaping a particular style of board, say freestyle, or do you work with all shapes including wave and course boards for your brand?

Right now we shape only twin tip boards but we plan to expand one day

Do you ride boards from other brands to see how they work as well or do you keep focused on your own direction and plans?

I stick to my own projects but as it happens our intelligence services do not laze around :)

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Have you ever discuss ideas with other shapers or do you play your cards close to your chest?

So far I haven't had a chance to share my ideas with other shapers. I tend to keep my ace up my sleeve to the last moment.

Kite surfboards seem to be becoming more and more popular, do you shape them specifically for kiting or do you stick to a more traditional surfboard shape.

Now I shape surfboards only for fun.

Can you tell us a little bit about your favourite board from the 2009 line up and why you like it so much?

Laluz 132 for the overall performance in all conditions and the feeling of lightness it gives you

Which is your favourite board of all time and why?

For now it would be Laluz - the last one I designed, because most of the features I look for in a board are in there.

If you weren't shaping boards what would you be doing?

Probably what I am already doing - judging the world cup and running pro ride clinics. Perhaps I would be a pilot as well...

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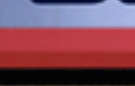
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What is the best thing about being a board shaper?

Lack of standstill, variety, I enjoy doing something that in the end brings people lot of fun

And what is the worst?

No wind while having brand new shapes ready to be tested!

Thanks for taking the time to speak to us, we really appreciate it!

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