

OUR MISSION & FOUNDER



FOUNDER & CEO, CONNIE K. DUCKWORTH

OUR MISSION

ARZU STUDIO HOPE is an innovative model of social entrepreneurship that empowers Afghan women by providing fair-labor, artisan-based employment and access to education and healthcare.

ARZU, which means "hope" in Dari, is an example of a "for-benefit" corporation model, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization that uses private sector practices to create jobs in rural villages in Afghanistan and produces export quality products. Net proceeds from the sales of ARZU's flagship products, ARZU STUDIO HOPE rugs and Peace Cord™ bracelets, directly benefit Afghans in the form of fair wages and social benefits, rather than accruing to investors or shareholders.

From a starting point of only 30 carpet weavers, ARZU's work today impacts the lives of tens of thousands of Afghans, providing private sector jobs and direct social benefits in seven rural villages in Bamyan and Faryab provinces. Central to ARZU's approach is our Social Contract with weaver families. ARZU agrees to pay women the market rate for weaving plus up to a 50% quality incentive bonus. In exchange for the extra income, families must agree to send all children under the age of 15 to school full-time, to allow women in the household to attend ARZU literacy classes and to allow ARZU to assist pregnant women and newborns in obtaining pre-and post-natal care.

OUR FOUNDER

Ms. Connie K. Duckworth serves pro bono as Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of ARZU, Inc., which she founded in 2004 to promote economic growth in desperately poor rural villages in Afghanistan, where little opportunity exists. Ms. Duckworth is a retired Partner and Managing Director of Goldman, Sachs, & Co., and was named the first woman sales and trading partner in the firm's history during her 20 year career from 1981-2001.

Ms. Duckworth is currently a Trustee of Northwestern Mutual Life and a Director of Russell Investment Group and Steelcase, Inc., in addition to serving on several philanthropic boards. She is a member of the U.S.-Afghan Women's Council, a public/private partnership created by the U.S. State Department and past Chair of the Committee of 200, the organization of leading women entrepreneurs and corporate business executives in the U.S. Ms. Duckworth is the recipient of numerous awards for her work transforming the lives of Afghan women, including The Skoll Foundation Award for Social Entrepreneurship in 2008 and The Wharton School Dean's Medal in 2011, the first woman to receive this honor. She holds an M.B.A. from The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania and a B.A. from the University of Texas.

"I founded ARZU STUDIO HOPE after my first visit to Afghanistan. While I had no experience in the field of international development, what I did have was a firmly held point of view that a job is the universal enabler of hope for a better future. Work leads to dignity; dignity leads to peace." - Connie K. Duckworth

ARZU STUDIO HOPE
EXPEDITIONARY ECONOMICS

SCALING ALTERNATIVE ENERGY
BRIQUETTES-FUEL PRODUCTION >

In 2010, ARZU piloted a training program in alternative fuel production for women apprentices, teaching them how to turn waste paper into compact briquettes that can be burned for heat with a 30% lower carbon footprint than virgin wood. Working in teams of four, the women produced 70,800 briquettes in the initial five-month period. By sourcing shredded paper under contract from the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, ARZU repurposed over 12 tons of waste, otherwise destined for a landfill. Starting in May 2011, ARZU tripled the size of the program and produced 400,000 briquettes over six months - enough briquettes to heat the ARZU Women's Community Center, ARZU office, and the ARZU bakery for the entire winter. This effort saved approximately \$5,000 that will be spent on social programs for ARZU beneficiaries.



INNOVATION IN HOUSING
< SUPERADOBE CONSTRUCTION

In June 2011, ARZU launched an exciting new "low-tech" alternative livelihood pilot project—the "Superadobe" method of earth-building construction. Teams of village men were trained to construct low-cost homes utilizing on-site dirt and sand, locally sourced sandbags and barbed wire, and a locally produced stabilizer. The end result stays cool in the summer, warm in the winter, is impervious to rain and bullets and even satisfies California's seismic standards. This new initiative aims at alleviating the housing crisis caused by poverty and seasonal flood devastation in Bamyan. Superadobe is ARZU's first micro-business targeted at training and employing unskilled men and is a model that ARZU believes can be replicated across Afghanistan.

CLEAN WATER SOLUTIONS
WATER FILTER PROGRAM >

In partnership with DACAAR, a Kabul-based NGO, ARZU trained women apprentices to make bio-sand water filters. These concrete boxes, resembling beehives, effectively remove 98% of water-borne pathogens to create a safe drinking water supply, which helps reduce disease. The filters are distributed, along with a small sample of Dr. Bronner's soap (donated by the company for the purpose of this program) to public facilities. Villagers now have access to drinking clean water at schools, clinics, mosques, government buildings, ARZU's Women Community Center and Garden Center, and the orphanages in the three villages ARZU serves (Dragon Valley, Domjoy, and Shash Pul), as well as the provincial capital, Bamyan City.



SUSTAINABLE NUTRITION
< HORTICULTURE AND FOOD PROCESSING

In 2010, ARZU constructed a community garden and piloted a horticulture-training program in Dragon Valley, Bamyan to address chronic malnutrition in the local populations through sustainable nutrition intervention. Local women, working in a co-op fashion, implemented best practices learned in workshops for soil cultivation, seed planting, plot tending, and harvesting. Women also experimented with two low-tech solar dehydrators to preserve excess produce. ARZU tripled the size of this program during the summer of 2011 to expand the benefits of this program to the greater community.



Nancy Vincent McClelland Merit Award ASID, 2011

The American Society of Interior Designers (ASID) selected ARZU STUDIO HOPE as an inaugural recipient of the 2011 Nancy Vincent McClelland Merit Award. ARZU was honored as a company that “significantly contributed to improving the environment for humanity through design-related activities or projects, oriented toward affecting the global human environment and benefiting the community at large.”



Gold Award Winner, Best New Product - Lifestyle and Social Impact Edison Awards, 2011

ARZU STUDIO HOPE was named the Gold Award Winner for 2011 Edison Best New Product Award in the Lifestyle & Social Impact category. The Edison Awards recognize a company’s commitment to “remain in the forefront of innovation, creativity and ingenuity in the global economy.” ARZU was honored alongside many notable companies winning in other categories including Apple, Inc; Starbucks Coffee Co.; The Coca-Cola Company; and Ford Motor Company.



Best of 2009, Interior Design, 2009

ARZU STUDIO HOPE + Designtex “Common Threads” collection was awarded “Best of 2009” in the rug category from a field of top contenders including Koko: Architecture + Design, Odegard Inc, and The Nought Collection. This preeminent design competition recognizes superior design projects and products in all categories.



The Best of NeoCon NeoCon, 2009

The “Common Threads” contemporary collection, a partnership between Designtex and ARZU STUDIO HOPE, won the Editors’ Choice and Special Innovation awards for The Best of NeoCon, 2009. Designtex is a respected leader in applied surface solutions for the commercial interior design and architectural market.



Skoll Award for Social Entrepreneurship Skoll Foundation, 2008

Former President Jimmy Carter presented Connie K. Duckworth with the internationally prestigious Skoll Award for Social Entrepreneurship, which recognizes the most innovative and sustainable approaches to resolving the world’s most urgent social issues.

ARZU STUDIO HOPE
AS SEEN IN

MAGAZINES



The New York Times
INVESTOR'S BUSINESS DAILY



NEWSPAPERS
New York Times
Investor's Business Daily
Financial Times
USA Today

Los Angeles Times



ONLINE
LA Times blog
Apartment Therapy
Casa Sugar
Second Shelters



BROADCAST/RADIO
BBC Radio
National Public Radio

NOTABLE COMMERCIAL PROJECTS

Oracle, Reston, Virginia - 2011

Fox Architects - Reston, Virginia

Ewing Marian Kauffman Foundation, Kansas City, Missouri - 2011

ARZU STUDIO HOPE - Chicago, Illinois

Marines' Memorial Club and Hotel, San Francisco, California - 2011

ARZU STUDIO HOPE - Chicago, Illinois

Woodruff Foundation, Atlanta, Georgia - 2011

ASD, Inc. - Atlanta, Georgia

Russell Investments, Seattle, Washington - 2010

NBBJ Architects - Seattle, Washington

The Ludlow Hotel Lobby, New York, New York - 2010

Ryall Porter Sheridan Architects - New York, New York

GraniteStar Capital, Lake Forest, Illinois - 2009

ARZU STUDIO HOPE - Chicago, Illinois

Hotel Lobby, Miami, Florida - 2009

Thomas Schoos Design - West Hollywood, California

Steelcase CEO's Office, Grand Rapids, Michigan - 2009

Collaboration between Designtex & ARZU, "The Common Threads Collection"

Bank of Tokyo, Chicago, Illinois - 2009

Partners by Design - Chicago, Illinois

222 Main, Salt Lake City, Utah - 2009

SOM - San Francisco, California

Afghan Embassy, Tokyo, Japan - 2008

ARZU STUDIO HOPE - Chicago, Illinois

US Embassy, Helsinki, Finland - 2008

ARZU STUDIO HOPE - Chicago, Illinois

NoVo Foundation, New York, New York - 2007

Ryall Porter Sheridan Architects - New York, New York

Pompei A.D., New York, New York - 2007

Pompei A.D. - New York, New York

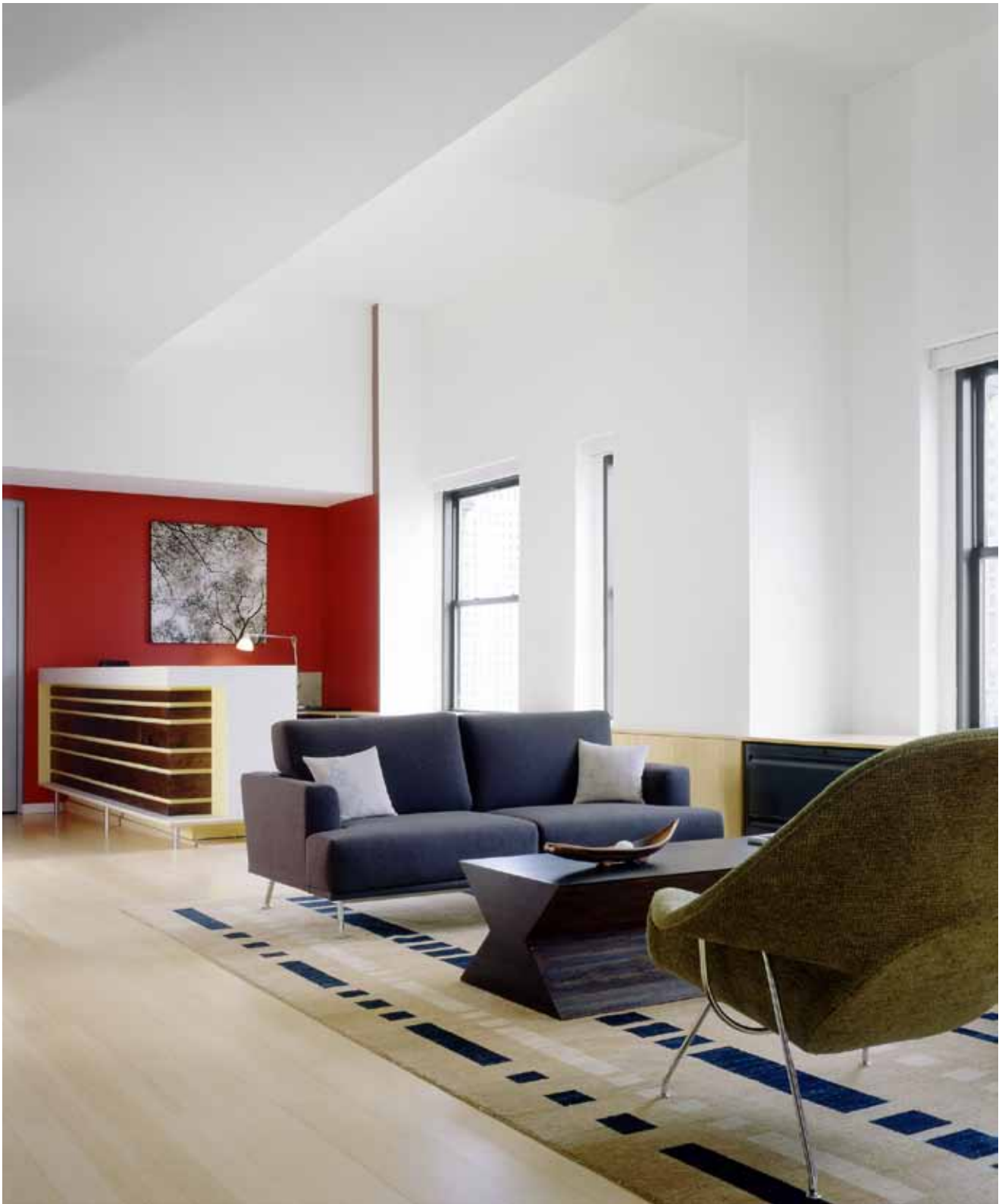
Swedish Covenant Hospital, Chicago, Illinois - 2007

ARZU STUDIO HOPE - Chicago, Illinois

Louis Dreyfus Corporation Board Room, New York, New York - 2006

ARZU STUDIO HOPE - Chicago, Illinois

ARZU STUDIO HOPE
NOTABLE COMMERCIAL PROJECTS



NoVo Foundation, New York, New York - Rug Shown: Renewal
photo credit: John Hall for Ryall Porter Sheridan Architects

ARZU STUDIO HOPE
NOTABLE COMMERCIAL PROJECTS



Collaboration with Designtex, The Common Threads Collection (Winner of Best of 2009, Rug Category, Interior Design Magazine)
Rug Shown: Humanity, pictured in Colesse showroom - Chicago, Illinois



Russell Investments, Seattle, Washington - Rug Shown: Confidence II



Afghan Embassy, Tokyo, Japan - Rug Shown: Kindness

ARZU STUDIO HOPE
RUG COLLECTIONS



HOPE Tribal Heirloom



ELATION Modern + Contemporary



VIRTUE Classic Traditional

MODERN + CONTEMPORARY



WELLNESS III

CLASSIC TRADITIONAL



TRANQUILITY

TRIBAL HEIRLOOM



SYMMETRY



RADIANCE



EMBRACE



INSPIRATION BORDER



MERGE



WISH



PREVAIL

RUG GUIDE



RADIANCE
Modern + Contemporary
size: 5'0" x 2'3"
(shown cropped)

STEP ONE : DESIGN

To begin, the design must be scaled properly and the colors selected from the approved color palette.



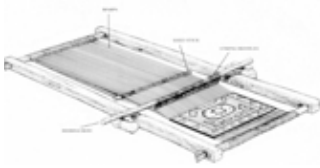
STEP TWO : GRAPHING

Once the design is finalized and the rug is ordered, the scaled artwork goes to our Master Grapher to be graphed. The rug is drawn in its full size; one box represents one knot. There are two major ways to graph the rug: 1. The whole rug is graphed, because there is no repeat in the pattern. This is the case with most Tribal and Modern pieces. OR 2. Only the corner or the repeat of the rug is graphed.

STEP THREE : WOOL DYEING

As the design is being graphed, the wool is being dyed. Dyeing wool is a multi-step process that begins with handspun wool. The exact process varies slightly depending on the desired color. Here is a loose step by step process:

1. The wool and dye stuffs are added to hot water and allowed to boil until desired color yields.
2. The wool is removed from the vat and spun in order to remove excess dye and water.
3. The wool is left to dry outside.
4. Once dry, the wool is ready to use.



STEP FOUR : WARPING THE LOOM

The warp and weft, usually made of cotton, is the basic foundation for all rugs. Knots are tied to the warp, the vertical cotton component. The weft is then added horizontally. Before weaving can begin, the loom must be warped, meaning the cotton is strung from the top to the bottom of the loom.

STEP FIVE : WEAVING

The term "weaving" refers to the knotting of wool yarn around the warp thread. The weavers sit along the width of the rug, and using the graph as a guide, make knots using the specified color. Once the knot is tied, it is cut off, which forms the pile. A weft is then inserted through the row of knots that has just been tied and cut, and that row is banged down into place with a comb tool.



STEP SIX : QUALITY CONTROL

On a weekly basis, an Afghan ARZU rug monitor comes into our artisan's home to check on the status and quality of the rug on loom. She can also address any questions the weaver may have regarding the design and/or color selections. She will also identify and fix any mistakes that may have happened since her last visit. Our rug monitors also grade the work of each weaver - an A grade awards the weaver the entire 50% cash bonus.

STEP SEVEN : CUTTING THE RUG OFF LOOM

Once the weaving is complete, the rug is cut off the loom. The weavers mark the weft, allowing enough space for whatever weft finish has been indicated by the ARZU production staff. Once marked, the weft is cut with sharp scissors and the rug is brushed off and rolled - ready for transport back to our washing facility.



STEP EIGHT : WASHING

Once the rug arrives at the washing facility, it is inspected and a specified wash is advised. Many factors go into the rug's wash recipe; design, size and colorway are all indicators.

STEP NINE : FINISHING

The rug goes through the final finishing steps before shipping: shearing, blocking, fringe tucking, pressing and finally, preparation for shipping.



THE FINISHED RUG





Peace Cord™ is a bracelet hand woven by women in Afghanistan from military grade parachute cord and authentic military uniform buttons. Peace Cord™ is your tie to our troops.



Peace Cord™ is a partnership between ARZU STUDIO HOPE and Spirit of America, like-minded organizations affecting positive change in communities across Afghanistan. Production of Peace Cord™ creates jobs for impoverished Afghan women, delivers access to education and healthcare, and provides funds to U.S. troops for humanitarian projects supplying necessities like shoes, food and school books to isolated Afghan communities.

100% of net proceeds from sales of Peace Cord™ are used to rebuild Afghanistan and foster peace.

Our objective is for one million Americans to go online and buy a Peace Cord™ to support our troops and empower Afghan women.

