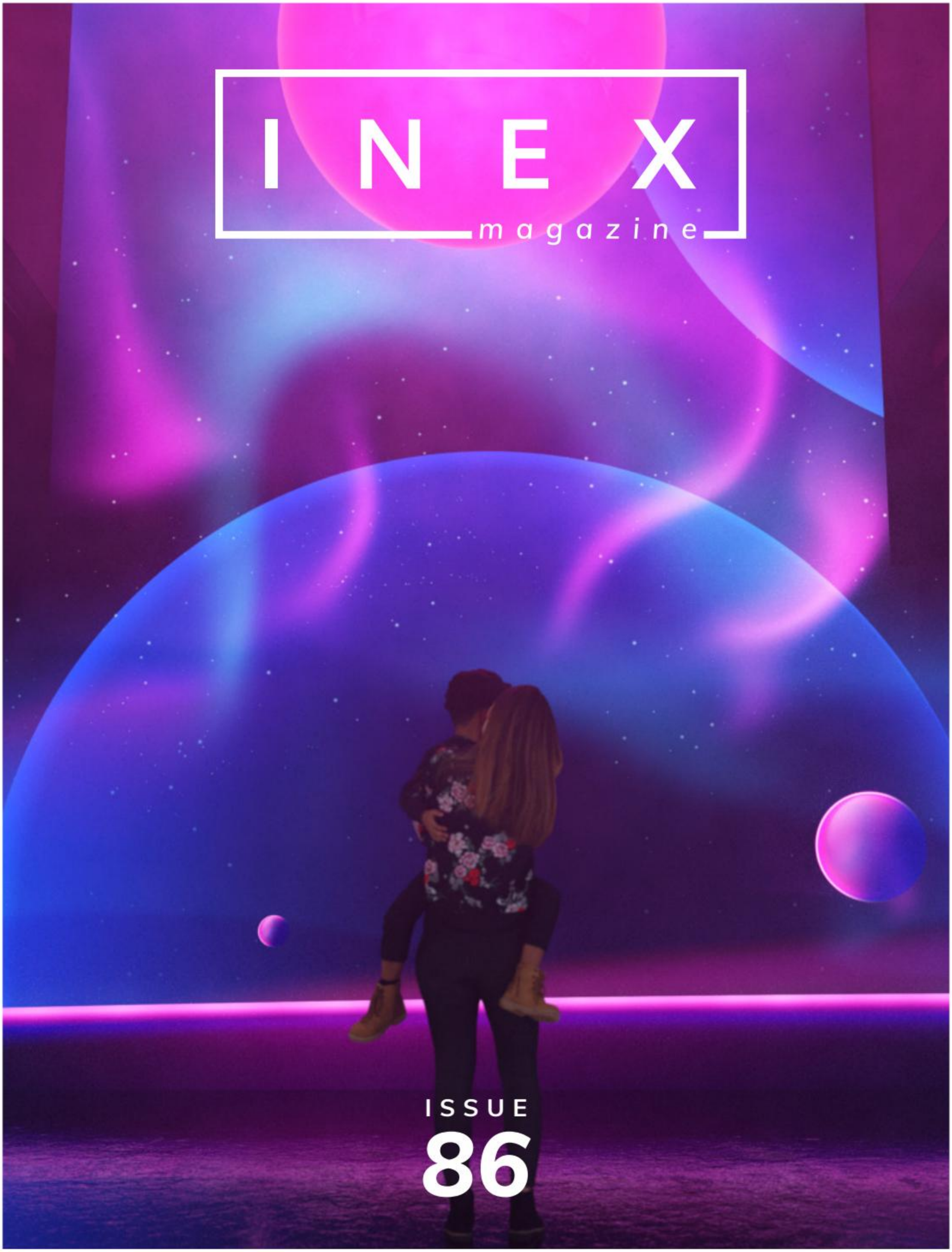
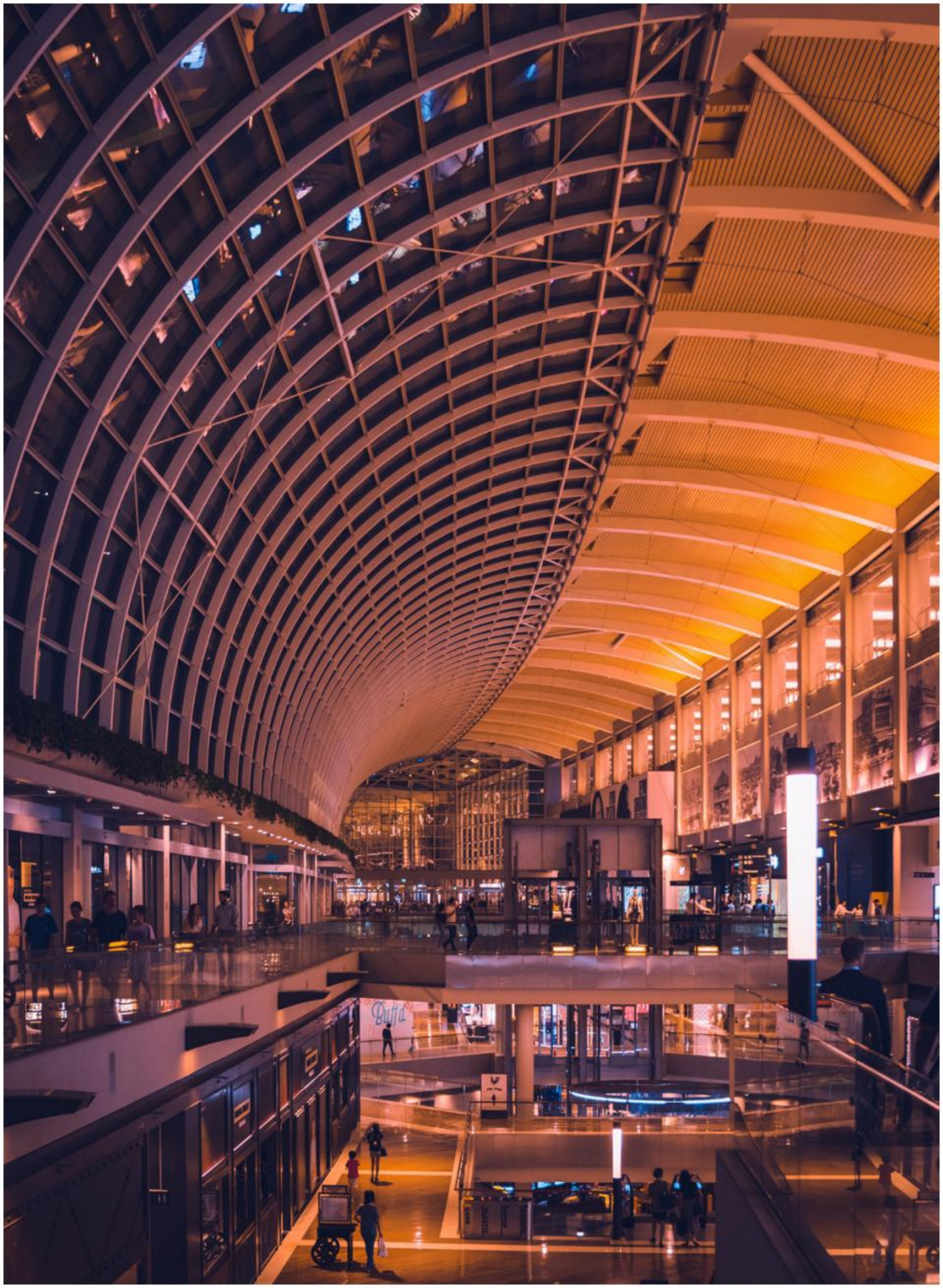
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Meet the designer:

SAMANTHA DRUMMOND

This month, Inex Editor, Rebecca Kemp, sits down with Samantha Drummond, Managing Partner at Habitus Design Group, to find out more about her design background and probe into her work on the famous Marina Bay Sands Resort.

RK: Please provide us with a description of your professional career.

SD: My career began in my home city of Melbourne, Australia, where I was on the operational side of the hospitality industry, helping to run independent restaurants, bars and clubs. New opportunities beckoned, and I moved to Asia to work on major residential and commercial developments and was still there when Las Vegas Sands came to the region. I was one of their first appointments and the fabulous possibilities of large-scale hospitality development opened up to me as I first led the design effort for the Cotai Strip in Macau and, later, for Marina Bay Sands in Singapore. Since then, I have gone on to create several more integrated resorts for Solaire, a foremost hospitality brand in Asia.

RK: What inspired you to become a designer?

SD: From the beginning, I loved transforming spaces, giving them new life and turning them around. I am someone who is driven to come up with new ideas for destinations, from concept through to the guest experience, while at the same time always ensuring that every element is aligned to make the business successful.

RK: What inspired the start-up of your design firm?

SD: Acting as client advisor on Marina Bay Sands, orchestrating leading-name design firms and managing a whole panoply of design issues was an incredible experience that taught me a tremendous amount. However, the day came when I wanted to be much more hands-on again, so I steadily grew my own design company, Habitus Design Group. It was also very important to me to create a platform that would employ and inspire young talented people – some of who would not have had the opportunity to be employed by an international firm due to lack of exposure. ▷











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RK: What/who has been your greatest source of inspiration throughout your career?

SD: The 'what' is a 'white box' or an empty plot of land – when I really have to use my imagination to come up with something exciting that hasn't been done before. The 'who' are the clients who have been kind and patient with my perfectionist ways and not judged me for my lack of conventional training, as well as the many creative and passionate people I have had the privilege to work with.

RK: How do you approach your projects?

SD: I try to look at the space as a business first and see it through my clients' eyes as well as the guests' eyes. I like to involve clients in the creative journey – this is essential to harmoniously integrate their vision and my ideas throughout the project cycle. It's a fine balance and critical for the success of a large venue to blend both business and creative worlds, to work collaboratively with numerous teams and to be pragmatic when needed.

RK: Would you say that you have a design style?

SD: Actually, I think my projects are all very different, and I don't have a particular style. I do, however, bring the same amount of enthusiasm and creativity to every project and, most importantly, the space has to work successfully for me to feel that I have fulfilled my role. I believe that when you are creating landmark destinations, large or small, it's the same principle:



identify what makes sense as a business model, embrace the location and provide experiences that guests can emotionally connect to.

RK: What do you believe is the biggest challenge for today's interior designers?

SD: I think it is to find a truly original design voice. This seems to be lacking these days, perhaps because it's all too easy to be seduced by online sources and imagery.

RK: What has been your most notable project?

SD: Without a doubt, it was Marina Bay Sands. The scale, ambition, the extraordinarily creative people I worked with and the mentors in the client team who paved the way for me all made it one of my most memorable experiences. It was very high-profile, so I had a lot to prove. Happily, the development soon became an icon for the island of Singapore.

RK: Can you talk us through one of your most recent design schemes?

SD: We have recently been asked to redesign several high-profile villas for a wonderful client in the Philippines. I came up with a concept based on the silk road trade routes, which allowed us to give each villa a unique identity and story. Everything is carefully curated with bespoke furniture, art and antiques, and the result is a completely different luxury experience in each villa. ▷



RK: Have you witnessed any recurring requests from your clients?

SD: I am often invited to participate in gaming licence pitches, which is something I find very exciting. I love to develop concepts and ideas for these, typically very large, resorts as well as identify and help select outstanding architectural firms to collaborate with shaping the submission.

RK: What advice would you offer to those that are considering a career in design?

SD: To listen well and always think about what you are learning from others, to look with fresh eyes and have confidence in yourself. I would also add that it's important to enjoy the beauty of what you are creating and to think about how your design will make people feel.

RK: What can we expect to see from you over the next year?

SD: Right now, I'm enjoying working on a luxury resort in the Philippines, and we are about to embark on a new beach resort, also in Asia. At the other end of the scale in terms of size, we are working on repurposing some historical buildings in Denmark into very special hospitality venues as well as looking at opportunities across Europe to design new destinations. I love the creativity needed to preserve the integrity of existing buildings whilst creating new and meaningful guest experiences. I always embrace opportunities to challenge myself and do something different! □

www.habitusdesigngroup.com



