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Indoor

Ex Animo: Samantha Drummond part 3, business

3 minute read



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Giant potted tree installation at Marina Bay Sands in Singapore. Image – Canva.

- Revenue generation is front of mind when designing
- Large budgets and high net worth commissions mean business sustainability is key
- Creating journeys to stimulate spending is a strategy unto itself

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In the third part of this series on designer Samantha Drummond, we discuss the business behind design. Previously we spoke to her about her roots, and what makes a captivating design.

Interior design for large budget projects and integrated resorts like Marina Bay Sands and Solaire require a finesse and skillset that is unique to the industry.

These destinations are neither merely casinos nor art galleries, Samantha Drummond told The Property Tribune they are "luxury lifestyle resorts that have everything".

"It's not for the faint-hearted. I enjoy the complexity of it and working with really talented people".

Samantha Drummond

A sure foundation

Ms Drummond's experience in Melbourne's hospitality scene certainly seemed to set the foundations for a business conscious mind.

Whilst working on fashion parades, renovating restaurants in Melbourne and running high profile events, she said she developed an eye for "what's going to draw people in?", and "what's going to captivate and keep them there?".

It was truly a high stakes arena, working with names like Michael Gudinski and the international labels he would welcome to Melbourne such as Madonna and Prince.

Design for revenue

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"I have to make people a lot of money".

The reason why it could be considered refreshingly simple? She did not take on the mantra other designers took of 'ars gratia artis'. Beautiful as concepts may be, Ms Drummond said, "my ideas have to generate a lot of revenue because the build costs are so significant".

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Retail, Marina Bay Sands, Singapore. Image – Supplied.

With the budgets attached to developments like Marina Bay Sands reaching some SG $8 billion (approximately AU $7.8 billion), it was fair to expect ideas would go on to generate substantial revenue.

From the moment a guest steps out of their transport into an integrated resort, in some instances beforehand too, Ms Drummond said there must be connectivity and adjacencies between spaces, and there was a complexity to how large volume spaces could work.

"It's all about people spending money along that journey, there's a strategy to it".

The task at hand, as she puts it, is "to interpret the client's vision and turn it into reality. You have to create a destination for them."

Not just considering more physical elements like where to position brands, outlets, and amenities in a shopping precinct, the business-based approach takes into consideration marketing, and social media – the Instagram moment.

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Bar and Lounge, VIP Club, Solaire Resort & Casino Manila, Katrina, art by Cuenca. Image – Supplied.

"I want them to feel a sense of belonging to that resort by the objects, the art, the interiors, to the food they eat."

Neither is it as simple as drawing inspiration from Pinterest or Instagram, Ms Drummond said that approach simply doesn't work for what she does.

"I want it to be truly aspirational".

The ability to enthral and captivate is an unyielding game, she said, "in Asia, competition is fierce".

"I want to have elements of complete surprise, sometime when you travel, it can be so mundane".

Samantha Drummond

Again, that refreshing business take on things kicked in again when Ms Drummond said, "good ideas have to stand the test of time, especially in big spaces, trendy things won't last".

"There's a focus on timeless interiors that also generate revenue, and Marina Bay Sands paid itself off"

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