



Upholstery Couture

interview by Karolina Barnes, photography provided by Aiveen Daly

A few months ago I met Aiveen from Aiveen Daly at her North West London design studio. Aiveen specialises in hand-upholstered pieces of furniture using very unusual tailoring techniques only seen previously in fashion. Her use of luxurious embellishment and fabric manipulation techniques is what sets her apart within the high-end interior design market. She collaborates with the best interior designers, design studios and architects across the globe, which allows her to develop new methods and applications, taking upholstery into different areas of the interior and pushing its boundaries into surface decoration.

We talked about her business journey, what her biggest challenge had been and what she has learnt on the way.





What has been your journey so far that led you to designing and creating your own products and brand?

As a child I never knew what I wanted to be when I grew up but my mother always loved interiors and glamour. I was born in Cork, Ireland and studied business and Russian at Trinity College in Dublin. After my studies I moved to Moscow and St Petersburg. I also lived in Sydney before moving to London to take a job at Newsweek magazine.

I then worked as UK marketing manager at Expedia but soon realised that a deskjob wasn't really for me, so I decided to follow my passion for textiles. I enrolled in a full-time traditional furniture upholstery course at London Guildhall University. While studying the course I developed my love for craftsmanship that I found in centuries old pieces of furniture.

I loved the idea of writing notes in the upholstery for the next generation to find and signing the initials of the maker. It was an age where furniture was seen as a luxury item and the finest fabrics and craft techniques were used as a sign of wealth and privilege before mass production took hold. I created my studio inspired by these values.



What is your mission with Aiveen Daly?

From the start almost 10 years ago, my aim was to become the most sought after specialist upholsterer and offer something truly bespoke and unique to my clients, while keeping alive the traditional and very complex upholstery techniques. We have definitely achieve that, however my mission is still the same: to provide the best service and keep pushing the boundaries of upholstery.

What has been your biggest business challenge so far?

I think overcoming recession was definitely one of the most challenging times of the business. Recession almost eliminated that business overnight but luckily an opportunity to do a commission for the Candy brothers for their One Hyde Park project opened up new business for me. Looking back on it now, I see that project as my big break into the luxury interior design market.



How did you overcome the fear of failure and any insecurities you had?

My attitude is always about trying new things and taking chances. I wasn't afraid of starting my own business because I was finally doing something I loved. I had nothing to lose. If it didn't work out I still could go back and do what I was doing before, but I just felt I had to give it a go and see.

What would you say to anyone who is thinking about setting up a business in the interior design industry?

1. Start with baby steps - get yourself on a course and try the waters first.
2. Always listen to your gut.
3. Learn as much as you can; being from other experts in the market, mentors and books. Surround yourself with people that will help you on your journey. Also don't be afraid to ask questions, so you can get the information and knowledge you need to get started.