



Interview ▶ We talk to an interior architect who has her own 'spatial studio' in the Principality



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Maiana Babot, Andorran and interior architect, studied at Elisava and after working four years in Barcelona returned to Andorra where she set up her interior design studio: espacial studio (espacialstudio.com). The three words that most define her, said by herself, are: pragmatic, ambitious and organized.

–You are co-founder of espacial studio. How was the company born?

–I worked for B720 and Nikken Sekai in Barcelona on the Camp Nou reform project, in the interior design department of the VIP areas. Practically finishing the project, Covid arrived and this caused the staff to be reduced and we did not renew the contract. From there, talking to a friend from university, we started looking around for a joint project. We are both interior designers focused on different perspectives, Ana is specialized in the world of retail and I more in restoration and especially housing. Many ideas came out, but the most solid was to create a design studio with a fundamental pillar that is interior design, without closing the doors to graphic and product design as long as it is related to a space. For example, if we design a restaurant, we could do the graphic design of the name, menu, signage, etc. In this way you get the design of the entire space to go hand in hand. After several brainstorming, research and tests, espacial studio was born.

–In your case you went to study in Barcelona, but decided to return to live in Andorra. Why?

–Well, I had always intended to go back to live in Andorra, but not so soon. The covid and the fact that I was out of work in Barcelona meant that I went «temporarily» at home. Things were bad to find a job in Barcelona again, moreover, I didn't want to go back coming from the Barça project. By back I mean being an employee who draws someone else's ideas, and that prompted me to create this new project that has made me settle here. The only «but» I could find is that here in Andorra people don't take as many risks as people in a city might do in terms of design. And less so when it comes to your home. That aside, I have to say that nowhere is more at home.

–How is the process of creating a company from scratch?

–Creating a company from scratch is a complex and multifaceted process that involves certain fundamental steps. It has its pros and cons like everything. Firstly, we required a clear business idea and market research to assess its viability, who we were targeting and how. Then would come the most fun part, which is to create the identity as such. We had carte blanche to do whatever we wan-



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Maiana Babot

Interior architect and co-founder of espacial studio

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ted, which made it difficult to decide something, as we had all our fronts open. Making the selection of a name, concept, colors, corporate identity, what philosophy we wanted... Then came the legal aspects such as registering the company, obtaining licenses and complying with regulations. We looked for the most viable way that would work best for us, because Ana works and lives in Barcelona even though she is Mexican. We decided to set up an Andorran company, which caused us establishment costs that we did not contemplate. The overall process involves a lot of planning, dedication, time and adaptability to deal with anything that may come up.

–In addition, you created it in 2020, the year of the pandemic. What was that time like?

–Exactly, we threw the plunge. In Andorra there was a lot of activity with new constructions, which motivated us. I just had the opportunity to do a project for an entire three-block building in collaboration with an architect friend of the family. I took it without hesitation and with that I started. Ana had many graphic design jobs in Mexico, and at that time each one did her own thing, although from time to time we helped each other with a topic. It was quite complicated to start and we had a lot of work to be able to move forward.

–In which countries do you work?

–Well, 90% of the projects are here in Andorra, they are the ones I carry out on a daily basis, and the other 10% are done by Ana in Mexico or Spain. Depending on the project and the volume of work for each one, we help them. In Mexico, for example, we only do graphic design projects working remotely, we believe very little in remote interior design projects. Basically, for the monitoring of the work, the contact with the client and the industrialists, the selection of materials... This is why we only do interior design in Andorra or Spain.

espacial

-You are specialize in homes and residential spaces, but you also have a great knowledge of kitchens. What is your favorite thing to do and why?

-I worked for almost three years at Siematic Barcelona, a kitchen company. It's as if I had a master's degree. All the details that must be taken into account and that no one teaches you except by doing. Clearly, the coolest space to design is a kitchen. It is where most things happen, not only at the user level but also at the design level, it is the heart of a house. Many things must be taken into account and above all understand very well who will use it, the frequency of use and the needs of the person or family who live there. I always do a small questionnaire before starting a project to understand the person and their needs as best as possible. Everyone has their own way of doing things and you as a designer have to make it as suitable for them as possible.

-How do you organize work within the company? Do you have people inside or do you collaborate as needed?

-We don't have anyone else, it's ourselves who carry out the entire process of each design. Each of them ma-



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kes the first contact with the client, budgets, designs and draws every project that comes their way. From here we are looking for a construction company and/or industrialists to carry out the work. We don't always work with the same ones.

Yes, we trust them, but if the client wants to use a specific one, we have no problem working with anyone as long as they meet our needs. Once the work starts, I always try to go there as many times as possible so that everything is done according to plan. There are decisions that must be made on the spot, at the moment they leave, or unforeseen events that must be resolved quickly so as not to have to stop the work. Personally, I collaborate a lot with architects, which makes me learn a lot about another sector, however similar it may be.

-Which project did you enjoy the most?

-All projects have their history and their process. The creative phases are very nice and so are the delivery phases. I don't know if I could pick one in particular, but one that is being very rewarding is the first that came to mind. A building that we started designing in 2020 and that is just now seeing the light of day. Seeing the results of so much work is very satisfying. It's seeing all the details, or elements that you had thought of, of so many spaces and that everything looks good.

-Do you have any goals on the ho-

rizon?

-Our goal is to be able to continue doing what we like, to grow as professionals. We would also like to be able to have some other large-scale project talking about interior design (some other building, a hotel...) that is a challenge, which in the end is where you learn the most things. And above all and the most important thing: to continue to see how grateful the clients are when we finish a project.

-If you had to choose to work or design someone's house in particular, whose house would it be?

-It would be my house. It's an aspiration I've had for many years. I think it's the biggest challenge I could have. Designing for others is easy for me, I propose options, but they end up choosing what they like best. If I did it for myself, it would be very difficult for me to stay with just one idea, since I like many things and there are a thousand possibilities, I think it would be a very long process, but I would love it. Apart from the fact that I could do whatever I want on a creative level, I am the one who knows best to understand my needs in each room of a house. There is no one better than yourself to understand this facet. In fact, whenever I

start a project I ask the clients to tell me what they do at home, how they move, where they are... in the end I always say that every house says a lot about the person who lives there, you can get to know a lot of a person through their space.

-What is success for you?

-For me, success is the combination of personal achievements, progression and satisfaction. It is the ability to pursue and achieve my goals and purposes, by growing as a person, and by feeling good and happy with who I am and what I do. The ability to be able to see things with perspective and face things with serenity and calmness.

-And happiness?

-I consider happiness to be a balance between the emotional state and the mental state in which one experiences personal satisfaction and well-being in life. It is not a final destination but a constant that I seek to maintain. Look for small details from day to day, moments, or appreciate small things that make you maintain this line. Feeling in harmony with who you are, the values you convey and the actions you have with others and especially with yourself. ≡

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