

SINGAPORE PRESTIGE CLASS AWARD & ASPIRING WOMAN ENTREPRENEURS AWARD 2021/2022



Founder of R + R Design Studio, Ms. Angela Arwen Cher

Wellbeing Approach to Design

Interior designers have a tremendous impact on the way we inhabit buildings and move through space. They have the capability to create physical comfort of basic sheltering and everyday functionality, while translating your ideal home into reality and guiding you through every step of the way. This is embodied by Angela Arwen Cher, the founder of R + R Design Studio. Her mission is to create spaces that will "nurture a holistic way of living to increase the user's consciousness in the spatial experience". It has always been Angela's goal to ensure her designs are seamlessly integrated with function and aesthetics that enables every client to use each space and item with a purpose. "I believe that design is not just an idea or concept but is a way of living."

Modern and innovative designs serve as a steady platform for R + R Design Studio. As a young start-up and as the winner of the Singapore Prestige Brand Award and Aspiring Women Entrepreneurship Award, Angela founded her own business in 2019 to continue her passion in interior design. Since graduating with a Diploma in Environmental Design from Laselle College of the Arts and a Bachelor of Arts in Interior Architecture from RMIT University, she has begun working on residential design and project management for the next 20 years. In 2014, she founded the Department of Design with a partner and later split the partnership to forge ahead with her own company. Named after her children Reanne and Reyes as well as her connection to her belief – R + R Design Studio started its journey in 2019 as a dynamic design studio working on a wide range of projects from residential houses to offices.

As a businesswoman, Angela's anchor is about "pursuing creativity" and creating a "welcoming space for talented designers to gather and work together to express themselves and build quality spaces." Throughout her years as an interior designer, her purpose has always been to combine her design philosophy with the goal to create a purposeful environment for her clients. As a small team of less than 10 employees, Angela attributes R + R Design Studio's success to her constant "pursuit of lifelong learning" and her drive to fulfil passion and purpose. The company has also proved their mettle with a steady stream of clients, old and new regardless of the size and age of the company.

Challenging Start

Starting a business begins with an idea followed by cultivating purpose and aim. Similar to many young entrepreneurs, Angela's successful business began with three simple Ps – passion, perseverance and perception.

"These are the three guiding principles of my life and what I use to define the path that I am travelling in." She believes that her strong positive outlook coupled with her determination were also keys to her success. "Success, to me, is to live the kind of life that I envision and to be in control of that life... passion and my vision of success is a strong motivator in everything I do." This was an important aspect for Angela to sustain her new business through 2020, a challenging year for many.

During the global COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 had proved to be a taxing year for many companies including R + R Design Studio whose revenue had dropped by 90%. Similar to many interior designers around the world, many made necessary changes and adjustments, specifically focused on its digital infrastructure. As a fairly new enterprise, Angela committed to build on their internal assets and digital strategies. She kickstarted the year by launching a company website and social media accounts with greater virtual support for their clients. "To ensure that we remained top of mind with our clients and target audience", said Angela.

Managing a business also comes with its own unique set of challenges and obstacles to face on a daily basis. For R + R Design Studio that was to ensure a steady flow of clients and set itself as a one-stop solution for interior design. "We, as the service providers, take on the job of selecting the individual items for the space, taking the huge burden off our clients' shoulders" and this became the company's competitive advantage including their referrals and word of mouth from their existing clientele. Despite the lack of manpower, Angela continues to focus on building an enduring business model by embracing the new normal.

Forging a New Path



The start-up culture also brings its own unique set of challenges for new companies like R + R Design Studio. Angela considers her design philosophy to tie in with her clients who come in with a similar approach to design and implementation, setting this company apart from the competition. "I listen to my clients with their best interests in mind and ensure that my proposals are tailor-made to every client to provide them with the best service possible".

Technology has brought about changes for companies in all sectors and regions across the globe in the last year. Many companies continue to accelerate the digitisation of their operations including R + R Design Studio. Many business owners such as Angela are aware of

the merits of digitisation. "Technology has definitely had a huge impact on the way we conduct our business, especially in 2020... We have also looked at opportunities to incorporate technology in our business model as well." To improve customer journey and streamline backend services, the company is currently working with a tech company on a mobile application to specifically cater to the design industry.

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Another pivotal step for Angela and R + R Design Studio were their strong relationships with clients inclusive of their subcontractors and suppliers. As a lean team composed of a pool of freelancers, she understood the need to build and maintain these relationships. This understanding tied in perfectly with her design philosophy and her company's ideology towards a family-like working culture to create strong teamwork and excellent work ethics. Angela also prides on the company's dependable connections and services that clients trust during the project. "We are a one-stop design service that takes the burden off our clients and takes charge of every step of the design process."

Business Success in 2021

While 2020 threw a wrench into businesses across the spectrum, the design industry has for the most part survived through this pandemic and economic uncertainty. Having covered all areas from design product management to construction, R + R Design Studio is looking ahead to expand their business into the lifestyle sector through brand collaborations as well as a shift towards investing in eco-friendly products. Going green has certainly taken centre stage in homes with sustainable practices at the forefront for many homeowners. "I hope that R + R will be known as an eco-friendly brand that incorporates such aspects in every one of our designs" said Angela.

Pressing on their strengths with providing design with quality and hard work, the company is also working to expand their team and improve brand awareness and not forgetting working with the current clientele to reach new ones. With hopes to expand internationally, this start-up is en route for further success. In the next five years, Angela hopes to build on R + R Design Studio's brand presence in the local market while continuing to stay abreast of trends and developments in the industry.

As an aspiring entrepreneur, Angela continues to hold all the experiences that she has gained over the years close to her heart as well as her accolades such as the Silver Award for Workplace Design from Interior Design Confederation Singapore in 2016. "As an individual, I am proud to be a part of the starting journey of not one, but two interior design companies." Angela has also continuously given back to the local community since her start as an interior designer. Under her new start-up, she is looking to impart her knowledge and skill sets to the younger generations by partnering with local design schools to give students a platform to learn through internship or on-the-job training. The current interior design terrain in Singapore is seemingly becoming collaborative and multifaceted, which bodes well with her ideology of collaborating with local design schools and enabling more opportunities for new incumbent to level up the industry standards. Through which, she also hopes to inculcate the value of creating spaces for the needy and underprivileged in Singapore.