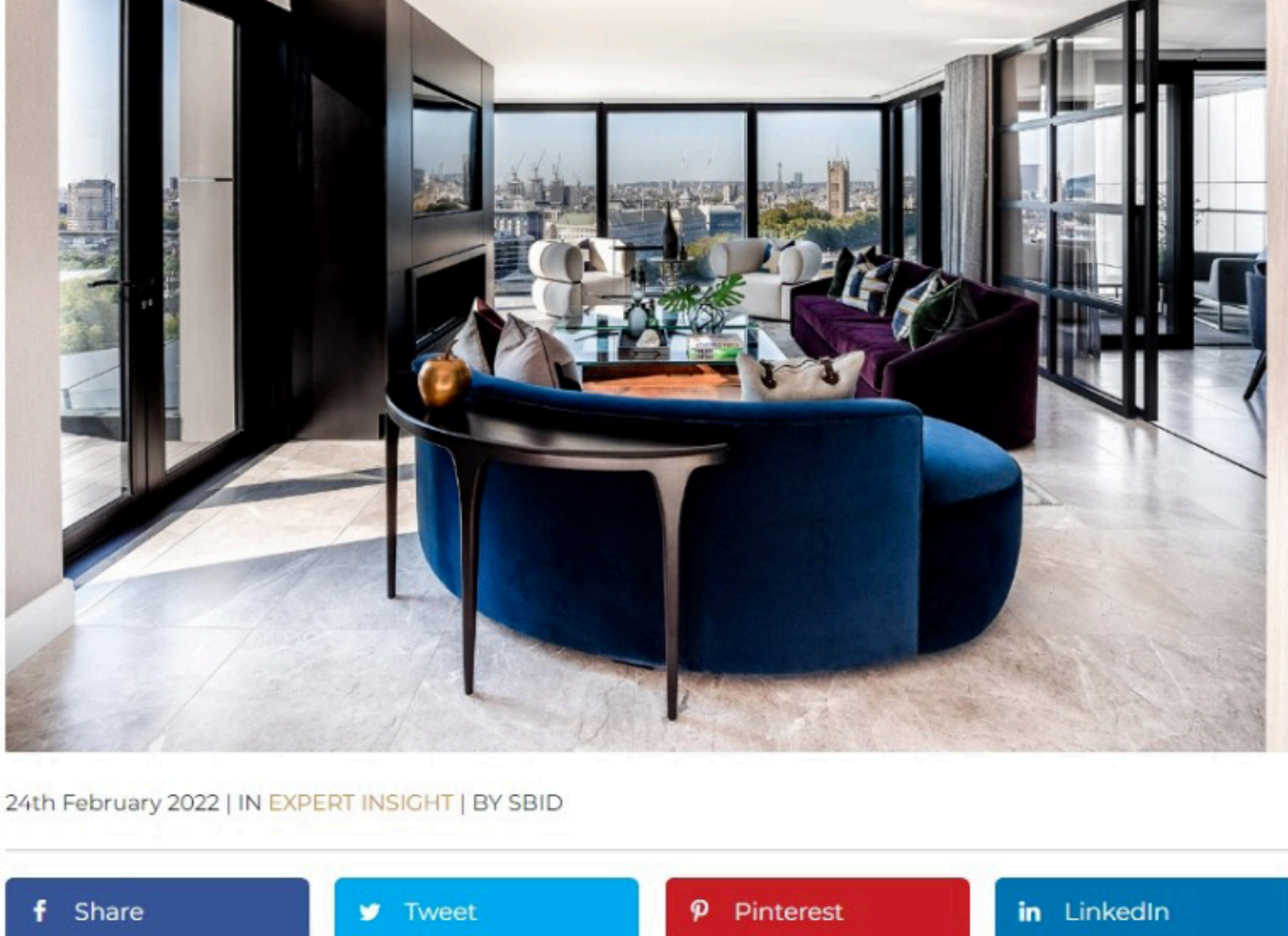


Angel O'Donnell's Approach to Creative and Versatile Designs



24th February 2022 | IN EXPERT INSIGHT | BY SBID

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In this week's interview with 2021 SBID Awards Overall Winner, Angel O'Donnell, the practice's co-founders reflect on their journey in the interior design industry and discuss their approach to incorporating local influences and culture into their designs.

London-based interior design studio Angel O'Donnell has created award-winning interiors for private homes, luxury show apartments and vast, mixed-use developments around the world. The studio prides itself on not having a signature style. That way, they can create beautiful and ownable designs that are 100% tailored to each client's wants and needs.

SBID Awards Category: Overall Winner

Practice: Angel O'Donnell

Entry: The Dumont

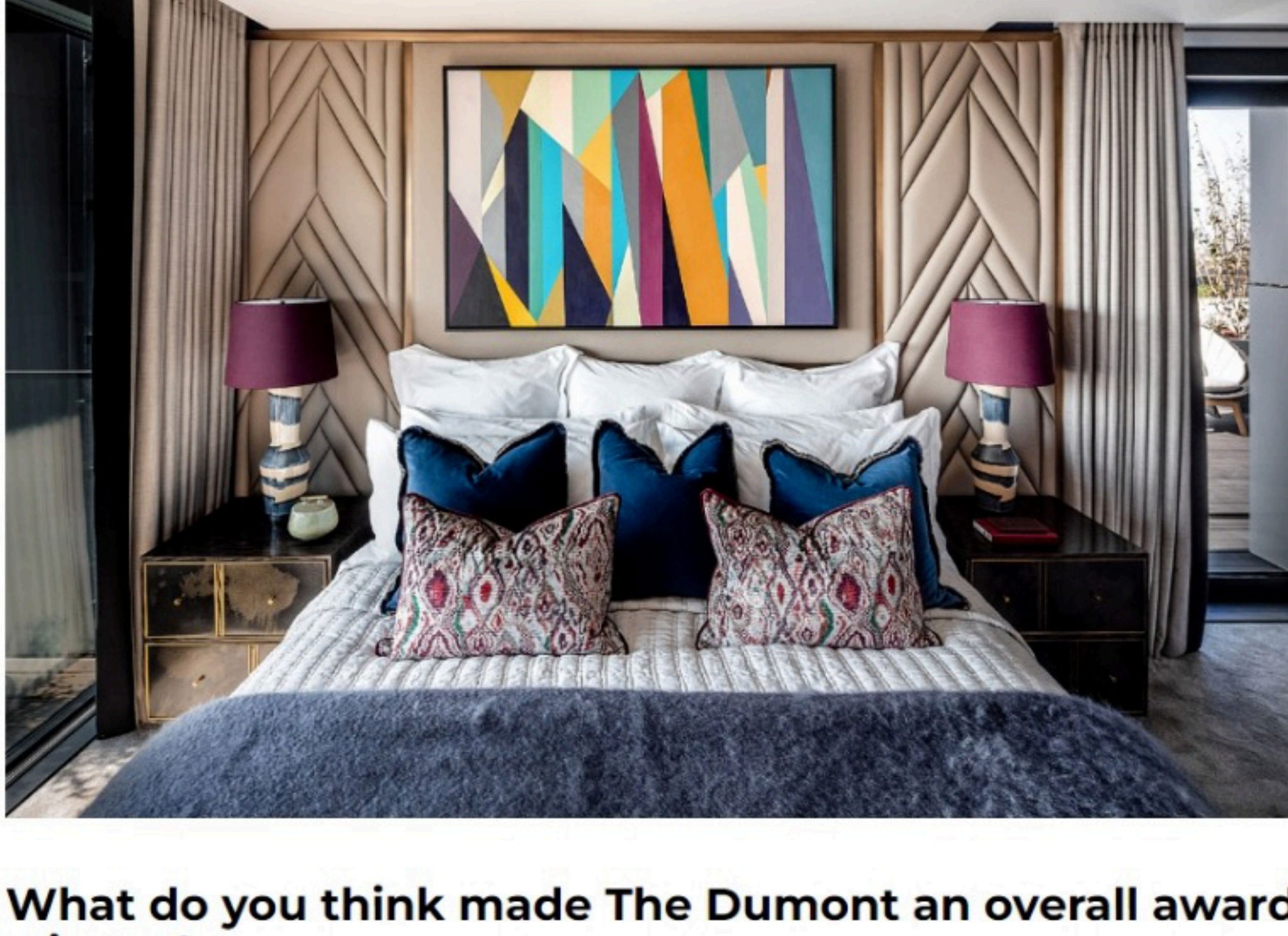


How important is it to enter the SBID Awards and receive industry recognition for your work?

Hugely important. Without question. We've said it before to our followers on Insta: the SBID is a lobbying titan and we're thrilled to number among its members.

It's a much loved and deeply respected organisation. How could it not be? In your own words you 'represent, defend and promote professional interior designers in the UK and in 71 countries worldwide'. Affirmations don't get much stronger than that.

And, yes, it's lovely to be recognised by your peers and role models. The SBID always attracts a stellar judging panel packed with industry luminaries at the top of their game. So, naturally, when they give your work the thumbs-up, it's seriously validating. And people do regard you differently afterwards, there's no doubt about it. Clients love it, too, which is always a good thing when you're pitching for increasingly bigger and splashier creative opportunities.



What do you think made The Dumont an overall award winner?

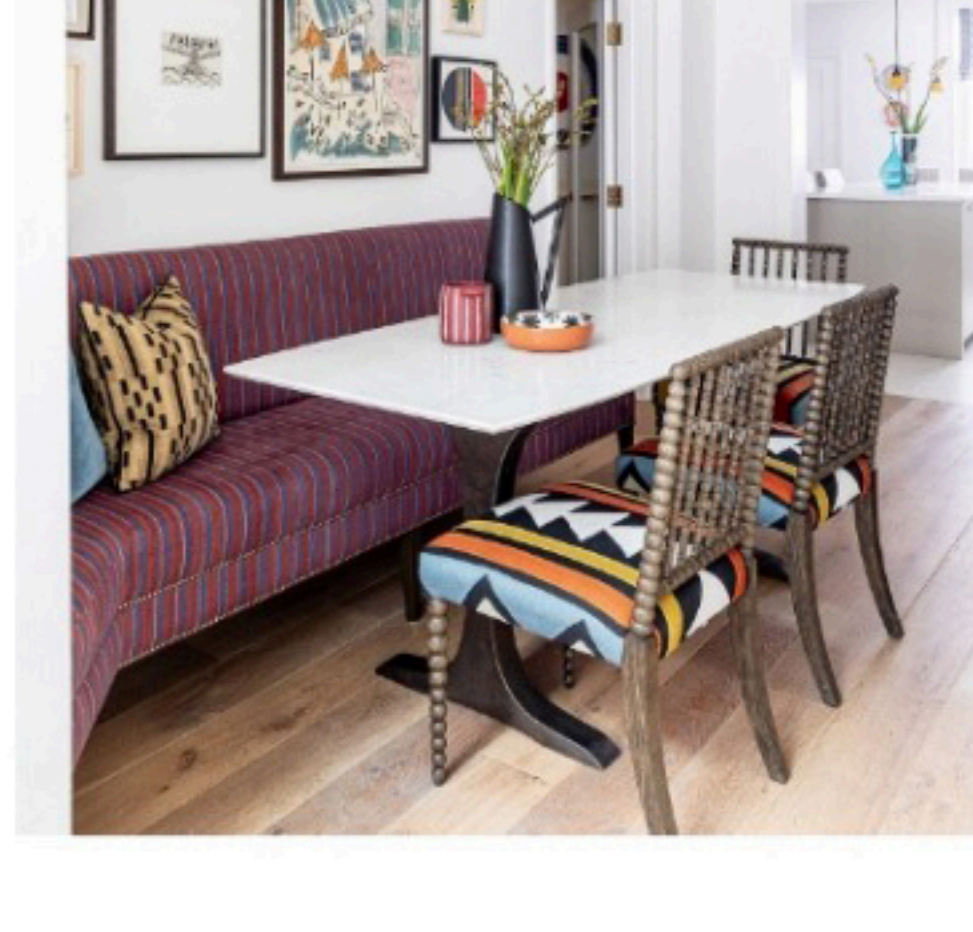
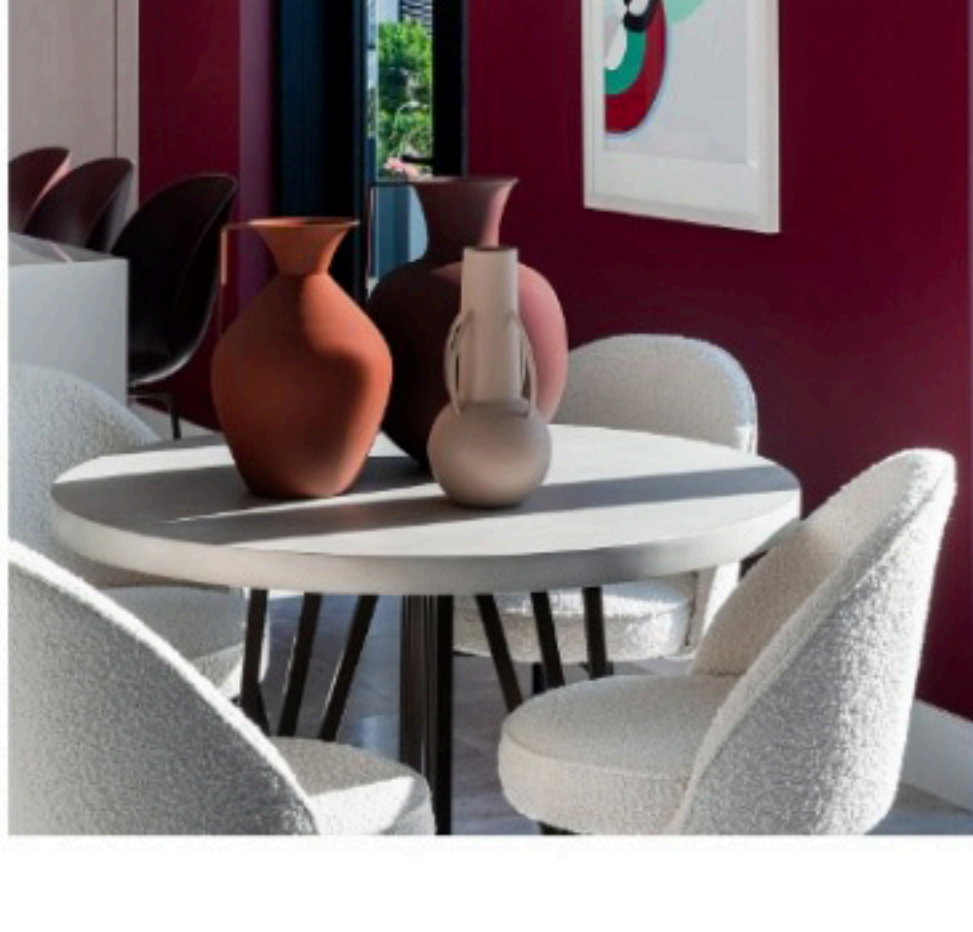
Tough question. We're still pinching ourselves that our project received that honour. The competition, as always, was fantastically strong.

Our guess is that The Dumont has something for everyone. The design manages to blend a lot of elements: earthy pigments with calm neutrals, densely textured fabrics with smooth glass and metal finishes, kaleidoscopically bright art with delicate objet. On paper, it sounds like a heady mix. But in reality, these things come together like old buddies: happily and without friction.

The judges may have also appreciated just how much was bespoke. Everything from wool-bouclé swivel chairs and curved velvet sofas to plushly padded upholstered walls and a bronze-clad fireplace was designed in-house.

The artwork, too, was a major part of our design. We lavished our client's home with specially commissioned acrylics, hand thrown ceramic bowls, delicate origami, metal sculptures – even an intricately beaded African ceremonial crown.

That said, there's a playfulness to these pieces. Nothing takes itself too seriously. We always want our designs to feel relatable. Luxurious, yes, but also accessible. We think a lot of people can imagine themselves living in the rooms we design.



When working on a new residential project, how do you incorporate local influences, artistry and culture from the surrounding area into your design?

We're always careful when we take inspiration from an area. We don't want to get swept up in lots of stimuli, no matter how fabulous, as this would drown out a client's needs and wants. We also don't want to create anything pastiche-y or thematic. So, we tend to think abstractly about our surroundings. For instance, in The Dumont, our client wanted us to create an interior that could echo the vibrancy, artistry and culture of London. Dizzying as that brief was, it prompted us to fill mood boards with lots of colour and pattern. To collaborate with local craftspeople. And to think about artists from around the world to reflect the capital's rich melting pot. It wasn't a literal interpretation by any means, but it nailed the brief.

More recently, we were tasked with creating a quintessentially British pied-à-terre in the heart of Chelsea. We set about defining what 'quintessentially British' means to us and concluded that it's about craftsmanship and the assemblage of unique and creative pieces. With this interpretation in place, we worked on producing a series of lively and vivacious rooms, filled with expressive prints, rich hues and beautiful detailing.

The bedrooms were treated to handmade Savoir Beds. Other rooms featured sculptural lamps inspired by the late great Barbara Hepworth. Walls were filled with artwork by an exciting mix of British talent, including an original Damien Hirst giclée print on aluminium, and an explosive figurative oil on canvas by rising star, Jack Penny. There were also whimsical pieces, like a pale pink cuckoo clock and prints of early 19th century botanical drawings of Japanese Sago Palms. It was like nothing we'd ever done before, and the result was fantastic.



Tell us a bit about your journey in the interior design industry. What have been the most rewarding takeaways since launching Angel O'Donnell?

We've been travelling very fast, on a vertiginously steep trajectory, for just over three years now. And what we've learned is just how much there is to learn. Always. We never stop. Every pitch, client, project, building, problem, solution, collaboration, challenge, creative block, creative breakthrough – it's different every time. And yes, it can keep us awake at night – but the end result always makes it worthwhile.

We've grown stronger as a team – and we've grown our team. We're now responsible for people's livelihoods and creative fulfilment, which is daunting but also incredibly rewarding. There's lots to be thankful for. Every project we win and every design we install gives us a buzz. We don't take any of it for granted – especially those landmark moments when you're pronounced overall winner at the SBID. That blew our minds. What a fantastic accolade. Even better that it coincided with our 3rd year anniversary.



Now that you've won an SBID Award, what are the next steps? Is there anything new you are excited to be working on?

Our next steps will be to continue nurturing our team and looking after our clients. Beyond that, we'll be working on two 2,500sq ft apartments in The Corniche, Albert Embankment. We're super excited to see how this iconically curvaceous building will influence our designs. Also, we have what can only be described as a culturally epic project waiting in the wings. Frustratingly, we can't reveal more than that right now. But as soon as we're given the green light, you won't be able to stop us from telling you all about it.



What advice can you give to young designers starting out in the design industry?

When we've interviewed young designers in the past, the ones that have stood out to us have had a strong sense of self. They're still teachable – we should all be that – but they're not daunted by others who have been in the profession a long time.

To have conviction in your decisions is a powerful thing. To stand by a design choice can often open people's eyes to new ideas and encourage them to take leaps of faith. That's when great things happen between creatives and clients.

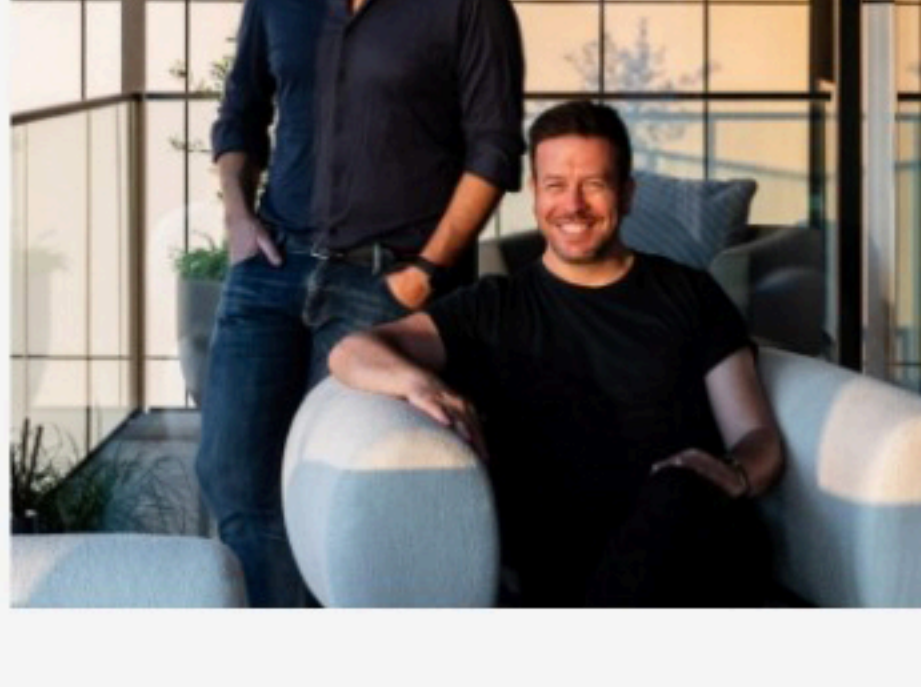
Of course, everything's a balance. There's no point digging in your heels when the people you're presenting to are shaking their disbelief. Designs have to be bought. It's a business like any other.

But be confident. Don't be swayed by trends. And drink in as much design – from as many disciplines – as your senses can handle morning, noon and night. Interior design is a beautiful, forever burgeoning craft. It'll never stop evolving. And neither should you.

If any aspiring designers reading this want to show us their work, please do. We're always happy to meet new talent.

[View the full project](#) →

Questions answered by **Richard Angel** and **Ed O'Donnell**, Co-founders, **Angel O'Donnell**.



For over two decades Richard Angel and Ed O'Donnell have created elegant and inviting interiors for both private clients and developers; their partnership is rooted in a deep respect for each other's skills, and is built on a mutual desire to deliver an authentically personal and in-depth service to their clients. From full interior fit-outs to more specialised requirements, such as sourcing bespoke artwork and objet, they provide a complete interior design service.

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