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Intermind Design Inc

The Psychology of a Good Design

An Interview with Mila Djuras



Three in One

Multi-award winning Intermind Design Inc., which started in 2004, is unique in many ways. It is run by the designer, by a woman, and by an immigrant. No, not run by three people, but one person: Mila Djuras. Mila began her life as an academic, teaching both science and later, design, at the university level. She came to Canada after war broke out in the former Yugoslavia and made the transition into business here in the early 2000s. Intermind Design Inc. sets itself apart from other design-build companies in that it does not outsource the design component. All aspects of the project from the permitting process, design management, budget, and quality control are solely coordinated by Mila. As Mila says about her approach, “one thing I do very differently is I meet with clients on a personal level and create relationships that last throughout the entire project. The same process in most other companies includes several other people, which include designers, general contractors, tradespeople, and others.”

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Mila's Approach

Mila's personal approach to her clients is perhaps the most unique quality of her business as she describes her method in further detail: "We had a Christmas party at my home with over 100 people. Three quarters of those were my ex-clients. As an immigrant, you have to start from somewhere to build your community.

"I really like the environmental psychology of design; I study that to the detail, and socio-cultural trends too. When I work with a client I work on a very personal level. That is why no two of our projects are alike. They can be minimalistic or totally unconventional. It has never been about my goals; it's always a deep reflection of what people need in a particular environment (house, workplace, or school). It's a basic concept of environmental psychology.

"I try to give clients the most functional and appealing environment while considering energy requirements, comfort level and interactive ambiance at the best price. Mila goes on to say: "I operate fully transparently, which means whatever is in the file, I create. I do this regardless of the design, budget, or invoices; it is all accessible to the client."



After



The Difference

Intermind Design Inc. has won many awards over the years, including two Georgie awards in 2022: one for best kitchen renovation under \$150,000, and one for best residential renovation under \$150,000. Perhaps one of the reasons Intermind has consistently won awards is due to their unique personalized approach to each and every project. Mila possesses a natural ability for understanding the needs of her clients on a deeper level. The level of caring given to each project and the psychological insight into clients' needs is unprecedented in the design-build industry.

Everything Has a Function

Every design is shaped to a high degree around the person. All the details are considered. A sink is not merely a sink. A mural is not just a mural. Everything has a function, a purpose and a meaning. It all ties into the psychology of the environment, and thus, to the person. Mila says, "nobody goes through a renovation for no reason. Most of the time it is due to a significant change in someone's life. Either they just had children, or they are retiring, or there has been a death, or a relative is moving in; there is always a significant change that is scary, like all changes, but also exciting. What I like to do is to set them up for the next 10-15 years of their lives.



Before



I listen as much as I can and then push a little bit to give them more, to help them become the best version of themselves. I think this is why we have won so many awards because of this unique approach.



Building Partnerships

Intermind Design Inc. has been working closely with On Time Construction for the past 24 years and has had zero conflicts during that time. They have also worked with A-1 Doors and Moldings for over 20 years as well as Save More Plumbing. During the past few decades, Mila has gotten to know the families behind these businesses. She has seen students grow into managers and children grow into adults. Not having any roots in this country and possessing a strong sense of herself as a woman in the construction industry, she has been able to build a network, a family, that reflects her values. "I love that sense of community," she says.



A Woman's Touch

Being a woman in a male dominated industry, the personal qualities Mila brings to the job sets her apart from her counterparts. There is a lot more attentiveness and caring and a lot less ego. "It's a sensitivity to needs. You kind of get tuned into knowing what the other person wants and when they are willing to say it, and sometimes they are a little shy, so you need to keep that opportunity."



On Budget

Staying within budget is at the top of mind more often than not these days and one of the ways in which Intermind accomplishes this is to source affordable, good quality products. Mila makes very detailed budgets and takes time to research the best and most affordable products, thereby saving money for a few luxury items the client may not necessarily need, but may desire.

Square footage cost is an irrelevant measure when all the budget details are taken into consideration. It is crucial to estimate cost with as many details as possible.

Planning

Another important element linked to the budget process is the planning stage. As Mila says, “the most important aspect is planning. In these particular times, start planning as soon as the idea enters your mind because we are currently experiencing such a delay, particularly in the energy sector; everything takes time, and you will end up settling for something you didn’t plan on and possibly something you don’t like as much.”

For more information on Intermind Design, visit <https://www.interminddesign.com/>



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