

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

NEWSDAY

WOMAN



02 Terri Lyons:
Focussed
and Driven

04 Christy Maingot:
Making a Scene

06 First Impression
at Home

09 Children Are
Being Lost

PHOTO COURTESY: Christy Maingot

CHRISTY MAINGOT

AN EYE (AND HEART) FOR DESIGN

KIERAN
ANDREW
KHAN

Interior designer, Christy Maingot reflects the exact balance of hustle, heart, hard work and humility required to thrive in the industry locally. With 11 years of education and experience to her name, she's pushing into new areas that combine her entrepreneurial enthusiasm with her creative mind and her innate desire to leave people happier than she found them. And more recently, she's expanded her CMID Interior Design brand into an array of products suitable for any space in your home.

“My father was my biggest influence...he inspired me to keep creating.”

Art has always been a part of me, one of my passions,” she recalled. “The act of creation – making something with my hands is an aspect of my life that I gained from my Dad who had a background in civil engineering and he was always busy making something and I was often right next to him, learning too.” Maingot would go on to begin studies in business before deciding it wasn't what really appealed to her, so she instead pursued a path to Orlando to begin formal studies in interior design and later on would read for her Masters at Boston Architectural College where she focused on sustainable design. “While my family wasn't sold on my career path at first, I presented a defined path to show that it would be a viable career, which at the time, it really wasn't seen as,” she said.

The designer spent her first few years back home working with a prominent designer before leaving the firm in May 2014 to start on her own, full-time. “One of the clients from that firm called me for an update and on informing her that I had left the firm to venture on my own, she immediately indicated that she wanted me to work on her project directly. She sought a refund from that company and became my first client,” she pointed out. From the first day on her own, she had the support of her father, who though he had retired was happy to now work with his daughter and offer his expertise particularly on larger projects that required construction work and labour expertise.

"From day one, my dad was by my side and it really helped to have his experienced, six-foot-tall presence there especially as people had this perception that I couldn't have possibly known enough given my age, to get the jobs done. I formed a great team – all of whom still work with me and we set about getting the jobs done. That first year, I had six projects which essentially were back-to-back, and I learned as I went along about how to interact with clients and reassure them that I know what's best for them and how to gain their trust by offering the best advice."

There were the challenges to be expected along the way too. Interior design as a profession and service was not something the local market immediately leaned into, as Maingot detailed further, "People may not easily realise the impact that design has on their life but the way a room flows relates to the functionality of it – and that can be a positive influence or negative. Not to mention colour and the way it makes you feel. But I go a step further and delve into lighting, materials, texture and even fabrics in terms of how it feels when you interact with pieces in the room – and that can make all the difference between a room that works and one that doesn't."

Two years into her business, Maingot's father passed away – leaving a void in a father-daughter partnership that had set her on a very successful path. "My father was my biggest influence – we had such a routine together for those first few years. His passing left me at one of the lowest points of my life. A few weeks before I was due to start my degree in Orlando, I had previously lost my brother Ryan in a... car accident. In both incidents, it just happened at this part of my journey that left me down and depressed. And at both points, after taking some time I had to find a way to push on. My university ring from Boston Architectural which today is still my most important piece of jewellery bears an inscription inside which says 'For Ryan.' He inspired me to get the best education I could. And after my father's passing I realised that he would want me to go on and be successful in my career that he's played a major part in. He inspired me to keep creating."

Ever the creator, Maingot set about recreating a small boutique shop and office space for herself in the heart Woodbrook – a warm, inviting space that draws inspiration from French boutiques she had visited during travels after her father's passing. "I had a full home office up to this point but people seemed to be turned off when you tell them that your office is at your home for some reason. So I created a place that I could go to, to get my work done but also could offer home décor and items for sale too."

Ever mindful of the many hats that an entrepreneur wears, Maingot also leveraged smart and connected ways to run her business. "I do have a team but at the end of the day, the shop front, the accounting, purchases and ordering for clients were still my purview, so I was sure to make use of smart technologies so that my point-of-sale system is online, powered by an iPad and together with cameras I can check in with the shop anytime – or pull up accounting info and files from anywhere on my other devices. I believe strongly in working smart," she added.

And ultimately, being a creative person, she returned to that fundamental need to make things under her CMID Interior Design brand – including hand-crafted candles which she not only taught herself to make, but spent over a year perfecting the balance of natural oils, soy and other botanical waxes to create a series of scents and candles that were on par with her vision for the brand. By customer request, she also recently extended her line into a series of body butters and creams using the same natural oils and scents. Her favourite clients remain those who place their complete faith in her ability to get the job done. "I've had clients who hand over their house keys and go on their vacations for a week or two and know that they will come back to a room or space completed to their specifications, on time. I've never had an unhappy client at the end. Ultimately, I'm a people pleaser, I want them to be happy with my products and service and with their new space and to enjoy it."

With an increased sense of self and confidence, Maingot is also taking a step forward as the face of the business she continues to build, representing a growing number of entrepreneurs who are closely aligning their personal brands with their lives' work – and doing so successfully.

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Store front of Christy Maingot's CMID Interior Design.

Photos courtesy CHRISTY MAINGOT

