

WHERE THE MAGIC HAPPENS

BY REBECCA SHERMAN. PHOTOGRAPHY SHAYNA FONTANA. PRODUCED BY MICHELLE AVIÑA.



Samantha Reitmayer Sano,
Joslyn Taylor

INSIDE SAMANTHA REITMAYER SANO'S BOOMING BRANDING AND DESIGN STUDIO

Earlier this year, Samantha Reitmayer Sano — founder and owner of the Dallas boutique branding and design firm Swoon, the Studio — got a call to meet her principal of design, Joslyn Taylor, at the Adolphus Hotel downtown. Executives from Rockbridge, the hotel's new owner, wanted to talk to them.

Reitmayer Sano, who had given birth to her second child three weeks before, rushed over. "I was barely functional," she says. "I got there thinking that it was going to be a small project, maybe a room or two." Instead, they were asked to take on a sweeping renovation and reimagining of the storied 1912 hotel's lobby and public spaces, including a refresh of The French Room, plus the design of new restaurant and retail concepts. The plum opportunity was bigger and more complex than any of the residential interiors Swoon had previously done. "I'm like, 'You understand who we are, right?'" Reitmayer Sano recalls. "They said, 'Yes, we do.'" Rockbridge wanted a boutique, residential approach, particularly Swoon's signature layered, warm, and organic take on interiors. "What they loved — what all our clients love about what we do — is that we could also take the hotel fully through rebranding. That's our advantage. We think about projects from both sides."

A talented graphic designer, Reitmayer Sano founded Swoon in 2009 with one employee and a roster of golden clients including Neiman Marcus, AT&T Stadium, AT&T Performing Arts Center, One Arts Plaza, and George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum. Her popular blog Style/Swoon helped launch her as an interior designer. (Internet fashion sensation Jane Aldridge and her mom, Judy, were among her first clients.) Seven years later, Swoon has 15

employees including Taylor, who joined three years ago to lead the interiors division. Most recently, Fossil and Neiman Marcus alum and art director Larry Oliver joined as creative director.

In a short period, the firm has become the city's go-to for sophisticated brand identity, with a megawatt list of clients that includes the Joule Hotel, Forty Five Ten, and Highland Park Village. It's even conceptualized graphic elements and exhibition design for shows at the Dallas Museum of Art, including "The Fashion World of Jean Paul Gaultier: From the Sidewalk to the Catwalk." And, for the last two years, they've collaborated with the Joule and Planet Productions to conceptualize and execute The Eye Ball, the Joule's soirée finale for Dallas Arts Week, held in front of artist Tony Tasset's dramatic three-story *Eye* sculpture. The Swoon crew has a knack for producing elegant invitations from unexpected materials, such as a slab of brushed metal, or heat-reactive paper that appears blank, revealing the print only when handled.

Taylor, a former corporate marketer and editor at *D Home*, was tapped to grow the interior-design side of Swoon — and it's exploding. Of the firm's current 150 projects, 55 are interiors related, including several ground-up projects. Clients tend to be creatives and out-of-box thinkers — they recently finished the Lakewood townhouse for Tracy Achor Hayes, Neiman Marcus editorial director. They're also in the midst of a total renovation of the Preston Hollow home for

(Continued on page 46)



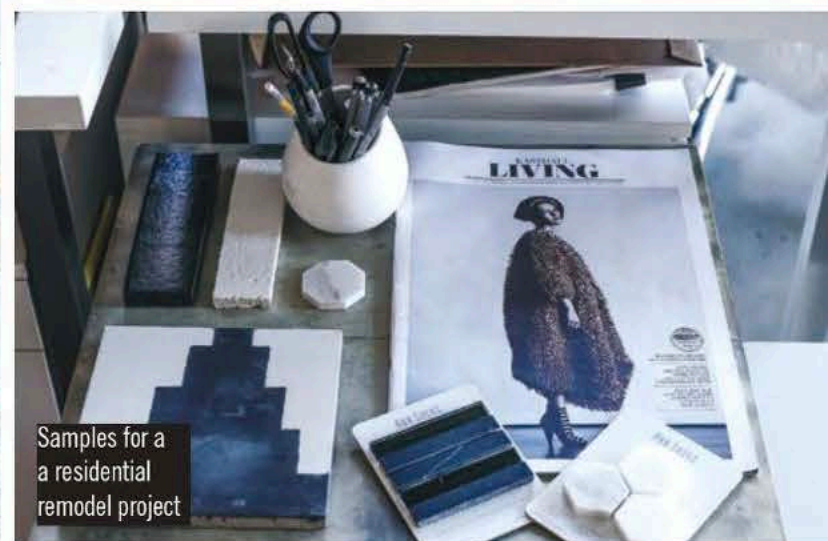
The Joule's in-room compendium, do-not-disturb sign, menu, gift card holder and invitation for The Eye Ball.



1530 Main, the Joule's publication, conceived and produced by Swoon, the Studio and Headington Companies.



Swoon, the Studio's downtown offices.



Samples for a residential remodel project



Objects, vintage art, materials, and tools in the studio.

(Continued from page 44)

a CEO who asked Swoon to work on the interiors for his 30,000-square-foot office building and the rebranding of his company as well. "We're truly multi-design, across all disciplines," Taylor says. "Not many firms in the country are taking the kind of holistic approach we are."

For the Adolphus, Swoon is gunning to bring back the vibrancy and excitement of the Beaux Arts-era hotel conceived a century ago by Adolphus Busch. The public spaces, including the lobby, will debut in December. Details are under wraps until then, but expect to be drawn inside from Commerce Street via a reimagined check-in and ground-level lobby. Cozy nooks will break up the second floor's long lobby. "There will

be lots of areas to tuck in for the day," says Taylor. "Places to work, places to meet, all designed in a way that feels residential in nature." Set against a backdrop of 100-year-old mahogany paneling, will be furnishings in Swoon's signature wood, stone, leather, mohair, and velvet, along with contemporary Texas art. The French room, with its glorious arched ceiling and ornate Louis XV detailing, will be treated with a light hand; it's slated to reopen in 2017. The hotel's rich legacy is the driving force behind everything, Reitmayer Sano says. "We're going back to the Adolphus' original Beaux Arts German and French roots, bringing back its liveliness and conviviality. But we're reimagining it in a fresh way."

CLIENTS TEND TO BE CREATIVES AND OUT-OF-BOX THINKERS.