



BY STU KATZEN

## Styling... Inspiration or Aspiration

To make it in the events business you have to find your own style. So start looking, says Stu Katzen.

Last year I was lucky enough to be invited to Las Vegas to attend and speak at an annual events trade show/fair.

I was even luckier enough to attend a seminar/class hosted by floral luminary, Preston Bailey. However, despite his floral designs being incredible, I must say I was a little underwhelmed by the general look, style and feel and ideas of the fair in general. The looks were not very cutting edge and a lot of it, us "backwater" Aussies had been doing for a while.

A couple of years ago I had a client from the UK, who vetoed an idea I had for an event, asking instead for a really "now" look and could she have an "all white" event? We had been doing that here three years previously.

The upshot of what I am getting at, is that here in Oz, we are lucky enough to have a plethora of inspirational event producers, very talented event designers, amazing event suppliers and an audience that is both sophisticated and demands something new and different... How cool is that?

So if you don't wake up in the morning thinking, "hmmm... a Missoni stripe will look amazing on the chairs for next month's event, or you don't even know what a Missoni stripe is, how do you come up with great ideas for your clients without engaging a stylist or designer?

So often I see someone's event replicated, or the same look used over and over again. And whilst copying something is the highest form of flattery, it leads nowhere.

A friend of mine had an arrow tattooed on her arm, the point aiming to her fingers to always remind her to keep moving forward. She is a stylist. I think everyone should have a metaphorical arrow on their arms to remind them to keep moving forward.

I get very frustrated with people who tell me they are not creative. Everyone is, in some way, shape or form. The trick is to find out what your strong points are and exploit them. Make them your style and your calling card. Use what others are doing (we all do) to inspire you. Use colours that are on trend, shapes that are in and mix them to create something that is yours.

Every event should be different, yet there is nothing wrong

with a signature, something that says "you".

Let others give you inspiration to create something great. Read magazines, go online; use every available resource to understand what is available and being done. You are never going to be someone you are not, so no point in aspiring to be that person. They are the sum of all their hard work, experience and concepts and that will never be you. But look at what those people have done and gain inspiration from it to drive you forward.

We all look at what everyone is doing. Instagram is awesome for that. As are websites. My kids laugh at me as I am always taking photos of everything. I have a massive library of photos. So often I use them to create my own mood board when I am designing an event. They inspire me.

I also have a large library of local and international magazines and subscribe to a lot. I encourage my staff to look in furniture stores, to go through fabric shops and to check out any new venue, bar, lounge or restaurant in town.

I find the more I look at what is happening around me globally, the more I am inspired. A colour, a sofa, the way someone plates up their food, it all helps. When I design an event I generally start with a very vague concept and build the details from there. But sometimes I build the event from one piece.

Just recently, I saw some amazing multi coloured Bentwood chairs and fell in love with them. They became the focal design point for an event I did at the MCA. In the end however, as much as I loved them and they were as sensational as I expected, the large floral curtain that was the stage backdrop, stole the show. Working with my amazing florist, we designed and built a large floral drape that brought the room to life with a sense of impending spring. All of that came out of seeing a chair that sparked an idea, that then led to a collaborative process between me as the event producer and my awesome florist. It doesn't matter where you get the spark for an idea from, just that you got that spark and it sparked the idea, that culminated in that event... and the process has begun! **m**

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