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CIARA PETTY

Ciara Petty Design



Ciara Petty returned to Ireland after spending almost 10 years in London working in interior design and branding for a retail design agency, where she was design lead on hospitality and retail projects for clients in South Korea, America and across Europe.

The initial move to London was prompted by the financial crisis, as Ciara had just completed a degree in Interior Architecture, while managing a high-end furniture shop in the IFSC, and the economic situation in Ireland did not favour launching a career in interior design.

The Dublin native’s decision to return to Ireland, where she now lives in Ennis, Co Clare, was for personal reasons. “My husband and I had a baby boy in 2019, and we decided that we would come home to be closer to family. We also felt it was a good time to come back to Ireland as there had been a recovery in the market, and there seemed to be a lot of opportunities,” she says.

Though she initially considered looking for a role similar to what she had been doing in London, the Covid-19 pandemic had deflated employment prospects. Ciara ultimately decided that the time was right to start her own company.

“It’s something I had always wanted to do, and I felt well prepared in terms of the

extensive experience that I had in leading major retail and brand design projects for a wide variety of global companies. But I lacked the network in Ireland that I’d had in London, so I initially thought starting my own company would be a bit further down the line,” she says.

“Ciara Petty Design is primarily an interior design agency. My main focus is design and brand for commercial projects – retail and hospitality, hotels, restaurants – but I also do some high end residential design.”

Ciara says this is a great time to be in retail and hospitality design in Ireland because Irish business owners are acutely aware that they are operating in a competitive market. “Retail and hospitality are no longer about simple transactions because of the advent of online shopping and food delivery services, especially during Covid. Bricks and mortar have become more about telling the brand story and the customer experience, so the design really needs to reflect that,” she says.

Ciara has found that the move to Ennis, where she has a home office, has greatly facilitated family life. “The lifestyle is brilliant. The pace of life is slower, and I find it really great to be able to have a mix of interesting and challenging work and family time,” she says. “I’ve also found it extremely positive from a professional

point of view. Doing business in Ireland is a little bit more relaxed, and, essentially, it is more collaborative. Clients here are really involved in the detail from initial concepts through to developed designs.

While launching the business during the pandemic was daunting, Ciara acquired her first few clients by word of mouth. “In that sense, I started with a bit of a bang, but I then found keeping the business going a bit challenging, as I didn’t have a great network here. Coming from a design, rather than a business background, has also been a big challenge in terms of learning how to run a business,” she says.

Ciara says that participating on the Back for Business course increased her network enormously and taught her invaluable lessons about running a business. “The main thing I’ve learned is to focus on working on the business rather than in the business,” she says. “I would definitely recommend the programme. In fact, I already have recommended it!”

Having just launched a company website, Ciara’s immediate plans are to focus on marketing. One of her clients, Offbeat Donuts, is starting a nationwide rollout of stores with her as lead designer, and she intends to tie her marketing in with their expansion.



POSITION

Director

WHAT WE DO

We design spaces to live, work, dine and shop in.

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