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by: Celina Lafuente de Lavotha 03/02/2024

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Quentin Chiai is a young and ambitious entrepreneur who, after a highly disciplined military career and serving in the prestigious Compagnie des Carabiniers du Prince, made a life-changing turn to follow his passion for design.

Quentin Chiai founded Iconic Design in 2022. He is now expanding, and together with his team, they celebrated the inauguration of their new interior design showroom and boutique on Rue Grimaldi in the Principality on 1st February.

Their maxim: "Creating timeless spaces as iconic as the people who bring them to life".



Quentin Chiai, military man-turned-designer

Monaco Life: Can you give us a summary of your background and how you ended up where you are?

Quentin Chia: I am originally from Normandy. While in the army, I had the unique experience of serving at the Elysée under President François Hollande as *Gendarme* of the Republican Guard. Following that, I joined the prestigious *Carabiniers de Monaco*, a pivotal period in my life. The time during the pandemic served for introspection, leading me to transition from my military career to pursue my lifelong passion for design. Before entering the army, I had pursued construction studies.

Post-military service, I had the chance to join a prominent interior décor showroom in Monaco as a project manager. This experience was crucial for me and helped me develop the skill set needed, especially in the people management area. In 2022, I took the leap and founded Iconic Design, initially operating from a business centre and later expanding to our dedicated showroom and boutique on Rue Grimaldi.

Can you tell us about your personality?

People often describe me as rigorous, a trait instilled through my education and military background. This discipline and logical approach are evident in everything on the work side, as I bring order and am meticulous and methodical. On the other side, adaptability is also a defining aspect of my personality. Having been able to do many different things in life, I firmly believe that nothing is impossible; it's merely a matter of thinking creatively and finding solutions.

On the flip side, I never stop to appreciate what I have accomplished, as I



Iconic Design showroom

What inspired you to develop your business idea?

I switched careers and started Iconic Design because I love design and real estate. Monaco's particular market allowed me to create a company where clients can bring their vision to life in their spaces. Opening a showroom just made sense – now clients can see and feel the furniture, allowing them to explore different possibilities to craft a space that genuinely feels like them.

How did you come up with the name for your business?

Choosing the name "Iconic Design" was a deliberate decision. I wanted something easy to remember, catchy, and inherently connected to what we do. The name encapsulates our focus on creating designs that are distinctive and memorable.

What do you enjoy the most about being an entrepreneur? How do you manage your work-life balance?

The aspect I enjoy the most is the freedom to organise my time according to my priorities. It is true that the entrepreneurial mind is always engaged, allowing me to make things happen during both work and leisure time. However, controlling my schedule enables me to prioritise crucial aspects of my life, such as spending quality time with my young son.

Maintaining work-life balance is crucial for overall well-being. I achieve this by prioritising family, and leveraging the flexibility that comes with entrepreneurship. During working hours, I focus on efficiency and productivity to ensure that I can allocate ample time to both my professional and personal life.

The Iconic Design team: Alexandra Boldrini, Quentin Chiai, and Benedetta Pizzonia

What are your tips to create a great team?

Building an exceptional team starts with trust. When hiring, I sought individuals I could believe in completely. As the personnel expanded, I valued their feedback in the hiring process. Team dynamics are essential, and understanding the vibe among members is crucial for smooth operations. Diversity in skill sets is another critical consideration. I believe in having team members with complementary skills to cover a broad spectrum of expertise.

What aspects of the designer-client relationship would you highlight?

In our client relationship, effective communication is fundamental, ensuring we grasp the project vision accurately. We aim to deliver personalised spaces and emphasise making the entire design process stress-free. We aim to create an open and collaborative atmosphere, to let the client enjoy a seamless and comfortable experience throughout the project. Establishing a relationship based on mutual trust and understanding ensures a positive and collaborative design experience.

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Inside the Iconic Design showroom

As a project manager, what questions will you ask your potential client to help define their project?

From the start, we've been fortunate to work on a mix of residential and commercial projects. While most are residential, we have also received interesting commercial requests that add diversity to our portfolio.

What are the most critical factors and influences that will shape the future of your company and the industry at large?

The future of Iconic Design and the industry hinges on several critical factors. Firstly, our commitment to delivering exceptional service will remain paramount. As the market evolves, staying at the forefront of emerging design trends will be crucial. Additionally, we recognise the significance of environmental sustainability in design. Incorporating eco-friendly practices and materials aligns with the growing industry trend and our responsibility to contribute positively to the ecosystem. Lastly, the ability to adapt to changing client expectations and lifestyle preferences will play a pivotal role. By remaining agile and responsive, we aim to continue crafting timeless, personalised spaces that resonate with our clients.

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Photos source: Iconic Design

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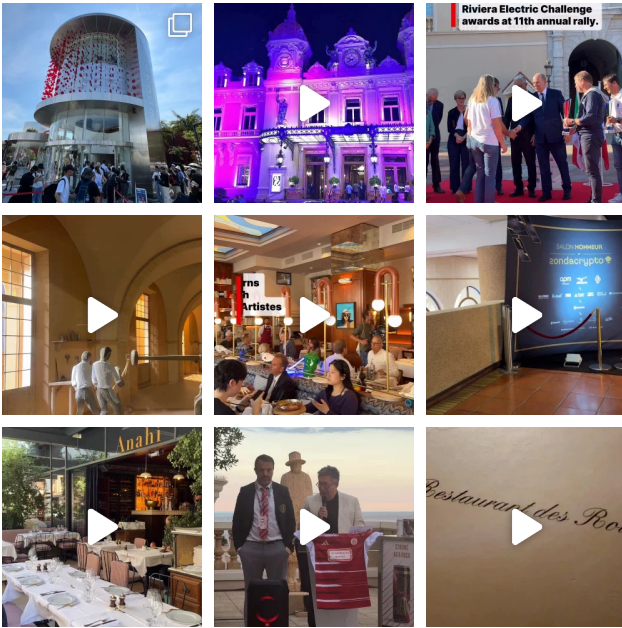
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