

HOME FURNISHINGS

## Studio Brunstrum's Susan Brunstrum: Luxury Woman to Watch 2021

October 20, 2020



Susan Brunstrum

By LUXURY DAILY NEWS SERVICE

*Luxury Daily* annually honors smart women executives who show the potential to make a difference next year in the luxury business. This year's list features 26 honorees who have set ambitious goals to achieve in a luxury market that, while growing, is also challenged by rapid changes in consumer behavior and technology.

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Here is one honoree:

Susan Brunstrum, founder/principal, **Studio Brunstrum**, Chicago

*"High-value purchases will be less of a signal of status and more of a confirmation of values"*

What do you most like about your job?

As an interior designer serving high-net-worth families, most people think my job is all about beauty and aesthetics. It's not.

Creativity, scale, sophistication and good taste are a given. As has been made clear in 2020 with the public health crisis, our homes represent our most important investment: our family's personal wellness.

It gives me great joy to be a diplomatic "connector of dots" and an intuitive problem solver, but the vision to ensure the wellbeing of my clients living in their home comes first.

My focus is on the human experience: how we live, function and interact in our homes. It is not about how a home looks, but how it feels that is of the most importance to me.

I love that our inside-out, heart-centered approach lets me invest in those living there.

What is your biggest challenge at work?

Allotting time for blue-sky thinking, strategic planning and product development, while balancing current client projects and new business development on a weekly basis.

The silver lining of the pandemic? It gave me an opportunity to re-think, re-calibrate, re-analyze and reset my life

goals, both personally and professionally.

How have you adapted to the new order of things with the public health crisis?

Interior design is a very personal business based on mutual trust, respect and communication.

Over the past 18 years, most of our clientele have come from personal relationships and referrals.

I can only see that method of business development increasing in light of the pandemic.

Some of our procedures have changed we can do more virtually than in-person and, of course, we follow the mandated health guidelines but our culture, DNA and core values have remained the same.

What is your work priority for 2021?

We are expanding Studio Brunstrum Home by launching our first line of accessories to complement our line of custom rugs.

We've also been very fortunate. Our clients are well positioned financially to withstand the impact of COVID-19, so we're projecting the same level of collaboration with our current and similar clientele in 2021 and beyond.

On a personal note, I'd like to get involved with a not-for-profit organization to assist others.

The pandemic has only further illuminated the growing disparities throughout the United States, so I'd like to find a way to apply my expertise to create a safe and healthy home for everyone.

What is your proudest achievement in luxury?

The awards from industry peers and accolades from magazines are nice. But what really matters is hearing a client walk in the door and say "Ahh, I'm home." Then I know I've served my client and they've received the luxury they retained me to provide.

We recently completed a turnkey, complete renovation in Chicago's Gold Coast and were then asked to continue collaborating on the couple's primary home in the suburbs.

To me, trust is the foundation of luxury, so knowing that we've developed a relationship with a client that continues beyond the initial project is always a proud moment.

How do you see luxury evolving in 2021?

High-value purchases will be less of a signal of status and more of a confirmation of values.

Acquiring material possessions just because you have the capacity to do so will be perceived as inappropriate and uncaring, as there continues to be more disparity in the world.

Conspicuous consumption or blatant consumerism will be out.

We will only purchase from and collaborate with those that are socially, morally and ethically responsible.

As we are all part of a bigger whole and each person is as equally important as the next, servicing people's essential needs, and giving back will be in.

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