

Bringing the world home

When two graphic designers working in the surf industry started travelling together, their eyes were drawn to products that are unusual and seldom seen.

Meet Australian *gia* Global Honorees, Danny and Tara Solberg, owners of *Few & Far*.

By Michelle Hespe

Precious objects with stories inextricably woven into their fabric, structure, composition and past, products that are *Few & Far* between. This is what Australian couple Danny and Tara Solberg have built the foundations of their thriving retail and interior design business upon, and it was the inspiration for the company name. Basically, they collect and curate beautiful, meaningful pieces to enhance people's homes and lives.

Tara and Danny both trained as graphic designers and met when they were working in the surf industry for a well-established brand. They travelled overseas twice a year to source products and stay ahead of trends, and often while out and about Tara would drag Danny into interiors and collectible stores. Her passion had always been interior decorating.

"We were in Melrose, California, at the beginning of one of our trips, and we discovered the most amazing warehouse-style store full of antiques and artifacts from around the world – Asia, Morocco, Africa, India, Thailand, Indonesia as well as industrial pieces from the USA and elsewhere," explains Tara with obvious excitement in her voice. "The owner was sitting behind a desk at the back of the store, working on his laptop, and Danny said to me, 'I want to be him.' And so we began dreaming and planning the concept of *Few & Far*."

The catch-phrase for *Few & Far* – "*Bringing the World Home*" – is as laden with meaning and warmth as the store's

name, perfectly reflecting the business's welcoming, cozy and richly layered atmosphere where the world's many cultures take centre stage.

"Our store name is essentially what

we do," says Tara. "We travel the world looking for inspirational pieces that tell stories of different cultures that we can mix with modern pieces to create timeless interiors. We also love learning



Global Honouree

about different cultures and traditions and seek out individual pieces with soul that tell a story or spark a question.”

The couple believe that the most captivating and interesting interiors are made up of a collection of pieces that have been added through time. “It takes time to create a thoughtful interior, and the way you feel is noticeably different when you walk into a room decorated with collected pieces – each with stories to tell – compared to a room with a package deal of matching furniture.”

Tara and Danny confess that the hunt for the perfect space for *Few & Far* was a very difficult process. “We are obviously not a shopping mall type experience with straight edges,” Tara explains.

“We wanted old bones in our building with old concrete slabs or old floorboards, timber beams and vintage patinas. These things can’t be reproduced and are a big ingredient in our recipe. We were so lucky with our store’s location – it was an old building that had four stores within it. Over time we presume layers were added with walls to create individual spaces, but when we peeled it all away and exposed the large space, which had fantastic natural light (that also cannot be reproduced!), it became the perfect space for us.”

Growing up, Tara loved to redesign and decorate her bedroom and has never let go of her passion for interior decorating. Her parents always owned their own businesses and her dad is a builder and self-confessed hoarder of building materials and aged timbers. He did the entire renovation on *Few & Far*’s building, and the store fit-out.

“My Dad being a builder had a big influence on my love for interiors, architecture and raw materials,” says Tara. “He understands exactly how I like things to be finished and how they should look, and he makes sure the details are finished to a high standard. I can show him an image or an example of the look I am trying to achieve and off he goes to make it happen, even if it means scouring nearby farms or properties for falling down sheds or old houses being demolished to source the timber for a feature wall.”

Danny and Tara are clearly sentimental, and this goes a long way to enhancing that personal touch and also assists in the buying process.

“Whenever we unpack a container of furniture, we are immediately transported back to the warehouse in India or China where we chose those pieces just from scent alone,” says Tara. “And when we find amazing pieces, I instantly envision an interior that they could

inhabit. I start dreaming about the kind of space that would do them justice – which is when I experience that ‘must buy’ moment!”

With so many memories linked to such an enormous array of incredible pieces, it’s hard for the couple to decide on a favorite object discovered during their travels. However, there is one distinct line that symbolizes their innovative, colourful approach to retail.





"We are always drawn to Herki Tribal rugs – everything about the Herki's patterns, styles and textures resonates with us," explains Danny. "They often have very organic colours mixed with bright almost clashing fluorescents. The patterns are also a little more unpredictable and usually have more geometric motifs than most carpets."

Becoming a *gia* Global Honoree shone a light on the work that Tara and Danny have been doing, and although COVID-19 has greatly affected them, they've realized that the future is bright – perhaps even brighter on the other side of the crisis.

The big night of the live-streamed *gia* awards (which was at 1 am for Australians) came after a tough day at work while home schooling and juggling their three children, and so Tara and Danny were both exhausted. "We set our alarms and woke up bleary-eyed to watch, hoping that no-one could see us in our pajamas," Tara says with a laugh. "When *Few & Far* was announced as one of the six Global Honorees I did a little happy dance and we silently high-fived. I couldn't get back to sleep after the announcement, and we also couldn't help but feel a bit bummed that we weren't popping champagne and celebrating in Chicago!"

But the sense of accomplishment was enough of a reward for Tara and Danny, and they couldn't be prouder of how far they have come. "Winning the title of Global Honoree is SO exciting and extremely gratifying," says Tara. "We absolutely love and believe in what we do and to be rewarded for our passion, hard work and effort is exhilarating. To think that

Tara's father, a builder who collects aged timber and shares her love of raw materials, helped renovate and redesign the store.

what started out as a little store on the South Coast of NSW will now be recognized on a global scale is completely mind-blowing."

Sponsored and organized by The Inspired Home Show and the International Housewares Association (IHA), *gia* is the world's leading awards program honouring overall excellence, business innovation and creative merchandising in homegoods retailing. For more information about the *gia* retail program, the co-sponsors, or participating in *gia*, contact Piritta Törrö at piritta.torro@inspiredconnection.fi.

For information about The Inspired Home Show and to pre-register for the 2021 Show, taking place in Chicago March 13 to 16, 2021, please visit TheInspiredHomeShow.com.

DEALING WITH COVID-19

Like all retailers, the global pandemic has definitely affected Few & Far. After having their best year since opening, Tara and Danny suddenly had to put their physical store on hold and focus on selling online, while at the same time shifting their attention to the interior decorating side of the business. They introduced an E-Decorating program offering interior design services without direct contact which has been hugely successful. They also created several 'how-to' styling videos on our social media streams.