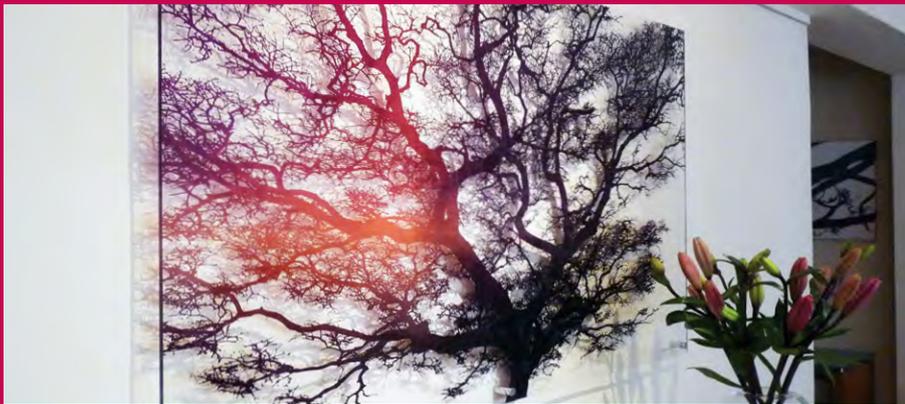


Creating opportunities

Becoming a finalist in UK Trade & Investment's Market Entry Competition was the catalyst that prompted Australian contemporary art design company, signarture, to set up in London



Fast facts

Company:	signarture
Country of Origin:	Australia
Sector:	Creative Industries
UK Location:	London
www.signarture.com	

Sydney-sider Sarah Leslie wanted to replace the framed prints hanging in her apartment with something more individual and unique. She shopped around in local galleries and art shops, but couldn't find anything that suited both her taste and her budget. So, she decided to get creative and produce something herself.

Having spent years in fashion product development, Sarah knew that she had the skills to create something that people would want to buy. Drawing inspiration from her travels, her expertise in art and fashion and countless design magazines, she set about creating a diverse range of collections that reflect the changing trends in interior design. In 2006, she set up signarture to bring this affordable artwork to the market.

"I found that there was really nothing out there between reproduction prints that you could pick up for around AUS\$50, and original artwork that would cost at least AUS\$5000," says Sarah, owner and creative director of signarture. "It struck me that

there were probably other people out there wanting to buy affordable artwork, so decided to bridge this gap in the market. The way art is presented is as important as the artwork itself, and I focussed on developing innovative materials to present signarture in a way that would suit contemporary interiors. For example, we are well known in Australia for offering a unique form of perspex art which uses the transparency of the medium to add a new dimension to the artworks. The design interacts with the light around it, taking on a different look and feel as the light changes throughout the day."

Homeward bound

Sarah has lived in Australia for 18 years, though she originally comes from London. Being familiar with the UK market, she recognised that this would be a sensible starting point when the time came to expand signarture beyond Australia. When Sarah heard about a

competition being run by UK Trade & Investment (UKTI) in late 2010, this gave her the chance to really consider her approach to the UK market in some depth. She submitted her competition entry and was delighted to become a finalist in the Entrepreneur category.

Following the competition, Sarah met members of the Sydney UKTI team who referred her to various contacts in London, including trade bodies, bilateral cultural organisations, and websites for lead generation specifically related to the UK's interior design sector.



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UKTI also introduced her to a British professional services provider specialising in both the UK and Australian tax and legal systems. Meanwhile, a friend moving to the UK agreed to become signarture’s UK country manager and soon enough the company’s first overseas expansion was underway.

“The design consciousness of interior designers and consumers in the UK is similar to Australia,” says Sarah. “Although China and India are popular export destinations for Australian businesses, there is a very different aesthetic there that signarture doesn’t cater to. Entering UKTI’s Market Entry Competition gave me the impetus to sit down and really work out my business plan in detail. Being a finalist really opened my eyes for the first time to the support that UKTI can offer businesses coming to the UK. As I prepared to launch signarture in the UK, these resources were incredibly useful.”

Firm foundations

As signarture comes to the end of its first financial year in the UK, Sarah is justly proud of what the company has achieved. The company is set up in a serviced office in Marylebone, where

its artwork is on display throughout the communal areas of the building. It has also secured an annual lease on a showcase at the Chelsea Harbour Design Centre, a key location where premium brands display their products to the interior design trade. As a result, one of the UK’s leading property developers, Berkeley, picked up signarture’s work to hang in its apartment blocks.

On her next trip to the UK, Sarah plans to meet with the UKTI sector specialist for the creative & media sector to discuss further initiatives to help signarture to grow.

“We have learned a lot in our first year in London, and feel that we have laid the foundations for a successful business in the UK,” says Sarah. “As in Australia, we are attracting a similar mix of property developers, interior designers and private clients. UKTI could not have been more helpful as we have got ourselves up and running, and I look forward to their continued support. Whether you’re a small or large business, you will benefit from the resources, connections and information that UKTI has to offer, to help make your decision to set up in the UK a success.”

The UK - Europe’s leading investment destination

Every year around 70 Australian businesses of all sizes, decide to expand to the UK or increase their business presence there. It’s the leading European destination for Australian businesses, and the second most popular destination overall - but why?

It’s more than just our close political, historical and commercial relationships - it’s because the UK is a fantastic place

to do business. It provides a unique gateway of international connections, is a recognised leader in the fields of creativity and innovation and is the sixth largest economy in the world. The UK is also one of the easiest places to set up and run a business. According to the World Bank, it takes just 13 days to set up a business in the UK, compared to the OECD average of 15 days.

Setting up your company in the UK

Deciding where to locate your international business is one of the biggest decisions you’ll make and can be daunting. UK Trade & Investment helps businesses coming to the UK with every aspect of setting up their new operations.

As the UK Government’s inward investment agency, it’s our job to know the UK’s strengths and where investment opportunities exist.

This means we can help your company to do all the research you need to make an informed decision, and then get up and running as quickly as possible.

UK Trade & Investment can help you to:

- Do your research
- Build key contacts
- Choose your location
- Set up your new office
- Grow your business internationally



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