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Flowers

Luxury look

For the luxury hotel industry, first impressions are vital. Samantha Lyster meets the florist top hotels call in to ensure that their arrangements are stunning

W hen London's Montcalm Hotel reopened its doors following a £38 million refurbishment, it wanted 'statement' floral displays to reflect its new five-star status.

So it called in Vita Rinkeviciene of Vital Flowers, who has some 30 years experience of producing grand arrangements for the hotel and restaurant industry, to create the horticultural look for the hotel and its sister establishment Montcalm London City.

The choice paid off when last year <u>the Montcalm</u> London City Hotel was awarded the James Miller trophy for best entry in the Summer Flowers Campaign, hosted by the Corporation of London and the Worshipful Company of Gardeners.

Rinkeviciene originally hails from Lithuania but moved to London some eight years ago from Holland thinking she would "stay for one year maybe, but I fell in love with London and I'm still here."

The florist, who has an air of delicacy and youthful glow to her similar to the flowers she arranges, controls a substantial yearly budget for supplying and maintaining not only flowers but also the plants for the two hotels. "My main source for supplies is New Covent Garden Market," she says.

"I also source from a few other places, and we are trying to buy in more flowers and plants from local growers. I work on a seasonal basis; I let that be my inspiration."

Rinkeviciene says that the natural world is also a great inspiration along with horticultural books and magazines. The Montcalm hotels are not her only service-sector clients – her team takes care of many restaurant and corporate accounts as well as creating bridal, celebration and sympathy bouquets.

For the Montcalm, she creates a new centerpiece for its reception area and its recently opened grill restaurant every week, and so she is constantly looking for flowers that can look as good on day seven as day one.

She adds: "I think it is incredibly important that luxury hotels have beautiful floral displays because they are eye catching and guests think "this place is special" and that's how all hotels should want their guests to feel, that they are staying somewhere special."

Although the budget is in the thousands, this is not just for statement displays that Rinkeviciene must provide, but also foyer table decorations, displays for the spa and orchids to set off areas such as the concierge desk.

"I cannot get carried away with ideas, my displays need to fit the prices of the flowers and so it is always about balancing the budget with my imagination," she explains. "As a florist you are always having to think about what the customer's taste is, and it's the same for a hotel."

The Montcalm's general manager Sabine Altschaeffl says that Rinkeviciene has added to the hotel's reputation as a premier place to stay. "Vita has a wonderful understanding of the vision of the hotel and her seasonal flowers not only create a warm welcome to our guests on entering, but contribute to the ambience throughout," she adds.

"Since opening many of our guests have remarked on both the quality and creativity of the hotel's flower arrangements which makes the effort all the more worthwhile."



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- 1- Vita Rinkeviciene of Vital Flowers
- 2—The foyer centrepiece
- 3—The Montcalm exterior with planting by Vital Flowers