

detail

Q&A: BRANDS BY DESIGN? DENISE KORN, KORN DESIGN



When it comes to the more gossamer elements of design—the menu graphics, logo placement, artwork to match the brand—some ultra-specialized design firms are emerging to create these pieces. Such firms are a growing niche, supporting conventional firms and operators that outsource these delicate brand-related details.

Denise Korn, principal of 10-year-old Korn Design in Boston runs a firm whose stamp is on Jurys Hotel Boston, CUFFS Bar, Great Bay Restaurant, The Charles Hotel, all in Boston. In each, Korn describes her role as “creating an emotional connection between people and places, and between products and services.” Below she explains to HD what she does to flesh out a brand.

HD: You play an unorthodox role. Why do people hire you?

DK: Owners and Developers engage us to assist them in pulling together the best creative team and partnerships for specific projects. Our role is then to integrate all of these services toward realizing the owner’s conceptual dream.

Interior designers and architects? We don’t do what they do, but we do great things together. When they bring us onto a project, collaboration drives the best results.

Design directors and VP’s of architecture/design strategy for national flags and boutique properties invite us to work with their interior and architectural design team on specific aspects of their brand strategy.

HD: What’s your background?

DK: My design experience includes editorial and book design, picture editing corporate identity, and brand design. My first design job out of college was at The New York Times. In the past, I wrote a dance column and photographed performers. Theater and performance has strong influence in our work.

HD: Why specialize?

DK: Early on, I noticed we were often hired for a specific and isolated task, such as designing the way-finding signage or the identity for a restaurant. I’d always ask a lot of questions as to how these pieces fit into the whole project, and thus discovered the recurring gap in the project team.

HD: So what’s missing in most restaurant experiences?

DK: Soul.

HD: What’s your fantasy project?

DK: It would be great to reinvent Holiday Inn. There’s so much great stuff attached to that brand which has been lost over the years. Infused with the right spirit, it would be a perfect new option for budget conscious consumers with a sense of style and adventure. Kripsy Kreme without all the fat!