

Company: J/Brice Design International, Inc, USA

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Best Multi-Discipline Architecture Practice – USA & High-End Hospitality Project of the Year: Kempinski Al Othman Hotel



J/Brice Design International, Inc. is a global design firm and Certified Interior Design and Architectural Giant specializing in the hospitality industry. We caught up with Jeffrey Ornstein to find out more about the firm and explore the secrets behind its success.

Founded in 1989, today J/Brice ranks among the three top ranked independent hospitality design firms in New York / New England area and has been identified as among the ten fastest growing design firms in the US. The firm has been a Certified Interior Design Giant since 1993, and Architectural Giant since 1995. Jeffrey outlines how the firm achieves these prestigious accolades through its commitment to excellence and sheer hard work.

“At J/Brice, we have consistently ranked among the leading interior design firms worldwide, specializing in interiors for the hospitality industry. We were Named Top Interior Design Firm of The Year by NEWH, the nation’s largest professional hospitality organization, and Boston Voyager which identifies local businesses, entrepreneurs, independent artists, institutions that matter, honoured J/Brice Design as one of its Most Inspiring Stories. J/Brice has also twice been identified as one of the Top Ten Fastest Growing Design Firms nationwide by Interior Design Magazine.

“These awards and accolades are testimony to our commitment to creating the outcome that meets the client’s needs on every project. As such, our goal first and foremost is to understand then owner’s objective for their investments, and translate into an award winning property. It should be distinctive, gracious, functional, culturally savvy, and revenue generating. Translating a developer’s vision into the art of design takes focus, clarity, and a through understanding of societal shifts and social mores To be a truly successful designer this all needs to be done on time, and in budget. I am truly proud to say our team has mastered all of the above.”

Thanks to this approach the firm has worked on many exciting projects over the years. Its most recent signature engagements include the fabled HMS Queen Mary, the iconic urban landmark The Helmsley Hotel in New York, The Kempinski Al Othman Hotel and Towers, Al Khobar, Saudi Arabia, and 50 Liberty, which has broken all records as the most expensive residential development in the City of Boston.

J/Brice is also a preferred design group for Hilton Hotels, Marriott International/Starwood Hotels, Intercontinental Hotel Group, Hyatt Hotels



Corporation, and Wyndham Worldwide Properties. The firm’s international credentials include working for TAJ Hotels, Kempinski, Royal Tulip, and boutique properties in Qatar, and The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Working all over the world, J/Brice has to adapt its style to suit every region, its culture and client specification, as Jeffrey highlights.

Sky Bridge: Hotel Exterior



Sky Bridge

"Since we work all over the globe, at J/Brice we have to be flexible, as client tastes vary from region to region. Motifs and palettes that are highly successful in one part of the globe may not translate as successfully elsewhere. I have been around the world more times than I could ever count, taking with my top tier designers who also embrace the immersion. We never stop studying our environment, asking our clients questions, and then studying what we find and learn so that the design we create reflects the specificity of the task at hand. And this never gets old.

"Alongside our focus on style, we understand that incorporating technology in design is paramount in today's ever advancing world. Being mindful that today's technological advances can be surpassed tomorrow, it is essential that trends in technology are recognized in advance, and anticipated as the

design develops. Equally important is to design with the knowledge that the changing face of technology will change how it is incorporated into a concept. This is something we always strive to achieve in every project we undertake."

As with any client facing industry, in hospitality design having a strong, dependable team is vital to success. As such, Jeffrey is eager to praise his staff and explain how they work together to create stunning, unique designs.

"To support our clients around the world, J/Brice has been a multicultural melting pot since our beginnings in the late 1980's. Our boutique firm has easily had designers from every corner of the globe bringing a different personal history to the charrette. I look for passion when interviewing. Skills can be honed, and horizons broadened, courage can be instilled, but a



lack of initiative usually cannot be overcome. My senior designers all share my belief that the right candidate, regardless of the specifics of academic background, can be mentored and become a valuable asset.

"Our commitment to highly personalized, well thought out design strategies and strong intrapersonal relationships within the team are a key component to our strength. Additionally, we are also known for exceptionally personalized service to our clients. We had several groups that have commissioned us consistently for over 20 years, and add new ones as we go. We approach the responsibilities of our job very seriously, but do it in team, oriented and amicable fashion. You can be highly professional and impressive with a client while demonstrating familial sensibilities at the same time. All things being equal, design is very subjective. Fundamentally, the designer/ client relationship for projects of our scope is a marriage of sorts, lasting many

month and often years. There are intuitive communications that take place when a developer is considering a design team, and these cannot be anticipated, nor should they be answered in reactive manner just to be awarded the project."

This collaborative, supportive approach extends beyond J/Brice's internal culture, as Jeffrey often contributes to the wider design industry's knowledge by sharing his expertise through written and spoken contributions, which he discusses in more detail.

"As a result of establishing a forward way to address hospitality design, I have been asked to share my thoughts and perspectives at many conferences, which I thoroughly enjoy. I have been a guest lecturer throughout the Middle East, Europe and North America, and was the first American named keynote

speaker of The Kingdom Hotel Expansion and Investment World Summit in Riyadh, KSA.

“To further share my ideas on design and its successful implementation, I am also a contributing editor to Hotel Executive Magazine, and have been featured in Boutique Design Magazine, Hospitality Design, Lodging and Hospitality, Gulf Interiors, Byouteit Magazine, Hotel Business, The Commercial Observer, Young Hotelier, The Improper Bostonian, and Scene Magazine, who named me one of Boston’s 12 Most Influential People. I am also fortunate to be able to work with young people, which I really enjoy, mentoring them as they develop their design sensibilities, and am the Board of Advisers at the prestigious New York School of Interior Design, and a Visiting Critic at The Boston Architectural Center and The Rhode Island School of Design (RISD). This range of opportunities allows me to support the wider property design market and share my knowledge and expertise with my industry peers and the up and coming designers of tomorrow. I was also honoured by being called to be a Judge for the annual Hotel World Platinum

Circle Awards in Las Vegas, Nevada, and for The Boutique Design Global Hotel Design Awards”.

Looking to the future, J/Brice has many exciting opportunities on the horizon which will allow it to grow and flourish, as Jeffrey is proud to conclude.

“Currently, at J/Brice we are working on a divergent group of projects, from a 100,000 sf summer palace on the Red Sea, helping a client develop an upscale cafe chain opening dozens a year with the expectation that within 5 years there will be over 3000 locations, to a Video Arcade, a Sea Aquarium, a boutique hotel in Mecca, multi hotel properties in Times Square, as well as more than dozen luxury condominium towers throughout the USA.

“With regards to the future, we are already looking into undertaking an array of new projects including working on luxury resorts, and I foresee many invigorating new collaborations which will help drive J/Brice to even greater success.”

