

BUILDING A STYLE THAT'S ALL HIS OWN

PRINCETON ARCHITECT BRINGS PLENTY OF VARIETY TO HIS PORTFOLIO OF PROJECTS

BY LAURA JOSZT

DURING JOSHUA ZINDER'S 20 years as architect, he has designed for almost every type of building - from restaurants and medical facilities to prisons - which has made it rather difficult for him to create one principle of design.

But despite that, Princeton-based Joshua Zinder Architecture & Design found a big-name client in Las Vegas Sands Corp., which appreciates the variety he brings to the drawing board.

"We really tried to make the restaurant really about (Wakuda) and about his food, and how he is always constantly exploring taste and texture."

Joshua Zinder, Principal JZA+D

Zinder, principal of his firm, has become something of a go-to architect for Sands since 2008, when he worked on the Palazzo's Restaurant Charlie; he's designed a total of 11 projects for the company. While not all of them have come to fruition, because of the economy, Zinder recently completed two restaurants halfway around the world - in Singapore's Marina Bay Sands Resort & Casino - with one of them earning recognition from the state chapter of AIA, American Institute of Architects.

AIA New Jersey awarded Zinder's firm a merit award for interior architecture at Waku Ghin, for how effectively he integrated all aspects of the restaurant. That's ironic, considering Zinder purposefully used contrasting materials in his design, to reflect the cooking styles of chef Tetsuya Wakuda. As a result, silk fabrics hang from the ceiling in a room that has stone floors and counters.

"We really tried to make the restaurant really about (Wakuda) and about his food, and how he is always constantly exploring taste and texture," Zinder said. "So we were constantly combining hard and cool surfaces with soft and warm surfaces." Since Zinder worked closely with Wakuda, the firm based the carpet on the patterns off the designs of the chef's knife, and included Wakuda's collection of sculptures and paintings, too.

"The idea was we were creating a gallery for him," Zinder said. "On one side it has Visual arts, his collections, and on the other side it has culinary arts, what he has created there."

The second restaurant Zinder designed, for the Marina Bay hotel, was more challenging, he said; the challenge in Sky on 57 was not obstructing the panoramic views of Singapore it offers. Those different design philosophies - one based on the chef, the other on the views - almost describes Zinder's work overall: He admitted that he doesn't really have one definitive style, because he tries to be open to lots of possibilities when designing.

That wide range of creativity is some thing that is readily apparent. Princeton-based KSS Architects may be a competitor,

but partner Allan Kehrt is impressed at what he's seen from the young firm.

"It appears as if he has a lot of fun," he said. "Architects are passionate about what they do. They love it. And Josh seems to be that kind of person."

Zinder also has taken his company in the direction that many in his field dream about: product design. According to Kehrt, it's not unusual for architects to talk about how they can design better chairs or light fixtures, but it rarely happens that they actually end up pursuing such avenues.

Working with a distribution company, Zinder's firm has designed light fixtures that are sold to other architects and interior designers. Zinder has plenty of experience to draw on for his product line, because he often conceptualizes the furniture for his projects.



"I think the biggest challenge is coming up with a piece of furniture that can stand on its own and can also fit seamlessly into a space," he said.

And though Zinder's designs can't be found in stores, he would like to transition there one day. He understands that not everyone working with an architect is ready to have custom-made furniture or light fixtures, especially in the case of residential work, like basement renovations.

"I think it's nice to see that the spaces you make have the potential to be more than just for your clients, that they can actually be good architecture," Zinder said.