EXPERIENCE-RICH ENVIRONMENTS
SHAPING SPACES THAT MOVE PEOPLE
RTKL's Chicago Office
ABOUT US

AT THE FOREFRONT OF COMMERCIAL DESIGN FOR MORE THAN FIVE DECADES, RTKL IS AN INTERNATIONAL ARCHITECTURE, PLANNING, ENGINEERING AND CREATIVE SERVICES FIRM. WE COLLABORATE WITH CLIENTS TO CREATE EXPERIENCE-RICH ENVIRONMENTS THAT BOTH STIR PEOPLE’S EMOTIONAL RESPONSES AND PROMOTE BUSINESS VITALITY.

RTKL has an award-winning international portfolio of environments at many scales and types, from expansive resorts to intimate retail spaces, from complex urban districts to corporate headquarters. Our process and creativity drive our characteristic vision and distill solutions that lead to the world’s most successful places. Our success lies not in relying on some predetermined design concept or traditional way of looking at things; our success comes from understanding who our clients are and where they want to go.
WHAT WE DO
SUCCESSFUL BRAND-RICH ENVIRONMENTS EXIST IN A VARIETY OF SPACES, FROM RETAIL AND HOSPITALITY VENUES TO WORKPLACE, RESIDENTIAL, AND EVEN HEALTHCARE SETTINGS. WHILE EACH TYPE OF ENVIRONMENT AND CLIENT REQUIRES A UNIQUE APPROACH, THE OVERARCHING PROCESS OF CONCEIVING, CREATING, AND DEVELOPING BRAND-RICH ENVIRONMENTS REMAINS CONSTANT. WITHOUT DYNAMIC DESIGN THAT REFLECTS CORE VALUES AND STRATEGY, PLACES CAN FAIL TO FORGE CRITICAL CONNECTIONS. FOR THIS REASON, OUR DEDICATED TEAM OF PROFESSIONALS HAS HONED A RARE BLEND OF SKILLS THAT CATER TO THE FULL SPECTRUM OF ENVIRONMENTS.

WHO WE ARE
An in-house division of RTKL, The Environments Studio is a multi-disciplinary team that goes beyond form and function to interpret an intangible brand, corporate mission or experience into a tangible, built environment. The Environments Studio imparts a unique perspective that draws on our experience in retail, hospitality and workplace projects. Our process defines our approach, beginning with the early stages of immersion and strategy, continuing through to the critical translation of Big Idea concepts into design, and finishing with implementation and installation of thought-provoking, experience-rich environments.

WHY IT MATTERS
For decades, RTKL has been designing dynamic buildings and environments—places that simultaneously meet our clients’ goals and surpass the expectations of users. The lines between mission and environment have blurred as times have changed and business has evolved, providing greater opportunities for our clients to make deeper, more meaningful connections to the people who live, work and play there. Our process is our response to the changing role of design—enabling clients to create the more cohesive, more potent environments that most resonate with people.

HOW WE WORK
Because we understand that today’s design challenges often take a blend of expertise and experience, we bring dynamic and accomplished professionals to the table, including brand strategists, planners, architects and graphic designers. While the depth and breadth of our expertise is unparalleled, we also understand the importance of having these experts in the right combinations on the right projects at the right steps in the process. It is this careful negotiation of expertise, timing, and context that give our strategic teams and partnerships an edge over competitors.
WHAT WE CAN DO FOR YOU

BECAUSE OUR APPROACH IS BASED ON A HOLISTIC APPROACH, WE OFFER OUR CLIENTS A WIDE ARRAY OF SERVICES THAT COMPLEMENT OUR CORE DESIGN DISCIPLINES. THESE RANGE FROM THE FRONT-END STRATEGIC SERVICES, THAT HELP CLIENTS DEFINE AND SHAPE BUSINESS GOALS AND CUSTOMER TOUCHPOINTS, TO THE MORE DETAILED ASPECTS OF PLACEMAKING AND EXPERIENCE DEFINITION.

BRAND STRATEGY
In order to immerse ourselves in your business, we conduct market research and charrettes to better understand who you are, who your target consumers are, and who your competitors are. We then shape a strategy that uses the built environment as a foundation upon which to build, hone and cement your brand’s inherent qualities.

IDENTITY
We unearth the essence of your brand’s character. Shaping, accentuating and communicating this character through the built environment or a recognizable mark, we create distinct signatures that memorably relate to consumers and distinguish your brand from the competition.

EXPERIENCE MASTER PLANNING
Drawing from our knowledge of wayfinding and placemaking, we envision the experience of an unbuilt place. By analyzing how people will use a space, we shape an environment that promotes and expresses distinctive types and sequences of experiences.

ENVIRONMENTS
Using architecture, interior architecture and design, and design guidelines, we shape a built environment that embodies and reinforces your brand’s character, creating an experiential atmosphere that resonates with a message of deeper significance.

ENVIRONMENTAL GRAPHICS
We choreograph memorable experiences using your business goals as our guide. By communicating through touchpoints in the built environment, signage and print collateral, we create a multi-layered, intimate connection between your brand and the outside world.
OUR PROCESS

DRAWING FROM OUR EXPERIENCE WORKING WITH A BROAD RANGE OF CLIENT TYPES ACROSS MARKETS AND SECTORS, WE GUIDE THE DESIGN PROCESS FROM THE EARLY STAGES OF IMMERSION AND STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT TO THE INSTALLATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT. A PIONEER IN THE INDUSTRY, RTKL UNDERSTANDS THE IMPORTANCE OF PROCESS IN CREATING EXPERIentially RICH ENVIRONMENTS.

1. IMMERSION
We immerse our team in your business to gain a deep understanding of your culture and values, business objectives, operational goals, brand, and work practices and procedures. Along with the basic parameters of schedule and budget, our experts factor in a profound knowledge of external market drivers and influencers.

2. STRATEGY
Armed with an understanding of who our clients are and what they seek to achieve, we script a specific road map that identifies and articulates your strategic goals. Your strategy becomes our strategy.

3. TRANSLATION
We translate the strategy into alternative concepts and approaches. Because this step is the most critical in building a strong bridge between mission and a built environment, we ensure that we have the right group of brand, business, and design professionals together at the right time.

4. SOLUTIONS
We create a fully developed design solution grounded in strategic thinking and guided by budget, schedule, and quality targets.

5. IMPLEMENTATION
We implement the design solution in the built environment.
“We respond to each community’s unique needs, aspirations, capacities and constraints; there’s no one-size-fits-all solution.”

[Katie Sprague, RTKL Vice President]
Across geographies and project types, RTKL brings together the disciplines of master planning and urban design, brand strategy, architecture, landscape design, marketing, and environmental graphic design to balance function with a sense of place. We consider the experience of a place from the ground up, and merge the physical and cultural context with clients’ needs and expectations. As a result, we create truly distinctive and memorable places for both clients and target users.
“Beginning 5000 years ago and continuing today, Failaka Island has its own unique story to tell—one of transformation and rebirth.”

[Katie Sprague, RTKL Vice President]
FAILAKA ISLANDS [KUWAIT]

LOCATED IN THE ARABIAN GULF A FEW MILES FROM THE SHORE OF KUWAIT CITY, FAILAKA ISLAND HAS CONNECTED PORTS OF TRADE BETWEEN MESOPOTAMIA AND THE CIVILIZATIONS ALONG BOTH GULF COASTLINES SINCE 3000 BC. LOOKING TO ESTABLISH FAILAKA AS A TOURIST DESTINATION OF HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL IMPORT, THE CLIENT SELECTED RTKL TO CREATE A DISTINCTIVE EXPERIENCE AND IDENTITY THAT COMMUNICATES KUWAIT’S RICH HERITAGE TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD.

RTKL began by bringing together a strategically selected group of professionals from a diverse range of disciplines: master planning, architecture, landscape design, brand strategy and environmental graphic design. Based on an understanding of local culture and history, the team explored the broader concepts of elements hidden and revealed—the idea that these islands were keepers of treasures both real and spiritual, ancient and modern. The team then translated this concept to design, weaving this thread throughout all aspects of the master plan. From the hotels, chalets and resort housing to the commercial outlets, marina and sporting facilities, visitors are guaranteed an experience beyond the simple pursuits of sun, sea, and sand.
“I think the more we studied the great waterfront urban districts in the world, the more we came to believe that for this project to help redefine the future of the city, it needed to have a real critical mass.”

[Adam Fishman of Fairmount Properties in a March 2008 article on Cleveland.com]
CLEVELAND FLATS [CLEVELAND, OHIO]
LOCATED ON THE LOW-LYING BANKS ALONG THE CUYAHOGA RIVER, CLEVELAND FLATS IS AN AREA ONCE RENOWNED FOR ITS STEEL MILLS. OVER THE LAST SEVERAL DECADES, THIS DISTRICT HAS BECOME A NIGHTLIFE HOT SPOT, BRINGING RENEWED INTEREST TO THIS ONCE DERELICT BROWNFIELD SITE.

Knowledgeable of RTKL's extensive work in retail-led and sustainably minded regeneration, the client sought out a design solution that would bring critical mass to this burgeoning urban district and transform it from an evening destination to an around-the-clock live/work/play environment.

Following extensive research, RTKL translated Cleveland Flats’ rich history and heritage into an experiential narrative for the contemporary visitor. Using environmental graphics, signage, wayfinding, architecture and landscaping, RTKL crafted an urban district experience that embodies the character of Cleveland Flats and communicates the significance of the area’s historical and ecological legacy to future generations. Capitalizing on a stunning waterfront location and a compelling industrial legacy, RTKL’s experience master plan embraces Cleveland’s “rust belt” legacy and provides the city with a distinctively vernacular urban experience.

Client
Fairmount Properties

Services
Experience Environment Master Planning, Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Environmental Graphic Design
“The healthcare industry is becoming increasingly aware of the power environments have to communicate mission and connect with patients.”

[Katie Sprague, RTKL Vice President]
MERCY MEDICAL CENTER [BALTIMORE, MARYLAND]

EAGER TO RECONNECT WITH THE COMMUNITY AND REPOSITION ITSELF WITHIN THE COMPETITIVE BALTIMORE HEALTHCARE MARKET, MERCY MEDICAL CENTER TASKED RTKL WITH REIMAGING THE ENTIRE MERCY ENVIRONMENT TO BETTER CONVEY ITS HEALING-CENTERED MISSION AND PROMOTE A POSITIVE PATIENT EXPERIENCE. BEGINNING WITH A LEAF PATTERN LOGO, WHICH SYMBOLIZES MERCY’S COMMITMENT TO “LIFE” AND “FAITH,” RTKL PROVIDED SERVICES THAT TOUCH EACH ASPECT OF THE MERCY ENVIRONMENT.

To underscore Mercy’s mission and ties to the community, RTKL designed a donor recognition pool for the hospital’s interior. Water, a symbol for healing, provides patients and visitors with a sense of comfort and peace. Throughout the Medical center, color-coded signage and wayfinding provide the double function of calming visitors and reinforcing Mercy’s identity. Outside, Mercy’s tallest building—with prominent logo—now stands as a shining beacon amid a sea of dark buildings, prompting one local newspaper to call it, “the best addition to the Baltimore skyline.” A comprehensive reimaging project, Mercy Medical Center proves that environments play a powerful role in communicating a positive healthcare experience.

Client
Mercy Medical Center

Services
“An industry historically based on standardization and known for similar, traditional hotel rooms has evolved into a vehicle through which designers, developers and consumers alike can make a personal statement.”

[Following the Lifestyle Trend, a 2008 Ernst & Young publication]
From urban hotels to seaside resorts, our hospitality environments provide unique experiences that exploit the innate treasures of the surrounding locale and express operators’ missions or brands. We blend a range of disciplines—including architecture, brand strategy, planning and interior design and environmental graphics—to ensure that every touchpoint, from the time of booking until check-out, resonates with guests and contributes to a consistent and inspiring guest experience. Capitalizing on the creative synergies of our hospitality and residential work, we strategically align our clients’ hotels and resorts to stand out from their competitors’.
“Consumers have wellness on the mind. As a result, the desire to promote physical, mental and spiritual well-being is driving new types of development and design.”

[Gina Goodin, RTKL Principal]
CANYON RANCH [TUCSON, ARIZONA]

CANYON RANCH, ONE OF THE NATION’S LEADING HEALTH AND WELLNESS RESORTS, WAS LOOKING TO GAIN AN UNDERSTANDING OF ITS EVOLVING GUEST DEMOGRAPHIC AND EXPAND ITS SUCCESSFUL HOSPITALITY PRODUCT INTO THE RESIDENTIAL MARKET. TO PRESERVE THE INTEGRITY OF ITS UNIQUE EXPERIENCE, THE COMPANY TASKED RTKL WITH CREATING GUIDELINES TO TRANSLATE THE CANYON RANCH BRAND ACROSS PROPERTIES AND IN NEW ENVIRONMENTS.

Working collaboratively across offices, a team of RTKL planners, architects, interior designers, landscape architects, sustainability experts and writers worked closely with the client to define each category of spaces within a Canyon Ranch environment. Rather than simply write design guidelines and standards, the team began by creating brand guidelines in an effort to define what makes the Canyon Ranch experience unique. In doing so, the team determined how each space affects the users’ five senses, how users feel when they are in each space, and how each space contributes to the overall experience. With a deep understanding of the experience in place, only then did RTKL create design guidelines, standards and interior design concepts. The resulting product ensures that developers and architects tasked with the next generation of Canyon Ranch properties accurately capture and preserve the brand. The 400+-page document, which reflects a truly collaborative process, sets a new precedent for design standards.

Client
Canyon Ranch
Services
Branding, Design Guidelines and Experience Guidelines
“Daufuskie Island will distinguish itself from other island resorts by reinforcing its unique identity across various touchpoints—from the plan and architecture to the operations and amenities.”

[Karl Stumpf, RTKL Senior Vice President]
It has a rich cultural and archeological history and boasts nutrient-rich marshes, stunning Low Country scenery, and an array of wildlife, shellfish and marine life. Familiar with the firm’s ability to identify the “white space” in a market and provide a multidisciplinary approach, the client commissioned RTKL to create a thorough reimaging plan for the entire island. RTKL’s approach hinged on creating a unique and cohesive experience—one that capitalizes on the island’s resort potential and creates a totally different kind of island destination.

The design team began the reimaging process by examining other island resort and spa facilities throughout the Southeast—such as Kiawah Island and Hilton Head—and by looking at the motivations and expectations of a variety of target guest types. After identifying the “white space” in the market, RTKL eschewed the manicured and pristine character of Daufuskie’s major competitors and focused instead on Daufuskie’s natural beauty, history and character. From there, the “It’s only natural” identity emerged. The team translated and applied this new identity throughout Daufuskie, from amenities, operations and marketing to master planning and architecture. Resultantly, RTKL has shaped a laid-back, uncultivated, timeless quality that brings the Daufuskie experience alive and sets it apart from other island resorts.
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**Privileged**

**What it means**

Above all else, the Privileged Experience makes guests feel important. It lets them know they have arrived somewhere special and exclusive; somewhere that appreciates their successes; somewhere that delivers on the luxurious hotel experience they have earned.

**How it’s expressed**

Customization, personalization, and a sense of “arrival” are instrumental to delivering this experience. Every touchpoint—from the time of reservations to the moment of entrance into the lobby to the interactions with staff—should work together to make guests feel like major players.
JW MARRIOTT MARQUIS [MIAMI, FLORIDA]
RTKL HELPS RE-DEFINE AND RE-POSITION AN EXISTING BRAND WITHIN THE MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL PORTFOLIO, CREATING A NEW EXPERIENCE-RICH DESTINATION FOR MIAMI’S SOPHISTICATED WORLD TRAVELERS.

Providing brand strategy and concept design services, RTKL identified the “white space” in Miami’s crowded hospitality market, creating new opportunities for an existing Marriott International brand. RTKL’s demographic and psychographic analysis helped to define a targeted guest whose view of luxury travel included customized services, indulgent surroundings and high-tech amenities with a high-touch approach.

The resulting design concept is true to the Marriott International brand: modern and classic elements blend to provide an upscale and sophisticated experience. Above and beyond the design, programmatic elements reinforce the experience, providing guests with services and amenities of unparalleled quality, including star chef Daniel Boulud’s DB Bistro Moderne; a world-class spa; and full-service health and fitness facilities. Having identified that guests want to be “privileged, pampered and plugged in,” RTKL has used design to create a sophisticated branded experience.

Client
MDM Development

Services
Interior Architecture and Design and Brand Strategy
OUR LUCAYA [GRAND BAHAMA ISLAND, BAHAMAS]
RTKL HAS WORKED ON A SERIES OF COMMISSIONS AT OUR LUCAYA THAT HAS COVERED MORE THAN SEVEN YEARS, BEGINNING WITH THE INITIAL RENOVATION AND EXPANSION THAT REPOSITIONED THE PROPERTY AS GRAND BAHAMA ISLAND’S PREMIER DESTINATION RESORT.

Inspired by the island’s rich beauty and natural amenities, RTKL planned and designed a resort experience that captures and exudes the spirit of the tropics. Each aspect of the resort reinforces the Our Lucaya brand—a fresh new take on paradise—and has been deployed through RTKL’s involvement in the project’s collateral, signage and wayfinding, food venues, retail offerings and interiors.

The resort is comprised of multiple buildings to accommodate guest rooms, food venues, amenities and retail. While each building has its own distinct look—and each venue its own unique theme—the overarching experience is unified under a single brand identity that captures the spirit and meaning of the resort as a whole. From the spa to the coffee shop, from the signs to the retail merchandise, Our Lucaya is more than just a resort but an array of vacation experiences that appeal to a variety of guests.

Client
Hutchison Development Limited

Services
“In hospitality design, we have seen a strong shift toward more distinctive experiences. Clients want to create places that resonate with guests in new and powerful ways. From upscale urban properties to resort destinations, distinctive properties now offer guests the opportunity to indulge in an experience that is not only amenity-rich but also tailored and truly unique.”

[Wendy Mendes, RTKL Vice President]
“Market research and charretting are the cornerstones of our design process. Before we design a residential space, we want to know who our prospective residents are and what they’re looking for in a home.”
[Thom McKay, RTKL Vice President]
In today’s competitive housing market, providing a meaningful residential experience is critical in attracting renters and buyers. Building on our wealth of experience in hospitality settings, we translate a deep understanding of market profiles, residential trends and our clients’ real estate objectives into sound and innovative design solutions. Our portfolio reflects our commitment to more than just functional and comfortable homes; it reflects our devotion to creating places that connect dwellers to a larger aspirational lifestyle.
Creating Places to Prosper

CooperLife creates developments full of potential and possibilities. These unique self-sustaining environments optimized by advances in design, technology and fitness medicine provide vibrant places where people can live, work, play, and more importantly, prosper and thrive.

CooperLife is designed to support a better, smarter, healthier, more convenient way of living. It’s an achievement without equal—shed of convention, freed from limitations, yet devoted to balance, functionality and individual well-being.

With a range of program elements applicable to all future projects, CooperLife can ensure that every environment it creates sets out to achieve what it aims to—and creates a desirable and exclusive way of life.

Expanding the Cooper Brand

Nearly 40 years ago, Dr. Kenneth Cooper revolutionized the way the world thought about fitness and health. Today, Cooper consists of 10 different Cooper Health Companies as well as a non-profit research and education institute. With the vision and leadership of Dr. Tyler Cooper—in partnership with Wellstone Communities—CooperLife is the next evolution of the Cooper brand—the creation of an upscale urban township that is entirely devoted to facilitating a healthier, more fulfilling lifestyle.
COOPERLIFE AT CRAIG RANCH [MCKINNEY, TEXAS]

THE CLIENT SPONSORED A DESIGN COMPETITION BECAUSE IT WANTED TO CREATE A NEW KIND OF MIXED-USE COMMUNITY WITHIN THE CRAIG RANCH TOWN CENTER DEVELOPMENT OF MCKINNEY, TEXAS THAT WOULD APPEAL TO AGING BABY BOOMERS.

This development would reflect a new and inspired kind of living—one centered on health and wellness and rooted in the teachings of Dr. Kenneth Cooper, the “father” of modern aerobics. With its extensive portfolio of experience-driven environments, RTKL was just the firm to understand the client’s nuanced needs. Its three-pronged air/energy/life design concept proved to the client that RTKL understands how to translate an intangible brand concept into a richly experiential environment. And, as a result, RTKL won the competition.

RTKL’s design concept is based on Dr. Cooper’s definition of aerobics “a system of physical conditioning designed to enhance circulatory and respiratory efficiency.” The community is seen as a living ecosystem that balances the need for air, water and energy in a way analogous to the human body.

Using this framework, RTKL defined a network of pedestrian paths and vehicular ways that provide circulation and wayfinding in a way that mimics the body’s vascular and nervous systems. A central park acts as the lungs of the community, and its storm water system is designed for natural filtration. Inside, residential units evoke the same healthful, inspiring experience that intimately connects residents to their own welfare and that of their community.

Client
Wellstone, LLC

Services
Master Planning, Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Brand Communications, Interior Architecture and Design
THE MONARCH [AUSTIN, TEXAS]

THE CLIENT APPROACHED RTKL WITH A COMPLICATED TASK—TO TRANSFORM A DENSE, URBAN SITE ON THE EDGE OF AUSTIN’S CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT INTO A WORLD-CLASS RESIDENTIAL ENVIRONMENT. THIS TASK PROVED CHALLENGING IN A SPRAWLING CITY WHERE DOWNTOWN LIVING HAS OFTEN BEEN A DIFFICULT SELL. TO MAKE THIS PROJECT WORK, RTKL UNDERSTOOD THAT IT WOULD NEED A RADICALLY ICONIC DESIGN CONCEPT—SOMETHING THAT WOULD INSPIRE PEOPLE TO EMBRACE DOWNTOWN LIVING. LOOKING ABOVE TO THE MONARCH BUTTERFLIES THAT PASS OVER AUSTIN ON THEIR WAY TO MEXICO EACH YEAR, RTKL FOUND ITS DESIGN CONCEPT.

Renowned throughout the natural and human worlds as creatures of significant beauty and grace, the Monarch inspires a new kind of residential environment—one that pays tribute to the ideas of natural beauty and international intrigue. RTKL translated the Monarch concept into a complete strategy—architecturally, experientially and programmatically. This strategy hinges on the client’s target demographic: stylish individuals with an appreciation for Austin’s energy and attitude. From the Cyber Café and Wi Fi Lounge that residents share to the gourmet kitchens and spa-like bathrooms that populate units, the Monarch provides residents with a comprehensive lifestyle environment that is distinctively Austin and distinctively downtown.

Client
ZOM

Services
Brand Strategy, Architecture, Interior Architecture and Design, and Environmental Graphic Design
“We are particularly pleased that our first development in Austin is in such an exciting downtown location ... We look forward to adding further energy to this downtown gateway with our new Monarch residential tower, which will be both an impressive architectural statement and a first-class living environment.”

(Kevin Wisdom, ZOM Texas Senior Vice President)
Market research allowed our team to identify the “white space” in Arlington’s competitive market and build a branded identity that works for this client and its target customers.”

[Thom McKay, RTKL Vice President]
**FOUNDER’S SQUARE [ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA]**

The client charged RTKL with the task of researching, identifying and honing a brand strategy for Founder’s Square, a proposed mixed-use property in Arlington, Virginia.

RTKL began with detailed market research of comparable properties in Arlington and other urban areas. The team then reviewed local newspapers and online profiles, and conducted resident interviews to identify and understand their target population. From these exercises, they were able to better understand the psychographic makeup of the target customer base.

Following its in-depth analysis, RTKL generated three big ideas (wellness, consumers with a conscience, and social networking) that related meaningfully to Founder’s Square target consumers. The three big ideas were then further distilled into three distinct brand attributes, respectively: body, mind and soul. The team used these brand attributes to inform conceptual designs, marketing and leasing strategies, floor plans and tenant partnerships. By creating body, mind and soul touchpoints throughout the space, RTKL ensured that residents, employees and the public would enjoy a cohesive experience. Currently, RTKL is working with the client to use their brand analysis and strategy framework in planning and designing the built space.

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**Client**
The Shooshan Company

**Services**
Brand Strategy
“Our extensive experience in hospitality crosses over into our residential work, especially when refining customer criteria is involved.”

[Wendy Medes, RTKL Vice President]
AIMCO NATIONAL STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT
[DENVER, COLORADO]

AIMCO, THE NATION’S LARGEST OWNER AND OPERATOR OF APARTMENT COMMUNITIES, WAS LOOKING TO UPGRADE ITS EXISTING DESIGN STANDARDS FOR NEARLY 1,370 COMMUNITIES. ADEPT IN PROVIDING CLIENTS WITH THE MARKET RESEARCH NECESSARY TO FUEL SMART DESIGN DECISION-MAKING, RTKL SET OUT TO DEVELOP NATIONAL STANDARDS AND DESIGN A MODEL UNIT SCHEME ROOTED IN THE VALUES OF AIMCO’S TARGET DEMOGRAPHIC.

Analyzing AIMCO tenants across the U.S., RTKL created over 40 classifications—from “laptops and lattes” to “prosperous empty nesters”—detailing residents’ interests, lifestyles and priorities. From this exploratory study, RTKL understood that the ideal tenant was female, would pay more for perceived value, and would be more loyal to and respectful of an AIMCO environment. Generalizing this finding to males and couples with similar values, RTKL was able to develop national standards and model units that align design with brand and expectations. Delivering these standards in three packages—Standard, Upgrade and Deluxe—RTKL ensured that installers tasked with the next round of refurbishments would accurately capture the AIMCO brand and appeal to the preferences of prospective tenants.

Client
AIMCO
Services
National Standards Development
Workplaces are not just for working. Today, workplaces are environments where people collaborate, communicate and socialize. Endeavoring to unearth clients’ strategic, cultural and operational objectives, The Environments Studio creates design solutions that effect change and reinforce mission. Working with a range of client types, our team creates environments that say something significant about the companies operating there. Moreover, our team is committed to shaping environments that attract and retain today’s savvy employees.
“The design process included interviews and information gathering with both employees and senior executives about how they work. This knowledge enabled us to design a space that would communicate ATA’s mission and best serve ATA’s employees.”

[Dennis Gaffney, RTKL Vice President]
AMERICAN TRUCKING ASSOCIATIONS
[ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA]
THE AMERICAN TRUCKING ASSOCIATIONS (ATA) REAPED MANY BENEFITS BY MOVING FROM A STAND-ALONE SUBURBAN FACILITY TO A LEASED SPACE IN AN URBAN HIGH-RISE.

Nevertheless, the transition also spurred new challenges. Chief among these challenges, the national trade association for the trucking industry worried that the more dense urban site—and the resulting absence of some of the social spaces present in their former suburban building—would deviate from their corporate culture. As a result, ATA commissioned RTKL to shape their new workplace in a way that reinforces and strengthens ATA's identity.

To replicate the sense of arrival provided by the base-building lobby atrium at the former headquarters, the design team removed an extra floor in the reception area. The new two-story foyer pays homage to the atrium at ATA's former headquarters, instills a feeling of ownership among employees and members, and helps distinguish the organization from other building tenants. Integrated conference and dining areas foster a sense of activity, and nearby, more formal conference areas can be customized into smaller rooms to accommodate space and privacy needs. Throughout the space, the design scheme focuses on the idea of “goods in motion,” a concept that drives the ATA brand.
As part of a repositioning strategy, CoStar commissioned RTKL to develop a new “branded workplace” concept for its offices. By communicating a cohesive brand image and cultivating a more flexible and interactive environment, the design team set out to attract and retain a new generation of workers; strengthen the firm’s ability to deliver real-time, industry-specific information in a digital age; and create a vibrant workplace that is inimitably CoStar.

The design process commenced with a series of “visioning sessions” that involved employees and senior executives. These interactive meetings allowed RTKL to understand CoStar’s culture, work styles and corporate mission. Guided by a decision-making framework rooted in a deep understanding of CoStar’s mission, the team provided space-use specifications, technology and workstation design as well as furniture and material finishes. Graphic imagery is interwoven to define a corporate signature and reinforce mission. A phased implementation enables CoStar to introduce the branded concept to existing and future office locations, while also benchmarking productivity and staff retention.

Client
The CoStar Group
Services
Interior Architecture and Design
“Over the next couple of years, we are going to see a variety of companies take more of a retail-style approach to their workplaces by attempting to forge emotional relationships between the tangibles of the brand and the people who experience them.”

[Dennis Gaffney, RTKL Vice President]
GENERAL MOTORS GOVERNMENT RELATIONS OFFICE
[WASHINGTON, DC]

SEEKING TO REIMAGE ITS GOVERNMENT RELATIONS OFFICE, GENERAL MOTORS TASKED RTKL WITH DESIGNING A SPACE THAT WOULD SHOWCASE ITS WELL-KNOWN BRAND AND SERVE AS A SOPHISTICATED, WELCOMING SPACE FOR HIGH-PROFILE CLIENTELE.

Before creating a design concept, RTKL worked closely with company leadership and employees to understand General Motor’s organization. These charrettes revealed that General Motors is rooted in three areas of interest: automobile research, design and production.

Using these themes, RTKL translated General Motor’s “DNA” into a powerful “road trip, innovation and machine” design concept. This design concept is realized in every aspect of the space, from the curved walls that convey a sense of journey to the brushed stainless steel columns that reference the pistons of an engine. Reinforcing the brand further, RTKL uses artwork to recall the organization’s history of innovation and to publicize technological works-in-progress. Altogether, RTKL has created a compelled branded environment that evokes General Motors’ rich legacy and invites guests and employees alike to share in the journey.

Client
General Motors

Services
Interior Architecture and Design, MEP Engineering and Telecommunications
In today’s competitive market, with so many shouting voices, it is difficult for one brand to stand apart from the fray. Increasingly, companies are looking for ways to achieve market differentiation, while further reinforcing their identities. A potent, compelling brand is one way to do that. But how do you get there? How do you ensure that your brand will align with your mission, while also forging critical links with your market? It begins with great design. Understanding the essence of your company and translating it into tangible messages and a unified identity are critical to successfully infusing your brand with your environment. Done right, a brand-rich environment can improve your profits by offering a wealth of benefits.
Understanding that traditional retail environments no longer suffice with modern consumers, the client commissioned RTKL to create a new kind of “unstore”—a place that appeals to consumers’ aspirational lifestyles and allows householders, designers, architects and builders to actively experience the Sub-Zero and Wolf brands.

In this new “unstore,” little or no merchandise is sold over the counter. Instead, inviting showrooms allow customers to interact with an array of kitchen environments, test-drive product lines and participate in product demonstration classes. With a demonstration kitchen, kitchen vignettes, wine storage and billiard room, laundry room and outdoor barbeque area, the showroom is transformed from a static retail environment into a dynamic, brand-rich space that connects with customers and builds brand loyalty for longer-term returns.

Client
The Westye Group
Services
Interior Architecture and Design
“The contrast between a Shinsei retail installation and those of competing institutions is striking.”

[Roger Yee and Lester Dundes in a 2003 *Corporate Interiors* article]
SHINSEI BANK AND BANK SPOT [TOKYO, JAPAN]
SHINSEI BANK’S NEW FLAGSHIP FACILITY HAD ONE MAIN GOAL: TO STAND OUT FROM OTHER JAPANESE FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS BY EMPHASIZING CUSTOMER SERVICE, A REVOLUTIONARY CONCEPT IN JAPAN’S BANKING INDUSTRY.

By responding to demographics and customer preferences, RTKL worked with the client to rethink the entire banking experience. The resulting design is a total branded environment that combines technology with a personal touch, integrating corporate identity, print collateral, furnishings and graphics to foster customer satisfaction and build trust.

Within only a year of the reimaging, a Japanese business survey revealed Shinsei’s brand awareness to be greatly improved. On the heels of this success, RTKL was commissioned to design environments for Bank Spot, a sub-brand of Shinsei Bank that brings automated banking to a younger and more technologically savvy clientele. Translating this strategy into design concepts that utilize modern shapes and color schemes, dynamic signage and artwork, RTKL was able to advance the Bank Spot brand by bringing a stimulating human element into the built environment. Providing a completely new banking style to tradition-dominated Japan, Shinsei Bank and Bank Spot are two dynamic brands that set a new standard for Japanese banking.

Client
Shinsei Bank, Ltd.

Services
Branding, Environmental Graphic Design, Interior Architecture and Design, Website and Print Collateral
ALEXA [BERLIN, GERMANY]

LOCATED IN THE HEART OF (FORMERLY EAST) BERLIN, ALEXANDERPLATZ IS AN HISTORIC CENTRAL PLAZA THAT SERVED AS THE HEART AND SOUL OF BERLIN’S CULTURAL LIFE PRIOR TO WORLD WAR II.

Familiar with RTKL’s experience in retail positioning and urban revitalization, the client commissioned RTKL to incorporate a dynamic new retail-led mixed-use development into the site. RTKL drew inspiration from the bold colors, rich urban nightlife, flirtatious attitude, daring art scene and metropolitan sensibility of inter-war Berlin.

From there, the team used the themes of music, dance, light, metropolis and people to organize spaces, determine design elements and provide wayfinding. Included in this process was a naming and logo exercise. Using broken geometry and vibrant colors, RTKL finished the space with stunning murals, sculptures and interior finishes, evoking the spirit of a rich past and indulging guests in a sensory-filled experience.

Client
Alexa Shopping Centre GmbH

Services
Identity and Logo, Interior Architecture and Design, and Environmental Graphic Design
“Some of the best design concepts are those that are rooted in the history of a place. In a city like Berlin, the rich heritage of art, music, theater and film inspired our modern twist on an Art Deco aesthetic.”

[Kevin Horn, RTKL Vice President]
DFS Galleria Okinawa, Japan

The History of Duty Free Trade on Okinawa

Generations of Okinawans have passed along their traditions, in traditions making, materials and styles.

The Boutiques

Creating a Brand Palace

Materials
DFS/DFS GALLERIA [MULTIPLE LOCATIONS]

AS THE WORLD’S LEADING LUXURY RETAILER CATERING TO INTERNATIONAL TRAVELERS, DFS WAS LOOKING TO EXPAND INTO OFF-AIRPORT AND LARGE DOWNTOWN GALLERIA DUTY FREE SHOPPING.

With the company growing and expanding into new and emerging markets, it was equally important for DFS to present one face to an increasingly mobile and affluent customer base. RTKL’s “brands within a brand” design solution resolved the company’s concerns, providing a branded environment that reinforces the DFS brand while still honoring the product brands sold within the DFS retail environment.

Working with the client on spaces of different sizes and scopes, RTKL has now designed DFS stores in Singapore, Japan, Hong-Kong, Guam and Hawaii. Within each of these stores, a fundamental and singular design concept drives the built environment: the three worlds of Beauty, Luxury, and Fine Leather and Fashion. Providing an intimate customer experience, the team used architectural elements, signage and wayfinding to heighten the senses of arrival and exclusivity. Today, DFS presents a strong and unified message to customers about what it is and where it is going—a message that RTKL actively shaped through the environment customers experience.

DFS Galleria Okinawa, Japan

Client
DFS Group Limited

Services
Architecture, Environmental Graphic Design, Interior Architecture and Design, Lighting and Pre-Design Services
“A cohesive brand strategy allows Hyundai to reposition itself within the market and achieve market differentiation.”

[Kevin Horn, RTKL Vice President]
EAGER TO ELEVATE ITS POSITION WITHIN A COMPETITIVE RETAIL MARKET AND CAPTURE A GREATER SHARE OF THE MARKET, THE CLIENT TASKED RTKL WITH PROVIDING A COMPLETE OVERHAUL OF ITS EXISTING BRAND STRATEGY.

RTKL began the repositioning process by looking at Hyundai’s diverse demographics, which include 30-50 year-old women on week days, teens and young adults in the evenings, and families on the weekends. Using a customer-focused approach, the team then crafted experiential, design and programmatic elements to “shift” Hyundai Department Store in a new direction.

RTKL's reimaging focuses on changing people’s perceptions. Rather than selling products, it now sells a lifestyle. Rather than being oriented around products, it is now oriented around people. Supplanting the outmoded “high-end classic” design aesthetic for a “luxury modern” look and feel, the team created a retail-led destination environment that exudes Hyundai’s new branded identity.

Client
Hyundai Development Company

Services
Brand Strategy, Design Guidelines, Architecture, Interior Architecture and Design
SERVICES

Architecture
Planning & Urban Design
Interior Architecture
Interior Design
Sustainable Design
Environmental Graphic Design
Brand Building
MEP Engineering
Structural Engineering
Special Systems Design
Historic Preservation
Landscape Architecture

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