

A Special Annual Edition from Sokol Media, Inc.

TOP WOMEN IN REAL ESTATE 2011

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2011



JJ FALK



A year ago, JJ Falk was facing a challenge. Samsung Networks America, a division of Samsung Electronics, the 100 billion dollar electronics giant, had selected JJ Falk and her firm, JJFD, to design their first in-bound call center in the U.S.

The project was prestigious, but presented numerous challenges. It had to be fast tracked, but no site had been chosen. It needed to be designed to eventually expand from 80,000 to 130,000 sf, be creative on a tight budget and serve to optimize productivity metrics. Ultimately, because of little to no building surplus in the area, a building would first have to be built prior to starting any of the Call Center work.

It's the kind of assignment at which JJ excels. Since founding JJFD in 1998, JJ has emphasized

a rigorous design approach to her projects that focuses on the responsiveness to the workplace environment's effect on people. With excellence in creative, economically sensible, design solutions, she has contributed to the efficiency and prosperity of her clientele in many industries.

Pondering the Samsung project while walking on a Caribbean beach one day in the early stages of the project, JJ came upon some wonderfully worn pieces of beach glass in blues and greens against the sand that echoed the turquoise blue

SAMSUNG

SAMSUNG IS EXPANDING ITS OPERATIONS IN NORTH AMERICA WITH ITS CALL CENTER (PHASE 1) AND 50,000 SF FUTURE EXPANSION PROJECT (PHASE 2; JJ FALK ALREADY COMPLETED DESIGN OF ITS ORIGINAL 30,000 SQ.FT OPERATIONS.). PHASE 1 WAS COMPLETED IN APRIL 2009 FOR 700 EMPLOYEES AND INCLUDES PRIVATE OFFICES, CONFERENCE ROOMS, PRODUCT SHOWROOMS, IT SERVER ROOM, A 100-SEAT CAFETERIA, LOUNGES AND A TRAINING CENTER. ONE OF THE MAIN DESIGN CONCEPTS WAS THE USE OF NATURAL LIGHT THROUGHOUT THE SPACE WHICH WAS ACHIEVED BY LOCATING THE OPEN WORKSTATIONS ALONG THE EXTERIOR WALLS AND PROVIDING LARGE SKYLIGHTS IN THE CENTER AREA.

JJ FALK

MANAGING AND DESIGN PRINCIPAL
JJFD ARCHITECTURE & INTERIORS
BY JUDITH ALBERTY





POLO RALPH LAUREN MENSWEAR

WHEN POLO RALPH LAUREN DECIDED TO CONSOLIDATE THEIR MENSWEAR LINES INTO ONE DESTINATION, A MIX OF CONTEMPORARY OPEN LOFT-LIKE SPACE WAS CREATED FOR THE MAIN SHOWROOM TO SERVE AS A FLEXIBLE BACKDROP FOR MANY LINES FROM CASUAL TO EXTREMELY FORMAL, WITH STAGE SETS CONSTRUCTED ON THE FLY AS THE SEASONS CHANGE. THE ENTRY AND WAITING AREA ARE EXECUTED IN A FORMAL, BUT CONTEMPORARY WAY WITH STAINLESS STEEL ACCENTS AND SLEEK MAHOGANY.

water and lush tropical greenery indicative of the beach environment, which is when inspiration hit her. The primary employees of the new Samsung facility would be customer service agents, a job that appears on many Top 10 lists of the most stressful jobs in America. What better way to create a sense of peaceful harmony than to bring the calm, relaxing colors of the beach to the new facility?

“Creativity doesn’t come at a specific cost”, says JJ. “You can design creatively on a modest budget, fulfill client goals and also achieve comfort and satisfaction for people who use the space.”

With her design principles in synch with the tenets of sustainable design which, in addition to reducing environmental impact, seeks to better relate people to the natural environment through the built environment, JJ’s design solutions also provide measurable return on investment for her clients. Samsung would be a superb example of those values.

Housing support functions, a data center, amenities along with disaster recovery systems including generator, UPS and complete redundancy of telephone and electrical systems, the Samsung Call Center was completed on time and

budget. The use of blues, greens and browns, representing water, sky and earth as a color palette allows mind, body and physical space to work in harmony. Aware that views and natural light positively affect psychological well-being and enhance productivity, JJ maximized both. A center spine and elliptical shaped large multi-functional break-out space provide areas for quiet relaxation for employee benefit. For peak performance and comfort, the JJFD design team selected ergonomic furniture.

A 30-YEAR JOURNEY OF DESIGN EXCELLENCE

JJ Falk has been creating brilliant, humanistic designs, always with a fine eye toward improving a client’s bottom line, for nearly 30 years.

It’s a journey that began in Seoul, the capital and largest city in the Republic of Korea, and included a diverse education culminating in degrees in both engineering and architecture, relocation to the United States, a move from Denver to New York City and, ultimately in creating her own company JJFD, to pursue her architectural and interior design vision.

Born to educated professionals (her father was third generation of medical doctors) JJ, in her words “was treated with all of the support,

attention and privilege afforded a professional family. I was brought up to be confident of my abilities.”

She attended the University of Hong-ik in Seoul, receiving a Bachelor of Arts and Masters Degree in Architecture. But as with many of her Korean contemporaries, JJ felt she needed to continue her education abroad. So she packed her bags and headed for the American West, and the University of Colorado

There, she continued her education, receiving a Masters of Arts Degree in Interior Design from the University of Colorado, during which time she was selected by well known architect W.C. Muchow, FAIA, as an apprentice.

Muchow’s objective was design excellence and to make a lasting contribution to the field of architecture. To advance that goal, he hired talented young architects with superior technical abilities and provided them with opportunities to learn and grow, encouraging creativity and design freedom. As an apprentice, JJ was also influenced by Muchow’s espousal of enhanced environmental quality which is evident in her work for IBM in Boulder and a University of Colorado extension project.

Armed with a few years of experience studying under Murchow, JJ was ready for her next, big career move. Comfortable in large, urban environments, Seoul being one of the world’s largest cities with a population of 10 million, JJ was ready to take on New York City.

IN THE DESIGN IN THE CAPITAL OF THE WORLD

Before arriving in New York City, JJ secured a position with Gensler, the global architecture, design, planning and consulting firm. There she had the great opportunity to be involved in the design of a multitude of corporate client spaces, including work for Goldman Sachs, Travelers Insurance, and Kidder Peabody. In addition, she was exposed to numerous other world-class architects and designers through collaborative projects which further bolstered her philosophy on design and sensitivities to humanism in the work place.

Equipped with her creative years at Gensler, JJ had the opportunity to direct the design philosophy of an entire firm with her move to the Philips Jansen Group (now TPG). As the director of Design, JJ earned a platinum reputation for her design work with all the firms top clients including the National Football League, DDB Needham, and Rolling Stone Magazine.

By the late 1990’s, she was at the pinnacle of her career, with a resume full of satisfied clients and the respect of her peers.

Grateful for the growth and experience provided by large firms, she was professionally ready and personally eager to open her own firm where she could pursue her vision of design purity and personalized service and create well-crafted work environments that would foster excitement and energy and help businesses prosper.

OPENING JJFD

In 1998, JJ’s long-held goal became reality when she opened JJ Falk Design LLC. Her market positioning was to unite her in-depth large firm experience and expertise with the personalized service, hands-on attention and sensibilities, such as creative, economically responsive design solutions, that her smaller firm could provide. She would also, of course, have the freedom to pursue a design approach to her projects focusing on the responsiveness to the workplace environment’s

DSW/FILENE’S BASEMENT

LOCATED OFF OF BUSTLING UNION SQUARE, DSW (DESIGNER SHOE WAREHOUSE) AND FILENE’S BASEMENT LOCATIONS SERVE AS FLAGSHIP STORES FOR BOTH CHAINS AND OPENED TO RAVE REVIEWS. THE UNIQUE ENTRANCE CANOPY AND THE FOUR-STORY ATRIUM ARE MEANT TO DRAW VISITORS IN TO THE SPACE WHERE THEY CAN SHOP ON ONE OF SEVERAL LEVELS.





200 HUDSON STREET

TRINITY REAL ESTATE, ONE OF THE LARGEST LANDLORDS IN MANHATTAN HOLDS AN EXTENSIVE PORTFOLIO OF PREMIUM OFFICE SPACE IN THE HUDSON SQUARE AREA, MOSTLY MANUFACTURING SPACES THAT WERE CONVERTED TO OFFICE SPACE STARTING IN THE EARLY 1980'S. 200 HUDSON STREET IS AMONG THOSE HOLDINGS FOR WHICH JJFD HAS BEEN PROVIDING COMPREHENSIVE DESIGN SERVICES. JJFD RECENTLY DESIGNED A NEW BUILDING ENTRY, REFRESHED THE MAIN LOBBY, ADDED A NEW CONCIERGE DESK AND ELEVATOR CAB INTERIORS WHICH WILL BRING A CLEAN, BRIGHTER, CONTEMPORARY, YET CLASSIC LOOK TO THE BUILDING. IT WILL ENHANCE THE TENANT'S DAILY EXPERIENCE IN CREATING A PROFESSIONAL OFFICE BUILDING ENVIRONMENT.

effect on people.

Her first client was a friend who asked JJ to design retail stores in Arizona. But it was her second client, to whom she was introduced by a friend of her mother's that got her off the ground. It was an 80,000 sf office interiors project for the CFO of Penthouse magazine.

In the ensuing years since the firm's creation, JJ has built a diverse portfolio with a veritable "Who's Who" of well known clients. She has completed projects in finance, retail/showrooms, advertising/media, high tech/telecom, law offices, corporate interiors, residential, institutional and building security/lobbies.

BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL, MID-SIZE ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN FIRM

Early in her firm's development, JJ realized that there was more to running a business than simply providing good design. She had to become an entrepreneur. So in addition to worrying about colors and finishes all day, she needed to be vigilant in embracing more mundane activities that included sales, marketing, finance, administration and operations. Fortunately for her, along with success came the ability to add staff to help her with some of the intricacies of running a successful business.

JJFD provides full interior design and architecture services to support its clients' needs in every

phase of their real estate and facilities cycle, from initial project strategy through the final details of construction and implementation.

Services include strategic planning, site evaluation, code and zoning analysis, pre-lease and work letter analysis, space standards development, furniture and equipment inventory, building security design, pre-built office design, identity design, LEED services, programming, space planning, schematic design, design development, furniture specification and procurement, construction contract documents, bid and negotiation and contract administration.

Headquartered on Fifth Avenue in New York City, JJFD is a certified Minority and Woman-Owned Business Enterprise (M/WBE), a member of the US Green Building Council and has LEED Accredited Professionals.

Bringing an array of skills to each assignment, JJ sees her firm's role as two-fold.

"First, we create a vision that will add value to our client's business and improve the quality of life of users for years to come," says JJ. "Secondly, we keep that vision in focus throughout the demands of construction and implementation so that the space can fully emerge true to the original vision."

Though she is the captain of her ship in setting the trim to choose its direction, JJ is a firm believer in the power of creating multi-disciplinary

teams and of employee training, aware that one of her competitive advantages is not only her talent and experience, but that of the professional staff she retains. For all projects, a principal of the firm is directly involved, assuring that JJFD's professional teams provide both design insight and cost-effective timely service.

She is also an advocate of being dynamic and visible in numerous industries. A devoted networker, JJ is, in her own words, "constantly out there", being seen, making connections and meeting with decision-makers.

She is an active member of numerous real estate, construction, engineering and architectural organizations including CoreNet Global, the Association of Real Estate Women (AREW), International Facilities Management Association (IFMA), and American Institute of Architects (AIA).

She contributes her time as a committee member to design, real estate and construction industry events that support and benefit SHARE (Self Help for Women with Breast or Ovarian Cancer).

Named a "Real Estate Industry Leader" by Real Estate Weekly in 2010, she was recently the only woman from the field of design and architecture to participate as a featured speaker at an annual KOWIN seminar entitled "Reach Outside The Box". Held at The Korea Society in Manhattan, the seminar featured a panel of eminently successful Korean-American women who shared their career development experiences.

BUILDING LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS: A KEY TO SUCCESS

Early in her firm's development, JJ embraced a marketing strategy that has served her firm's growth well. She sought to create long-term, repeat clients, secure non-compete status with those firms and become on-call architect for

KIDRO

THE PROPOSED INTERIOR RENOVATIONS FOR KIDRO, A CREATIVE MEDIA NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION, ARE COMPRISED OF TWO FLOORS WITH A CONNECTING STAIR. ENERGY CONSERVATION, USE OF ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY MATERIALS AND MAXIMIZING NATURAL LIGHT WERE SOME OF THE CRITERION THE DESIGN EMBRACED. COMBINING OPEN WORK ENVIRONMENT AND PRIVATE OFFICES ENABLED NATURAL LIGHT TO FILTER THROUGHOUT THE SPACE ADDING WARMTH AND FURTHER ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF THE WORK ENVIRONMENT. THE DESIGN CONCEPT PROVIDES HARMONIOUS MATERIALS AND FRIENDLY ATMOSPHERE FOR USERS AND VISITORS ALIKE.



COVENANT HOUSE

COVENANT HOUSE, A TOP TWENTY FIVE NOT-FOR-PROFIT CHARITABLE ORGANIZATION, NEEDED TO SIGNIFICANTLY CONSOLIDATE THEIR EXISTING 200,000 SF INTERNATIONAL CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS. THE NEW LOCATION AT 5 PENN PLAZA WAS EFFICIENTLY PROGRAMMED AND LAID OUT, TAKING ADVANTAGE OF HIGH CEILINGS AND OPEN OFFICE ENVIRONMENTS WHICH YIELD MANY SUNLIT SPACES. INDIVIDUAL SPACES INCLUDE NEW BOARD ROOM WITH TELECONFERENCING CENTER, CRISIS HOTLINE/TELE FUND CALL CENTERS, AND EXERCISE ROOMS.

projects large and small.

She's been successful in that goal. JJFD has long-standing relationships with numerous clients, among them Polo Ralph Lauren, for which JJFD just completed their seventh project, a Menswear Showroom at 650 Madison Avenue; and JPMorgan Chase, for which JJFD has designed more than fifty projects over the last half dozen years; Cushman & Wakefield; Boston Properties, not for profit agencies and others.

JJFD is noted for creating selling environments that differentiate many of the world's leading retailers, each distinctively designed and branded through the firm's in-depth understanding of the retail/wholesale industry and customer behavior. JJFD retail/showroom clients include Polo Ralph Lauren, Aeropostale, DSW, Eli Tahari, Kenneth Cole, Filene's Basement, Riflessi Menswear, John Atencio goldsmith and





NEW YORK TIMES

THE NEW YORK TIMES PUBLISHERS CIRCULATION CALLING CENTER PROJECT HAS AN EXCEPTIONAL CAPACITY OF NETWORK TECHNOLOGY INCLUDING A COMPLEX HVAC INFRASTRUCTURE. THE DESIGN CRITERIA INVITED SENSITIVITY TO EMPLOYEE COMFORT AND THAT MESSAGE WAS CONVEYED THROUGH FORMS, LIGHTING, COLOR AND TEXTURE, NATURAL LIGHT AND ORGANIC SHAPES

Zumtobel, among others.

In addition to JPMorgan Chase, financial clients include Alexandra Investment Management, Capital Dynamics, Deutsche Bank and Evercore Partners, among others.

Additional JJFD clients include GMCI General Media, Hill & Knowlton, KidRo Produc-

tions, MTV Networks, Covenant House, Freddie Mac, New York Life Insurance, The Guardian Insurance, Wall Street Concepts, Weil Gotshal & Manges, and Jafee & Asher, among many others.

EMBRACING CHANGE

As they say, to “know where you’re going, you have to know where you’ve been” JJ keeps her finger on the pulse of the real estate market past, present, and future to better gauge individual market sector potential, which in turn, may lead to job opportunities. It also helps her identify trends which serve to keep her up to speed on an ever changing work place and work force, as well as an ever evolving client base.

Case in point: “Back in 2008, we were getting a lot of calls from landlords for pre-built suites. With the economy spiraling down, there was a heightened need for smaller spaces, with little or no start up costs passed on to the tenant. The solution, pre-built suites. After completing a few dozen of these, we realized we needed to address the needs of the landlord on a larger platform in trying to move space during difficult times. We assigned a team to do nothing but pre-built suites, so when the landlord called; it gave him a little peace of mind to know we had an entire department at his disposal. To get it out fast, to get it out cost effectively, to get it out on time and under budget. That’s how we service our clients,” says JJ.

Realizing that she was doing something for one side of the “deal”, JJ felt it wise to be a proponent for the other side as well. After all, most of her work was tenant driven, so it was only natural that she re-affirm her support on the tenant side. Thus, JJ recently announced the formation of a new Tenant Development team dedicated to meeting the architectural leasing needs of small and mid-sized tenants. She initiated this program in response to the greatly increased need that such tenants have for sophisticated architectural and design services in a rapidly changing commercial leasing market.

JJ’s ultimate goal is to make a positive difference in the lives of her clients’ workforces with designs that help workers feel better, reduce stress and turnover, increase concentration and energy and improve productivity, all of which provide opportunities for her clients to turn their facilities into more productive profit centers. That, in turn, leads to the long-term relationships and repeat business that is a key factor in her current and ongoing success. ■