



hospitalitydesign

june 2015 hospitalitydesign.com

hd awards 2015

the new wave of
the future class

HD*expo*
a hospitality design event

Photo by KELLY MARSHALL

alicia cannon

**Principal
AJC Design
New York**

I grew up in Ridgefield, Connecticut.

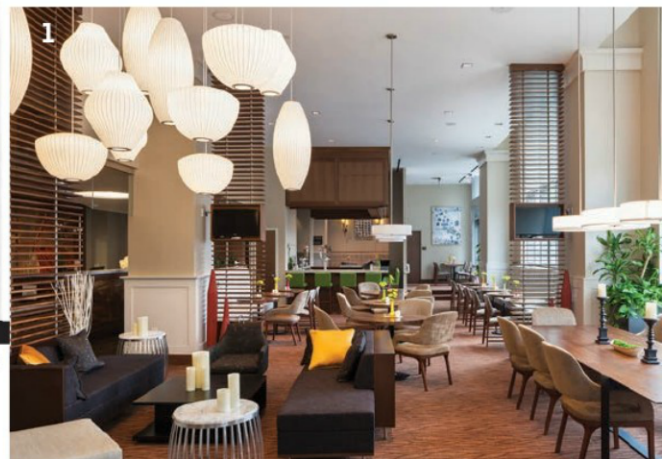
I was very creative as a child. I was asked in the fifth grade to write on an index card what I wanted to be when I grew up. To this day I can remember seeing it posted on the bulletin board in the back of the classroom with interior designer written on it. While my mom was pregnant with me she was actually attending the New York School of Interior Design. Many believe my career decision was due to the prenatal design training I was exposed to early on.

My first memory of design was during a family trip to Austria. We visited a beautiful famous castle and I was fascinated by the details in the design and the ornate furnishings.

Every summer, my family vacationed in South Carolina. My parents would attempt to drive through the night, occasionally taking short rests at the car park. My mother and father were able to recline but us kids had



Photo by MICHAEL GRIMM



to sleep on top of the luggage or anywhere we could fit in the back of the station wagon. This made me believe that there were better hospitality accommodations out in the world, and I was determined to design them.

I was burnt out after my thesis—I had just graduated with a degree in interior design from Pratt Institute—so I decided to do something completely out of left field: I sold packaging products, namely bubble wrap. It gave me the skill set and tools required to run a business and taught me that I can be successful at anything I set my mind to, design or non-design related.

My first internship was at Gensler, a well-oiled machine. That instilled in me the importance of being highly efficient and organized.

Looking at all the jobs I have had over the course of my career, they were all challenging



Photo by PETER KUBILUS

stepping stones that led me to where I was destined to be today. I don't live with regrets, I don't re-read old journals, I just move forward assessing the situation in front of me, trusting my instinct, and following my path of happiness. I am truly blessed to have had worked for some design icons such as Cheryl Rowley and David Easton and have had some amazing mentors while being surrounded by many peers who believed in me.

First reality check: 9/11. Do what you love always, follow through on your word, be true to yourself, and remind your loved ones that you love them every day.

I started my own firm because I wanted to see more of the world as well as develop my own design environment that I was sure others wanted to be a part of.

My big break was the Westport Inn in Connecticut—it was my first hotel on my own as AJC Design (a collaborative effort with architectural firm VM Design Studio).

The project I am most looking forward to completing is the Renaissance in Harlem, New York. It's in a neighborhood that has an incredibly rich history and situated on a site that's being integrated within the Victoria Theater, a landmark just doors down from the famous Apollo Theater.

Most challenging part of the job: making the decision that will be in the best interest for all parties involved. Most rewarding part of the job: an elated client.

My style is simple and clean lines, neutral textures, and pops of color,

preferably orange. My fashion icon is Audrey Hepburn—her style was classic and elegant.

There are way too many spaces I love but a few are the Andaz Amsterdam, the New York Public Library, El Fenn in Marrakesh, and Chapelle Notre-Dame du Haut in Ronchamp, France.

Guilty pleasure: Playing countless games of Yahtzee while staying in on a Friday night listening to country music and eating Grandma's pizza [a restaurant in New York] with a Miller Lite in hand.

My mentor is designer Deborah Gear. I still can't thank her enough for the skill set she passed on to me.

Designer or architect I admire: Richard Serra and Le Corbusier.

Success is having the freedom and availability to jump on a plane to any destination at a moment's notice because I choose to.

Recently Completed Projects:

Penthouse suite at the Tuscany, a St Giles hotel, New York
Hilton Garden Inn New York Long Island City/Manhattan View
Hotel Indigo Brooklyn, New York
Penthouse suites at Affinia Gardens NYC
Westport Inn, Westport, Connecticut

Projects on the Boards:

Westin Riverwalk San Antonio, Texas (lobby and exterior areas)
Sheraton Mahwah, New Jersey
Renaissance Harlem, New York



Photo by KELLY MARSHALL

