



Klingmann

Architecture Brand
Development

By Ingrid Spencer

Anna Klingmann, principal of Klingmann Architecture Brand Development, has just finished a book about architecture and branding called *Brandscapes: Architecture in the Experience Economy* (MIT Press, 2007). The architect and educator, who transplanted herself to New York City from Germany many years ago, is raring to bring her expertise to the American marketplace. Having formally started her company in 2004, her clients have been exclusively European-German-based Robinson Resorts; the City of Halle, Germany; and competitions for clients such as Adidas and the City of Prague. "I'm excited to work where I live," says Klingmann, "and I see the potential here, as real estate developers and corporations in recent years are realizing that good design can enhance the value of their brands."

While Klingmann's firm consists of about 3-to-4 people at any one time, she relies on collaborations with a network of professionals around the globe to accomplish the total package that a branding effort requires for a client. "We do the architecture and the master planning," she says. "We try to see the brand in a conceptual way. Not as a product, but as a catalyst—a strategic tool. We bring logic to the table, and magic."

Klingmann emphasizes that it's the values of the company that need to be shared with the public through architecture, and while that means that the building can help employees "live the brand," it also means that the public should be brought into the culture. "Corporations often close themselves off from the public with their architecture," she says. "That's an opportunity lost. If clients have public spaces that create a physical experience for people, then architecture can serve a powerful role in communicating. By fencing themselves off, they create a feeling of distrust."

As an educator, Klingmann knows that brandism is still not quite accepted as a viable way to go about the business of architecture. "Academia is so concerned with 'shape making' that it often ignores the relevance of content," she says. "Architecture is more than just creating a cool object. It can make economic impact, improve a depressed area, and communicate a long-term strategy. We visit certain places because they are unique, so as the world becomes smaller, it's important that architects keep it from becoming homogenized."