IT'S BEEN A GOOD 10 YEARS. FROM 1994 TO 2004, STAGGERING SOCIAL changes affected how people viewed the places they worked, played and lived. The Internet-driven economy set sail, and interiors mirrored the irreverent, imagination-fueled thoughtfulness of the culture. Designers integrated people and technology into everyday life as never before.

Then, the wind was sucked out of the dot-com sails and the economy plum- meted. A new economic conservatism settled in, and designers responded with conscientious originality. When terrorists struck, designers replied with mindfulness and simplicity, finding comfort in the classics.

In every era, two things are certain in design: Nothing matters more than the people inside the buildings, and in soaring highs and plunging lows, innovation is the only constant.

IIDA, sponsor Permagrain and publishing partner Contract Magazine cel- ebrate this decade of innovation and its 10-year anniversary with the Decade of Design Awards. Ten outstanding interior design projects illustrate the best of the decade, and Perspective profiles the winners, including their creative inspiration in years past.
The late Don Brinkmann was celebrated at Gensler for his ability to think in three-dimensional forms. "Don was able to see the whole volume of the space and every plane. He would develop a design in his head and then refine it, with beautifully executed hand sketches," says Robin Klehr Avia, FIIDA, Managing Principal at Gensler New York.

As designer of Swiss Re Financial Services, Brinkmann applied his love of geometry with striking form, enhancing rather than modifying the angles of the building. He did that by spending equal time exacting the ceilings and walls as choosing materials or drawing elevations. Suffused with bold lines and clever detailing, the evocative space is serene and light, yet fervent at the same time. This was Don Brinkmann’s signature.

“He studied the module of materials and space and integrated them into one unified vocabulary, always working closely with the requirements and clear understanding of, and strong respect for the client concerns,” Avia says. “He took a true architectural approach to design.”

Don Brinkmann, Design Director, Gensler

Thinking about interior space as theater is inherent in Michael Gabellini’s design sensibility. For him, buildings are flexible backdrops of form, function, lifestyle and luxury. “Luxury equals comfort, and comfort means pleasure,” Gabellini says.

For example, Gabellini thinks of Ultimo Boutique San Francisco as an Alice in Wonderland-like journey within a red chinoiserie box in which geometric components

ULTIMO BOUTIQUE, SAN FRANCISCO: This space is all about showmanship. The backdrop: bold, red walls shrouded in luminous light, contrasted by water white mirror panels and custom walnut furniture. The stage: A series of flexible bluesomes platforms and walnut trapeze bars floating throughout the two-floor atrium to spotlight Ultimo’s luxury ready-to-wear collections.

PARK AVENUE APARTMENT, NEW YORK: An inspired relays for the owners’ vintage and contemporary photography collection, the residence is composed of courtyard-like living spaces counterbalanced with black volumes of ribbon mahogany and honed Amara limestone floors. The bathroom volumes leave little to the imagination — glass enclosures that go from translucent to opaque with the flick of a switch.

YEAR: 1997
PROJECT: ULTIMO BOUTIQUE, SAN FRANCISCO
FIRM: GABELLINI ASSOCIATES

YEAR: 1998
PROJECT: PARK AVENUE APARTMENT, NEW YORK
FIRM: GABELLINI ASSOCIATES

YEAR: 2002
PROJECT: JIL SANDER BOUTIQUE AND SHOWROOM, LONDON
FIRM: GABELLINI ASSOCIATES
layer space in a taut interplay of form and function. These components act as display stages for Ultimo’s signature ready-to-wear collection.

“Ultimo is a space that celebrates the notion of craft and technology coming together, operating like a flexible theater for the environment and its continued evolution. It’s purely about opulence and reveling in pleasure,” he says.

The winner of three Decade of Design Awards, Gabellini’s winning entries are light, air and sound controlled like a theatrical set to create different emotional states.

Gabellini’s theatrical tendency also translates into the only residential space cited among the award winners. The Park Avenue Apartment required intense examination of emotion and function in an everyday living space.

“We thought about how we could pull away from the energy of an urban environment, and, in this little wedge in urban New York, create something that relaxes, excites and animates our client.”

INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT FIRM, CHICAGO: Unexpected horizontal planes — dropped paper-like ceilings intersecting at different levels and continuous carpet patterns — create a space that’s open and flowing. Rich woods, marble and steel combine in this Zen-like space to celebrate the honesty of the materials with quiet vitality.

ING DIRECT CAFÉ, NEW YORK: Bold colors, forms and wit merge to solidify this virtual banking business in bricks and mortar. Every design element expresses the client’s brand identity with attitude, from the orange palette to the environmental graphics, retail design and high-tech media.

YEAR: 1998
PROJECT: INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT FIRM, CHICAGO
FIRM: VOA ASSOCIATES
NICK LUZIETTI, IIDA, AIA, DESIGN PRINCIPAL, VOA ASSOCIATES
When Nick Luzietti cooks, he doesn’t follow a recipe. “You have to add things and taste along the way until it’s great,” he says.

Luzietti applies the thinking of chefs, filmmakers and painters to design, though he believes the industry struggles with rules. “Guidelines cheat you out of the spirit of it. We have to go from a static process to really getting the soul and vitality of a space,” he says.

VOA’s interior reflects Luzietti’s examination of spaces within spaces. He realized he could break up the long, narrow office by looking at horizontal planes differently and creating a series of interconnecting
Social gathering places; and “nodes” connect customers to ING Direct. The cleverness of their approach is in their subliminal strategies to make the environment functional and dynamic.

“I think we can connect with people emotionally, even without them understanding how the space works,” Bricker says. “Certain strategic aspects are distilled into architectural expression. It’s an interdisciplinary approach.”

The result is design bungee jumping – a solidification of a virtual bank that is irrelevant, a bit risky and happens to be a café. “It takes a person with faith in cyberspace to do business with a virtual bank,” Bricker says. “There’s a trust factor there, and we had to suggest stability in the design execution.”

Wang adds: “We did this by making the space a destination with the synergy and excitement of the brand.”

**NEW YORK STOCK EXCHANGE TRADING FLOOR EXPANSION, NEW YORK**

**FIRM:** GENSLER NEW YORK

**PROJECT:** NEW YORK STOCK EXCHANGE TRADING FLOOR EXPANSION, NEW YORK

**YEAR:** 2000

**JOHN BRICKER, DESIGN PRINCIPAL, AND PETER WANG, AIA, DESIGN DIRECTOR**

When John Bricker, Peter Wang and the Gensler team conceived of ING Direct Café, they adopted an interesting design vocabulary in the process. “Ribbons” elements symbolize organization; “cubes” are inherent in all rooms. “Constant ceiling heights weren’t going to work anymore,” he says.

Luzietti’s solution was to create paper-thin ceilings, dropped by wire, connecting and overlapping at different junctures. Many people said it wasn’t possible, but Luzietti triumphed. “Techniques have to be a slave to the bigger idea. You have to go after those big ideas to achieve the dream.”

**NEW YORK STOCK EXCHANGE TRADING FLOOR EXPANSION, NEW YORK**

**FIRM:** SKIDMORE, OWINGS & MERRILL LLP

**STEPHEN APKING, AIA, DESIGN PARTNER, SKIDMORE, OWINGS & MERRILL**

Even though the New York Stock Exchange has defined itself as a technology company, Stephen Apking sees things differently. To him, it’s a technology company interacting with people as its foundation.

The client still is always right. “No matter what the technology, it’s still all about people and their relationships and trust on the floor,” Apking says. In the process of design, Apking and team looked intensely at how people utilized technology necessary for stock trading.

Then, they strategized how to facilitate them efficiently. For instance, rather than looking up at television monitors mounted on the ceiling, the team designed notebooks that people could use, then push away when they didn’t need them.

“There’s a place for technology in the world. And it’s important to develop new ways of programming these issues in a three-dimensional environment. With greater understanding of how people use technology, we can all design spaces that are truly more supportive.”

**INFUZE TEAHOUSE, VANCOUVER, B.C, CANADA**

**FIRM:** SEETON SHINKESKI DESIGN GROUP LTD.

**KEATH SEETON, BID, RID, PRINCIPAL, JULIE CAMPBELL, RID, PROJECT DESIGNERS**

Modern designers often take pride in creating an interior brand for a product. Keath Seeton, Julie Campbell and

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Modern designers often take pride in creating an interior brand for a product. Keath Seeton, Julie Campbell and
Beth Drever twisted that notion when designing the interior of Infuze Teahouse. “In this case, rather than the brand making the product, the product makes the brand,” Campbell says.

The team showed deliberate restraint in its design, intentionally simplifying the white interiors to push the brilliant green, red and orange teas into the foreground. “Sometimes the simplest solution is the best, most functional way to go,” Seeton says. “We applied form, function and emotion to create a memorable experience.”

Notably, the three were able to reconcile budgetary limitations placed by the client. They learned to utilize moody lighting in silent collaboration with simple, inexpensive materials to create an Eastern-inspired atmosphere.

“Good design doesn’t have to be costly,” Campbell says. “Especially with the right process and right materials, success does not equal expensive.”