

NEW YORK SPACES

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Q&A with Brian Messana of Messana O'Rorke

Brian Messana, one half of the dynamic duo behind the New York-based design firm Messana O'Rorke, answers a few of our questions on their projects, design philosophy, and what inspires them today!



NYS: Why and when did you and Toby O'Rorke decide to found your company, **Messana O'Rorke**?

Brian Messana of Messana O'Rorke: We had always talked about forming our own company since we met in 1988 while studying at Virginia Tech. I, Brian, was working for Peter Marino and Toby was working for Ralph Lauren Store Development when we were offered the opportunity to independently design a DKNY store in Santiago, Chile; this project was the genesis for forming the company in March 1996.

NYS: What does your company focus on?

Brian Messana of Messana O'Rorke: Our focus is always on design, we love both the process and execution of design. We find design in everything.

NYS: What do your projects range from?

Brian Messana of Messana O'Rorke: Our projects range from the design of plumbing fixtures and furniture, to renovations of buildings to stand alone architecture, but we'll design anything.



Model Apartment at 200 East 62nd Street

NYS: What large-scale developments have you worked on recently?

Brian Messana of Messana O'Rorke: Our largest project to date is **200 East 62nd Street**, the redevelopment of a thirty story rental apartment

building into 115 condominiums including all public spaces; port coterie, entry lobby, fitness center, children's playroom, roof top terrace and club room.

NYS: Which has been the most interesting and why?

Brian Messana of Messana O'Rorke: 200 East 62nd Street is our largest project to date. It's been an exciting project on many levels. We were involved not only in the redesign of the building and show apartments, but we were also involved in the building identity and the development of the marketing collateral.

NYS: How did your start working at architect Richard Meier's firm influence your design aesthetic now?

Brian Messana of Messana O'Rorke: Richard Meier's work was an inspiration to Brian during his undergraduate studies and provided an incredible work experience and Richard has been an incredible and generous mentor to Messana O'Rorke. Aesthetically, Meier's work is grounded in Modernism and our work is focused on reduction and minimalism.

NYS: What do you think separates your firm from others of the same nature?

Brian Messana of Messana O'Rorke: This is a difficult question, I guess we would say our unique process and perspective.



California Senior Housing Project

NYS: Can you tell us about your California Senior Housing Project? We found it to be quite beautiful and sadly unusual for what you would expect in a Senior Housing Project!

Brian Messana of Messana O'Rorke: Thank you, that is a very nice compliment. We feel the design of typical senior housing is unnecessarily institutional so we wanted to create an environment that was conducive to creating passive social opportunities within a genuine community. Our model was a hilltop village in Tuscany where people live in close quarters, but are able to enjoy their privacy.

NYS: What about the Norfolk Condo? Can you explain the design?

Brian Messana of Messana O'Rorke: We love the light-filled interiors and that beautiful courtyard. The design solution was generated from the desire to capitalize on the site and its amazing views towards the East and West. The base of the building was located to retail, with the upper floors being full floor apartments with a roof top garden. We wanted to create a simple and elegant building to juxtapose the existing Lower East Side neighborhood.

NYS: The 12th Street apartment was quite minimalistic yet so warm. How did you achieve this perfect mix?

Brian Messana of Messana O'Rorke: The apartment is located in a beautiful Bing & Bing Building in Greenwich Village. The bones of the apartment were perfect, scale and space were on point. The apartment as a whole needed attention, to be brought back to life. We introduced modern minimal details such as the fire place surround and completely gutted the kitchen and bathroom.

We created a minimal yet warm space, by carefully selecting materials and developing details that create a livable modern space.



Newly Landscaped Porte-Cochere, 200 East 62nd Street.

NYS: How is your approach to designing stores different from when you are designing a residence? What went into designing the DKNY store in Geneva?

Brian Messana of Messana O'Rorke: Our process of design is the same for both residential and retail space, the difference is in the preoccupations of the client and their program. DKNY Geneva was part of a roll-out of nineteen stores that we produced world wide. Design criteria had already been established and the overall aesthetic was understood. So the process of designing this store was part of a continuum to maintain the brand image and provide the required retail

environment; adjusting fixtures and fittings as necessary to fit within the space.

NYS: What would be your dream project?

Brian Messana of Messana O'Rorke: Our dream project would be any project with a client who shares our vision, who challenges and trusts us to give them our best.

NYS: What are you working on now?

Brian Messana of Messana O'Rorke: We are currently working on a number of exciting projects including, a private houses on the Greek Island of Andros, the island of Vieques, Puerto Rico, and Phoenix, Arizona, two stores for Malin+Goetz in Los Angeles, several residential projects in New York and two commercial development projects in New Jersey.