

# How a calling becomes a career

*Mendy Blasberg from Brooklyn, NY, isn't happy that he completed the ICA Interior Design & Architecture Program. His career is flourishing. His design knowledge is solid. His experience at the program was, in his words, "everything I needed and more." So, no, happy isn't the right word, but exultant, grateful, and wholly satisfied might be.*

## How did you first get interested in design?

Mendy: Ever since I was a kid, I loved exploring different ways to be creative. At 20, I took something like an aptitude test in Singapore, and it confirmed that design was the field I'd thrive in. Back home, I landed a job at a design firm with almost zero knowledge, but I learned something new every day.

## What made you decide to pursue further training?

Mendy: After a year at the firm, I realized I wanted to accelerate my career, sharpen my skills, and really be able to add value to a company. I wanted solid skills to offer a future boss, but I didn't want a four-year commitment.

## Why did you choose ICA?

Mendy: When I reached out, they were very welcoming and informative, walking me through the process and curriculum. I saw that it was a comprehensive program that would teach me what I need to know to excel in the field.

## And did it?

Mendy: Yes, definitely. It covered everything. We learned all the technical tools like AutoCAD, Revit, SketchUp, and Photoshop, and the creative part, like space planning, architectural design, and conceptual thinking. Plus, the program taught us how to establish our own design firm, understanding the industry, how to deal with clients, things like that. We also worked on several hands-on projects.

## Tell me about some of those projects.

Mendy: For the first one, we created a physical design board by collecting real samples, doing hand sketches, and then presenting our boards to the class. It was a huge lesson in stepping out of your comfort zone, explaining your choices, thinking about

the client, and learning to sell your ideas. Later, as our skills got stronger, we worked on residential layouts and lighting, and the most advanced project was designing ICA's new offices, each of us creating layouts for classrooms, offices, bathrooms, and a kitchenette. Everyone got real feedback and saw how design comes to life. So at the end, we had a nice portfolio to showcase to potential employers or clients.

## How was the job market when you graduated?

Mendy: I sent my portfolio to several design firms, and a few reached out with offers; I selected the one where I felt I could grow the most.

## Any highlights from the program that stand out?

Mendy: My favorite part was the collaboration. First, with other students—we were all on similar journeys, but the different



questions that came up in class were a huge part of the learning process. Second, from the instructors. These were people in the field for 7-8 years with real-life exposure, providing amazing insights about actual jobs they were working on. And third, from the vendors. When we learned about tiles, a tile vendor came to the class and showed us different tiles and where they would best be applied. Same for lighting. We saw, felt, and experienced real-life examples of what our everyday would look like as designers.



Biscayne Dermatology Clinic in South Florida

## A word with Kivi Weber

Kivi graduated the ICA Interior Design & Architecture Program in 2018 and runs Kivi Weber Design, a thriving practice based in Boro Park.



## How did your ICA training help you in your career?

First of all, it gave me confidence. I knew I wanted to do interior design, but I came in with zero knowledge. Second, it gave me a strong grasp of the actual tools and programs that I would use throughout my career.

## Any advice for new students considering interior design as a career?

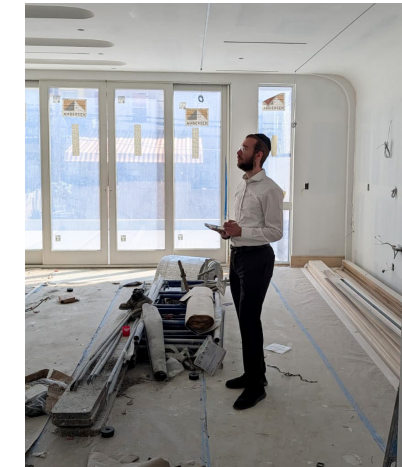
We had a class of about 25 students. I would say 90% became independent interior designers, while the others are also still working for firms. My advice? Go for it.

## One lasting lesson you still use today?

Designing with a concept in mind. Before every project, I review what I learned about conceptual design, which makes sure that every project has its own unique look. It's not just putting together nice things into a room; there's a solid concept and thought behind the design, and that's what makes it a cohesive design.

## Any recent memorable projects?

A residential home in Boro Park where the client gave me the go-ahead at the start to move forward with my vision and didn't question a single thing throughout the design process. It was an artsy, detailed style; the result was perfection, and the client is obsessed with every detail.



Miniland Daycare in Boro Park



Residential home in Boro Park

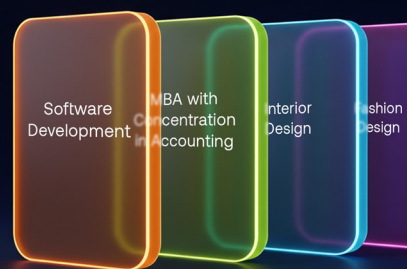
Today, Mendy runs Modo Design Studio, a full architectural interior design studio. They also run a division to assist architects, designers, developers, and contractors with drafting, renderings, and design support. Recently, the practice was hired to redesign the Biscayne Dermatology Clinic in South Florida, stepping in to assist the architect with layout and leading the design for the center.

From Singapore to Brooklyn to South Florida and beyond, Mendy's design dreams have come true.

*And so can yours. For men and women with all design skill levels, the ICA Interior Design & Architecture Program helps you build the skills, confidence, and practical know-how so you can be ready to take on the design and architecture world with confidence and flair.*



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