



Peter Joehnk and Corinna Kretschmar-Joehnk

JOI-Design, Hamburg

When Corinna Kretschmar-Joehnk joined the office of Joehnk Interior Design in Hamburg in 1993, she had no idea that she would find a career and a husband. Moving quickly up the ranks from project manager to managing director of the former Zurich office, she garnered local “fame” for her work on the first-ever McDonald’s hotel, the Golden Arch. At the same time, she also caught the eye of her boss, Peter Joehnk. “I found myself ‘discovering’

this beautiful, creative woman through the media and worked hard to impress her, even losing 26 pounds,” he says.

Even though they started dating in 2001, thanks to formal business communication typical in Germany, the pair had to refer to each other using their surnames until they professionally joined forces in 2003, changing the firm’s name to JOI-Design. Not surprisingly, marriage followed just a year later.

For a pair who say they share their lives 100 percent, they prove that opposites attract. Corinna has a big, lively personality in a small package, whereas Peter is quiet and enjoys time alone. In the office, she encourages collaboration and deliberation, and he prefers less debate and more direct yes or no answers. And even though they don’t have clear-cut parameters at work, outside of designing, Corinna is more focused on marketing and press, while Peter handles costs and contracts, something he admittedly hates.

“We have never had a serious dispute about design which we haven’t been able to resolve,” Corinna says. “Our life together is



Above and below: The lobby and reception of the Steigenberger Grandhotel and Spa Heringsdorf on the Baltic island of Usedom.

our job and our job is our hobby and achieving success together makes it even more fun.” Adds Peter, “The results are even better when two opposite poles come up with ideas and then the best elements are drawn from each concept to create a truly inspired, collaborative design.”

Their differences have become lessons learned for one another. As Peter explains, “Encouraging young creative designers to come up with crazy ideas is a practice I really value. However, Corinna is not as much of a

risk-taker, which has taught me that not every challenge is worth the accompanying hazards.” “But alternatively,” Corinna muses, “I have come to see that without any risk, our office would quickly come to a standstill.”

Standstill is definitely not the case. Since founding the firm in 1984, Peter and Corinna and their staff of 40 have designed some 200 hotels, making them a major player in Europe. Current projects include the Swissôtel in Odessa, Ukraine, the Hilton Munich Park, a Sheraton in Essen, Germany, Four Points in Zaporozhye, Ukraine, the InterContinental Hamburg, Le Meridiens in Frankfurt, Cologne, Hamburg, and Moscow, and the JW Marriott in Cannes.

Could they imagine doing anything else? Not really, they say. “I could imagine operating a small hotel,” Corinna says, “chatting and welcoming each guest with personal care.” As for Peter, “I could see myself repairing old tractors, while still, of course, designing hotels.” **hd**