



Ray Ehscheid: designing and driving positive change

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Something one quickly discovers when speaking with Ray Ehscheid is that he rarely keeps still. Throughout any conversation, the principal and New York managing director at IA Interior Architects is always animated, moving about the room, adjusting furniture or books while keeping up a continuous dialogue. Within 15 minutes, he's shared stories ranging from new potential employees to finding that elusive vintage wine, a recent photoshoot on a new project or a delicious new French bakery on the Upper East Side. Although the past two years certainly caused significant strain on all, he shows unbridled enthusiasm in helping his team move forward, as well as passion and zest for the reemergence of all that makes New York a dynamic place to live and work.

And Ray does love to talk about New York; from a quick run-down of new restaurants, old favorite watering holes, recent gallery exhibits and architectural sites, he'll give you a tour of the city with his own slant, combining style, substance and eccentricity.



Ray Ehscheid, IIDA, RDI

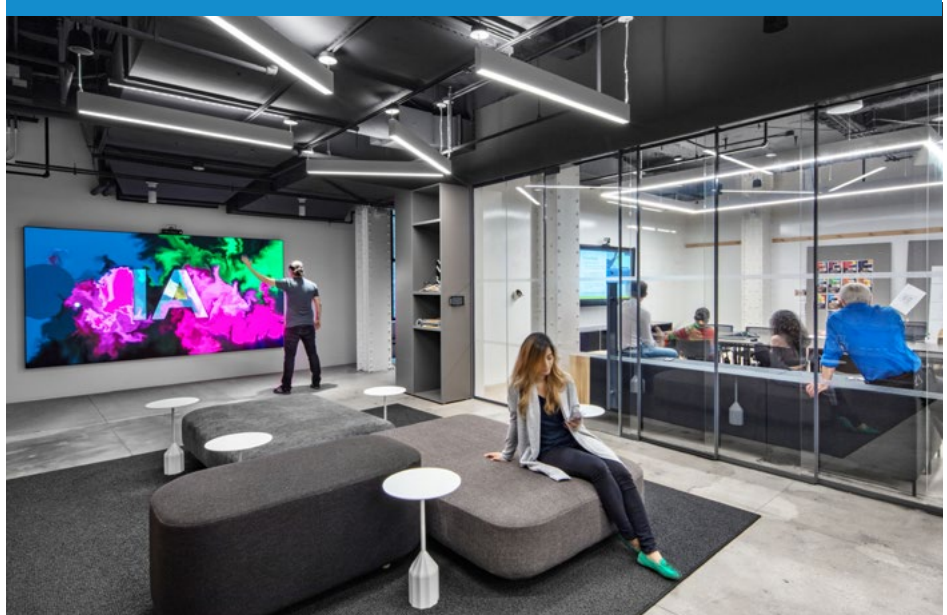
You've likely met Ray in person or virtually at some point in the recent past; he speaks and writes frequently on the topic of design, with a strong emphasis on

financial services. His most recent piece explored possible change in the financial service industry's physical presence due to pandemic concerns, and he has taken the podium at various global banking summits to speak on similar topics. It's a surprise in some ways, as one might think by looking at his clothing choices that Ray had spent most of his career in fashion, and yet his time working at Bank of America was one of the longest stretches of his career. Not a lot of bankers skip wearing socks with a suit, or have been profiled in The Financial

Times for his wardrobe, yet he feels that his personal style allows him to both subtly stand out and give him the confidence to demonstrate his understanding of and expansion upon the complex world of which he remains a part. But also, sometimes this personal brand allows him a platform to share how being someone who's "different" can succeed powerfully.

The International Interior Design Association (IIDA), the Planning and Visual Education (PAVE) association, and, especially, the Retail Design Institute (RDI) have each been a channel to which he has dedicated his time, effort and skill in focusing to drive positive change.

"I've always felt that being able to bring my whole self to work has contributed extraordinarily to my success,"

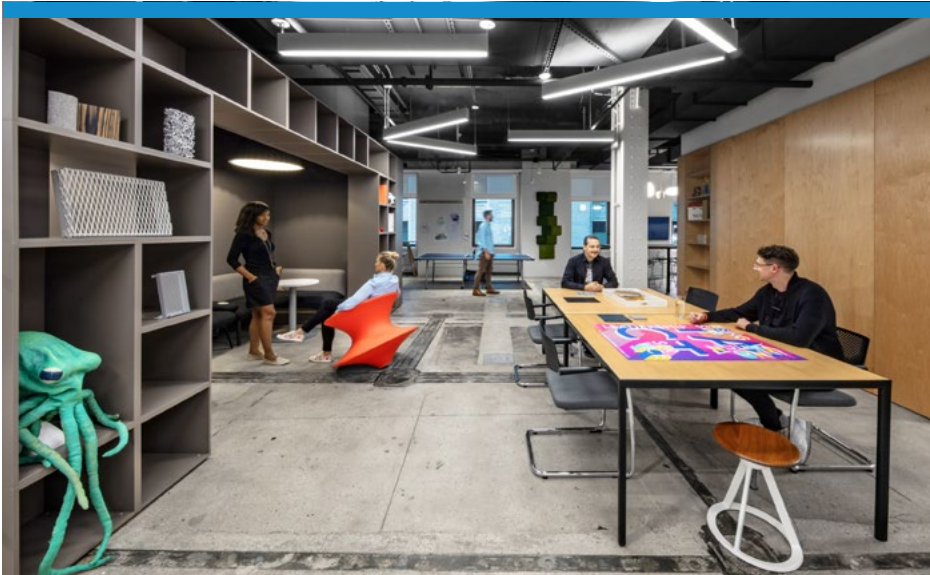


All photos of IA offices in New York: Eric Laignel.

said Ray. He noted that earlier in his career, as he progressed through various roles, that being gay or even being perceived as gay was at times beneficial and at others challenging in his personal and career growth. "Small snubs were more prevalent than large ones in some organizations," he noted, "but both hurt and caused me to redouble my efforts to be accepted and applauded for both my work and for who I am."

When pressed on how he adapted to these challenges, Ray noted that building a support network or allies was essential in building confidence in those early years. Mentors are a prime topic in his conversation, and whether they are a member of the LGBTQ+ community or not, each holds a particular place in instilling self-confidence and allowing continual growth.

Ray noted his leadership style as influenced by these various mentors has become one typified by an unwavering commitment to his colleagues and teams, aligned to his vision of an inclusive, supporting workplace. Throughout his career, and especially at Bank of America, Ray's consistent involvement in corporate affinity groups has been focused on LGBTQ+ issue awareness. These organizations serve a valuable purpose in creating alignment, and at BofA, mentorship and allyship were a focus for Ray's efforts within the group. Ray continued this focus after joining IA in 2017,



Association (IIDA), the Planning and Visual Education (PAVE) association, and, especially, the Retail Design Institute (RDI) have each been a channel to which he has dedicated his time, effort and skill in focusing to drive positive change. Ray has led committees, chaired events, mentored teams, and judged competitions across the US and the UK. Within these organizations, he's been a champion of ensuring that the needs of LGBTQ+ students and professionals are recognized and he has worked alongside

also taking on the role of executive sponsor for the organization's internal team focused on public speaking and salesmanship called Pitch Academy. From this role, and from his position on IA's executive committee, he has created a platform to discuss improvements across the firm and instill confidence in a group of people to focus on this skill set.

"Building confidence in our team via public speaking reminds me of one of the ways I grew personally, overcoming internal fears and becoming visible," said Ray.

And maybe that's the best way to describe him: visible. Ray has been a significant part of the New York architectural design community for the past 10 years, and his involvement with peer-to-peer organizations focused on the specific needs of this world has been a key driver for him. The International Interior Design

peers to ensure that the breadth of the community is represented.

"I've grown a lot in the last few years," remarked Ray. "Leading a remote team while being present and visible were initially a challenge."

And now, via virtual meetings, his team can see the life he's built at home through the lens of his computer's camera, with his husband of 27 years moving through the frame and casual discussions of travel and family filling the spaces while waiting for presentations. Ray notes that this casual focus and collision of work and personal life continues to normalize not only his life but that of all his teammates.

"We've become an even stronger team," he said, "and contributing in some small way to the diversity of that group makes me very happy."