

*Medical Spa
Design*



Sam Margulies is a designer from France. He began his professional education with an apprentice program. After completing his education in upholstery and window treatments as well as in interior design and architectural design in France, he traveled for several years in Europe and the Middle East where he studied different design styles and methods. In 1988, he moved to Montreal, Qc, and after working for two different design companies, he relocated to Burlington, Vermont in 1993, where he opened his own design firm, ATMOSPHERE DESIGN. In the early 1990's, Sam began to study the Chinese art of Feng Shui that plays an important role in his approach to design and architectural conception. Sam is involved in the SPA market since 1996. He has been invited as a keynote speaker in Spa shows in the USA and Canada, and is recognized as one of the leading experts in SPA conception and design.

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WHAT MAKES THIS MEDICAL SPA SO SUCCESSFUL?



NURSE KATHI'S & DR. JONES MEDICAL SPA

BY **SAM MARGULIES**

On December 14th 2001, there took place in Houston, Texas, the grand opening of a new medical spa: PERSONA DAY SPA, Owned by Kathi Jones and her husband, Dr. Stanley Jones. Kathi, a nurse by trade, is the heart and the boss of the spa. With her medical background in both practice and management (she was the manager of her husband's clinic), Kathi manages her medical spa, while Stanley, a spine surgeon, is the medical director of the spa. Over 450 people from Houston attended the Grand Opening event, and a few months later, it is already difficult to have an appointment on short notice.

What makes this spa being so successful so fast, and already being considered as the #1 spa in Houston? This is a question that cannot be answered in a few words, because the success of this medical spa resides in the professionalism in which every step of it's conception, design, realization and management have been taken care of from the beginning of the project. It was clear from the beginning that Kathi Jones wanted to propose medically oriented treatments as well as traditional spa treatments, including water therapies.

To do so, before even looking at the plans of the building, the decision was made that the structure would be divided in four major zones: the Reception/retail, the medical space, the traditional spa space, and the manicure/pedicure/waxing space. At the first meeting with Kathi, I didn't know what to expect in term of her priorities. With her back-ground and

WHAT MAKES THIS SPA THE NO. 1 IN HOUSTON?

her husband's back-ground, I thought that it might be difficult to make them understand that in a spa, the priorities are not automatically the same as in an operating room, and that the environment is as important as the procedure itself. So at that first meeting, I asked Kathi about her "priorities". She looked at me and answered: "My first priority is to make it right". That being said, everything was ready to fall into place in the best manner.

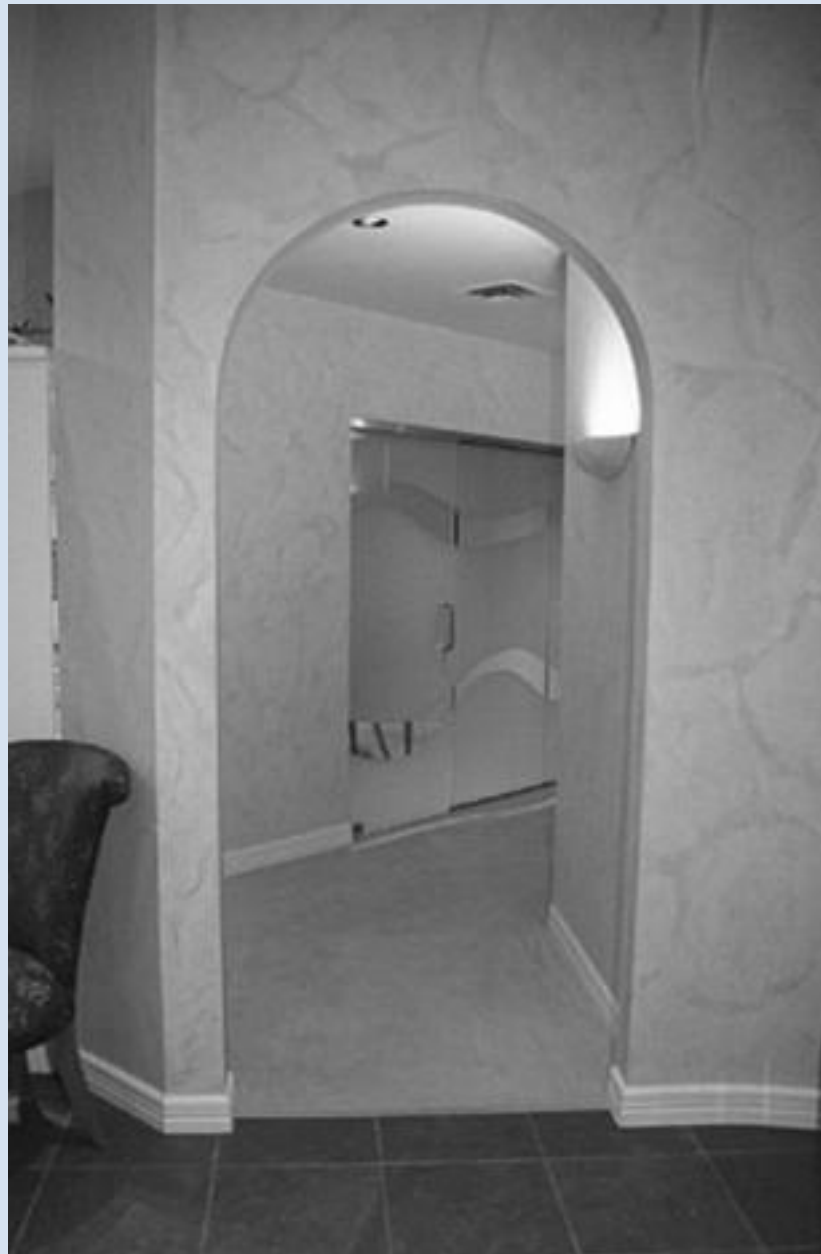
The first challenge was the shape of the space: in the center of this new building, with almost 5,200 sq.ft., the shell of the spa was similar to an asymmetric diamond with the bottom section rounded. We decided to define the geographic placement of each of the four principle areas. The center front was going to become the reception/retail, the left would be for the manicure/pedicure/waxing which creates a higher energy level, the right side of the structure becoming the space reserved for the administration and the medical treatment area, while the center and the back of the structure would be reserved for the spa area. It is important in this kind of distribution to create a traffic pattern that flows easily, allowing the staff to pass from one area to the other, and inviting clients to go without stress from the spa area to the other spaces while keeping the privacy of the spa intact.

1. RECEPTION / RETAIL: Considering that the shape of the shell was wider than deep, it was important to give enough depth to the reception area without taking too much of the space needed for the treatment rooms. Have you ever been in a place where the back wall of the reception is so close to the front door that it feels oppressive when entering the space? To avoid this, we

created a retail/reception space that is only 14' deep, but across the front door, we designed on the back wall a 9' x 9' rounded alcove that created a visual appearance as if the whole space was now 23' deep. In the center of the alcove, a custom-designed water fall follows the curve of the wall, while on both sides, arched passages lead to all areas of the spa.

Back to the front door, when entering the spa, the retail space is on your left

side, and the reception desk is on your right. All the lines in both retail and reception areas are curved, giving to the space a feeling of water flowing through the place. Almost 100 linear feet of curved glass shelves are dedicated to retail space, and a 15' long suspended glass path above the reception counter following its curved shape add to the feeling of light flow. This glass path, as well as all of the glass elements throughout the spa, was made and installed by Mike Boggs and



THE FIRST MEDICAL SPA PRIORITY 'IS TO MAKE IT RIGHT'

his company, B & S GLASS. Speaking of the reception counter, it is 45 inches high so that the client is welcomed at eye level. The computer screens are being hidden, recessed under the level of the counter so they don't create a separation between the receptionist and the client creating a more welcoming feeling.

2. THE MANICURE / PEDICURE AREA: on the left side of the reception alcove, the arched passage leads to a small corridor with, on the left, a meeting room with a frosted glass wall, and on the right, a stylish powder room, for use by any person who doesn't use the dressing rooms reserved for those who have spa treatments appointments.

A few feet later, the door of the women dressing room is on your right, followed immediately by another arched passage leading to the

manicure / pedicure area. During the preliminary discussions about the pedicure stations, Kathi was clear about wanting to create an open space where people would be able to interact without having their noses on the neighbor's feet. So the 6 pedicure stations were placed on 3 walls around the space, with custom- designed 5' tall frosted glass panels separating each station.

The manicure stations were designed in the form of one long curved table divided into three stations. Above, a curved glass path is suspended 6' from the floor, following the form of the triple station, reproducing the design of the reception counter.

3. THE MEDICAL AREA: On the right side of the reception alcove, the arched passage leads to the men's dressing room on the left and to the

administration office to the right. Beyond this point, the medical area of the spa begins. There are five treatment rooms where a doctor and a nurse perform treatment such as Botox injections, microdermabrasion, laser treatments, hair removal, endermology, and others.

All the medical treatment rooms are decorated in a similar manner as all the other treatment rooms, in order to carry on the spa environment in the medical area, as well as to be able to perform spa treatments in these rooms.

This allows a better management of the space utilization. For that matter, all the medical rooms have sizable closets where medical equipment is plugged in and can be rolled out in the event of the room being needed for a spa treatment.



THAT BEING SAID EVERYTHING WAS TO FALL INTO PLACE

4. SPA AREA: The center and the back of the structure are reserved for the spa area. Once more, going from the entry, women go from the reception desk to an arched passage on the left of the water fall, and the door to the dressing room is on the right.

The men go from the reception through the arched passage to the right of the water fall, and the first door on the left side of the corridor is their dressing room. Between the two dressing rooms is the relaxation area. It is in the center of the spa, and is considered as the heart of the structure. With a circular water fall in its center, it is a "haven of peace". Never mind the fact that only a wall separated this space from the entrance, because of the way clients get to it, it feels far away from the outside world. Clients reach the relaxation room from the locker/dressing rooms,

and wait there for the therapist to come and lead them through a wide arched passage in the back wall of the relaxation room, that opens onto the corridor to the treatment rooms.

The corridor goes around the spa, between the treatment rooms and the center, beginning on the left of the spa in the back of the manicure/pedicure area, and going all around to the medical area and all the way to the reception.

This way, clients coming for manicure/pedicure only, or for medical treatments only don't access the spa area, while the clients coming for traditional spa treatments can access the other two areas without having to pass by the reception. The spa treatment area is also divided in two zones: the wet zone and the dry zone. The wet zone is composed of two

water-proof rooms where the hydrotherapy, Vichy shower and wraps are performed. These treatments are noisy, so it is always preferable to separate them from the quiet areas. From the left to the right, the manicure/pedicure area is separated from the wet area by the staff room.

The hydro-room, which is the most noisy treatment, is separated on the right from the dry area by the Vichy shower/wrap room. All of the dry treatment rooms are designed to be multi-functional so that any treatment such as massages, facials, dry wraps or waxing can be performed in any of these rooms.

Creating the identity of the spa: To create the specific identity of the place, a limited number of different materials were chosen, and throughout the spa, it is the same materials that are used but



TO MAKE YOUR MEDICAL SPA DREAM TO NOT TURN INTO A NIGHTMARE

in different combinations. For example, the flooring of the retail/reception area is made in limestone.

The waterfall basin and perimeter is made of the same lime-stone while the wall where the water slides is made of small iridescent glass and copper tiles.

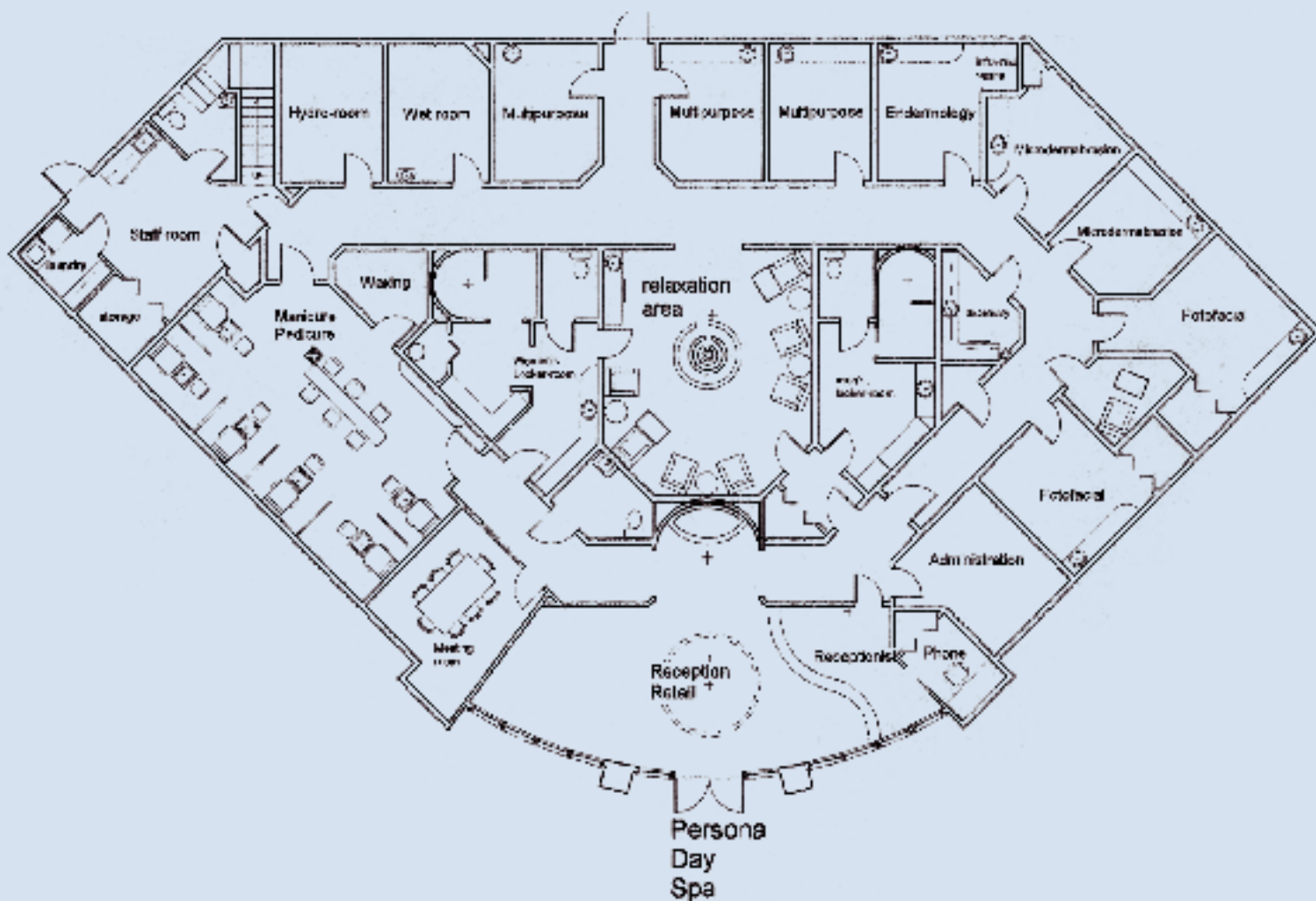
In the middle of the reception area, the logo of the spa, the "P" of Persona Day Spa, is a mosaic made of the lime stone, the small iridescent glass and copper tiles, as well as some 4"x4" clear ice glass tiles. You find the same clear ice glass tiles on the counter-top of the

cabinetry in both dressing rooms. The waterfall in the relaxation area has a different shape than the one in the front area, but is made of the exact same materials, while for the flooring, there is soft wall to wall carpeting that you find also on the corridor's floor around the spa.

The manicure/pedicure floor is made of the same wood flooring system that covers the floor in all of the dry and medical treatment rooms. For the wet rooms, where Hydrotherapy, Vichy shower and wraps are performed, their floors and wall were covered with the same ceramic tiles in two tones which

were used for the locker rooms. The particularity of each of these rooms was created by a different design layouts in each space. The floor and walls of the round showers were covered with a mosaic made of hammered pieces of the same two tones ceramics: 30,172 pieces for the women's shower (I counted them).

To finalize the identity of the spa, a fabulous faux painting (by K & P Design, Houston) has been painted on the walls of the reception/retail, manicure/pedicure, relaxation area, as well as throughout the corridors that erase the straight limits of the walls



GET THE BEST PROFESSIONALS FROM THE CONCEPTION TO THE OPENING



in putting together a spa are the local architecture firm and the construction company. Alvin and Todd, from "Alvin Oncken & Associate", were great collaborators in finalizing the drawing of the blue prints and applying for the permit which they got in such a limited time frame.

Without the collaboration of a good local architectural firm, this crucial step can take for ever, and this is why it is so important to have great collaborators. If the construction company has a previous experience in spa building it is a big plus, considering the specifics of a spa. However, in this case,

The "Christians Development Company Inc." from Houston had no such experience. The owners, Mike and Dan, were so exited about the project, and so positive and constructive in their attitude during the preliminary meetings that we thought that they would be a fine company.

In fact, they were not just fine, but their collaboration, with the help of Larry, the project manager, made this project becoming one of the best spa construction experiences I have had in my career as a spa designer.

If you have the dream to open a spa, and really want this dream to not turn into a nightmare, do what Kathi Jones did for Persona Day Spa: get the best professionals to collaborate on your project, from the conception to the opening, including the best educational trainers you can find on the market.

*This will make your spa as successful
as Kathi's Medical Spa.*

and gives you the impression of walking in the clouds.

FENG SHUI: The fact that the entire spa has been designed based on the principles of Feng Shui is certainly not foreign to the immediate success of Persona Day Spa. First of all, looking at the surface plan of the spa, you will immediately see that the traffic flow throughout the spa is organized in a simple, peaceful and soothing manner.

All of the angles that would come out at 90 degrees or sharper have been cut and replaced by softer corners. The division of the different energies in the spa has been organized in a way that allows each different space type to flourish without imposing upon another space.

The design of the waterfall in the rounded alcove in the reception area has been conceived to absorb the hectic energy from the outside, recycle it into a more serene one, and dispatch it throughout the spa using the traffic flow of the structure. In the center of the relaxation area, which is the center or heart of the entire spa, the waterfall is round (360 degrees) with a 9' diameter dome over it's top.. With this specific design, it recycles and re-energizes the energy coming from the front of the spa, re-distributing the energy in an expanding concentric circle throughout the whole spa in an enhancing and protective manner. In fact, every aspect of Persona Day Spa was conceived according to the energetic principles of Feng Shui. Some of the most important elements