

## An Interview with Linda Porter Bishop

Healthcare overseas, changes in the landscape and confusion in today's furniture market.



### ARE YOU SURPRISED BY THE SUCCESS OF EMBRACE?

Our goal with Embrace was to create a line that was "timeless." We were frustrated with manufacturers' presenting 'healthcare' product lines--for furniture, carpet or fabrics--and it was typically leaves, dark colors or built like an army tank. We wanted a product that had a transitional and hospitality feel but tastefully married the details needed for healthcare. We wanted many options, like back heights, arm details, and discreet bumper guards for vacuum cleaners, in addition to the more standard details. It's a nice validation of our original concepts that it continues to be successful for you.

#### LINDA PORTER BISHOP

Calls Home: Oxford, MS  
Education: BFA in Interior Design  
Masters in Educational Psychology  
Bachelors in Elementary Education



Linda has been a registered interior designer in Texas for 19 years. She is a professional member of ASID and IIDA and has her LEED-AP certification. She is one of 50 Founding Members of AAHID (2004). She has designed several furniture collections. Along with interior designer Iris Dates, Linda designed the award-winning Embrace Collection for Carolina. She has won local ASID, state IIDA and national and international design awards. She has been part of the editorial review board for HERD Journal since its beginning, one of two interior designers out of 30 worldwide reviewers.

Frequent speaker at NeoCon. Past juror for Healthcare Design Awards at Contract Magazine. Best of NeoCon juror for 15 years.

She is a mother of 4 and grandmother of 4.

### WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN UP TO SINCE DESIGNING THE EMBRACE COLLECTION FOR CAROLINA?

In 2008, I jumped into an amazing opportunity to live and work in Doha, Qatar. I sold my home, my car, left my grown children (who were wonderfully supportive!) and worked briefly for a U.S. firm there. Then my client, the government-owned healthcare system, hired me. I worked in The Center for Healthcare Improvement at Hamad Medical Center. It was my dream job, and I worked with a wonderful group of people from all over the world.

While in Doha, I was asked to design a healthcare product line for the Asia Pacific division of a U.S. furniture company, and I moved to Shanghai in 2012. Another dream job! My commission evolved to overseeing the product development, branding and marketing strategies for the line. As that neared completion, I started consulting with Roberts Spaces in Beijing on their hospital and senior living projects; beautiful work and beautiful people!

In 2015, I decided it was time to come home. Air pollution and daily challenges with the Internet just became too much to handle; and I missed family!

### WHILE YOU WERE WORKING OVERSEAS, HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE GENERAL STATE OF HEALTHCARE TO BE IN THOSE COUNTRIES?

Qatar and the Middle East are very different from China, and both are very different from the U.S.

Qatar is an interesting study of contrasts: they've leapfrogged ahead with technology and are slowly developing the infrastructure to support it. It is with the very best of intentions that they build the most

modern healthcare facilities. Their challenge is bringing their citizens through the systems to support the facilities without the help of expert oversight.

In China, it is another but different contrast: there's the beautiful tradition of TCM, or Traditional Chinese Medicine, that has sustained the citizens for thousands of years. At the same time, there's the drive to be recognized globally as a world leader, so there's been a rush to construct these massive healthcare centers with the latest technology. But as in Qatar, the infrastructure hasn't caught up, and often the technology is plentiful but unused.

### HOW IS (OR ISN'T) THAT DIFFERENT THAN HEALTHCARE IN THE US?

Everything is different.

There are very basic things for designers, like learning to convert our Imperial dimensions into metric. The design process is also very different. In Qatar, owners wanted a final rendering at the first meeting, and there was no consideration for any user input. In China, you were required to present "inspiration photos" for your design, and there was no appreciation of creativity.

On the positive side, both countries invested in many tours to the U.S. to tour our well-known facilities. In the case of Qatar, they actively seek partnerships with leading facilities to bring their knowledge and expertise back to Qatar.

As far as healthcare furniture, there's nothing available around the world that is similar to U.S. healthcare furniture. There's also no appreciation for it; it is often beautiful but totally inappropriate

high-end contemporary pieces. There are lots of opportunities for education regarding infection control and patient safety.

#### WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE BIGGEST ISSUES FACING INTERIOR DESIGNERS IN THE US THAT ARE DESIGNING HEALTHCARE SPACES?

Technology and Evidence-based Design has changed everything.

It's incumbent on each of us to keep up with the latest research and not to rely on our intuition or what we did on our last project. You have to spend time reading and understanding the implications of the data to your projects.

You have to spend time with all segments of the population and observe them in a healthcare setting: what do patients need and then solve the puzzles when designing the environment and when specifying appropriate products.

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You have to cast a critical eye on finishes when you walk through a hospital: what hasn't worked or what seems hard to clean and then bring those observations into the design process.

#### WHAT OPPORTUNITIES DO YOU SEE FOR CAROLINA AND OFS BRANDS TO SUPPORT THE A&D IN THE US HEALTHCARE MARKET?

I think you are right-sized: not so large that it is hard to respond to the market and not too small to be overlooked. You also have a wonderful tradition of knowledgeable reps who have been with Carolina, especially, for many years, who know the market and know their designers.

When you combine those qualities, you have an opportunity to make an impact as a thoughtful knowledge leader with a supporting portfolio of beautifully designed products.

#### WHERE DO YOU SEE HEALTHCARE INTERIOR DESIGN IN 10 YEARS?

First, I think we need to think about our work as Health and Care Design. It addresses the unique needs of hospitals and clinics as "care" environments.

From a branding and marketing perspective, it's only a short hop to senior living — or what I call "healthcare-lite." That opens up a new market.

With this huge wave of retiring Baby Boomers, we have an opportunity to redefine what those environments will look like. Most of us don't live in a Chippendale-inspired environment; I'm eagerly awaiting a senior living provider who gets this concept.

As each generation of designers enter the market, their preferences have taken over the market and the preferences of the older generation has been phased out. But we have so many people living and working longer, and we need to find a respect for each and a recognition of their individual tastes with our design solutions.

#### WHICH LIVING PERSON DO YOU ADMIRE THE MOST?

My mom. She's 91, has always encouraged me and has the most laid-back attitude. As she's gotten older, she refuses to worry about things and just enjoys her life.

#### WHERE IS YOUR FAVORITE PLACE YOU'VE TRAVELED IN YOUR LIFE?

It's a tie....love the food and culture of Istanbul, but the quiet and peace of the beaches of Oman.

#### WHAT BOOK(S) ARE YOU CURRENTLY READING?

Just finished Elena Ferrante's 4 Neopolitan Novels; up next are "Custer's Trials" and "The Fall of the Ottomans."

#### WHAT'S YOUR SCREENSAVER?

On my phone it's my 4 grandchildren sitting on my lap during last summer's family vacation.

#### WHO WOULD PLAY YOU IN A FILM?

Meryl Streep....easiest of all the questions....queen of the movies!

#### WHAT/WHERE DO YOU SEE LINDA PORTER BISHOP 10 YEARS FROM NOW?

Sorry, totally personal: watching my four grandchildren grow and welcoming any new ones that might come along.

I still have a couple of destinations on my bucket list: a photo safari in Africa and kayaking in the Galapagos. I'd love to return to the beautiful beaches of Oman, revisit the whirling dervishes in Istanbul, spend another New Year's Eve sunset at the pyramids in Giza and take another six week yoga retreat in the Himalayan foothills. And there's always spring camping in Big Bend in Texas.

