

Ryan Korban Is Never Too Busy for a Power Lunch

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Profile

The AD100 designer, hard at work building his own brand, finds keeping a certain routine may be the secret to doing it all

By [Karin Nelson](#)

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In-demand designer Ryan Korban regularly retreats to Manhattan restaurant Michael's Photograph by Max Burkhalter

On an early summer afternoon, the much in-demand interior designer [Ryan Korban](#) was seated at Michael's, the legendary midtown Manhattan eatery for movers and shakers, rattling off the laundry list of projects he is currently working on. Given the dizzying amount, one could argue he has no business indulging in a two-hour repast. But then, power lunches are part of how he gets it all done. "I don't care if people say it's dead—I still make time twice a week to do it," he says, taking a bite of farro salad. "I find you get a lot done at a lunch, and you really solidify your bonds."

Still, our lunch left him behind schedule for a meeting at the New York Design Center, where he will soon open a showroom for his [home furnishings line](#) with EJ Victor, the licensing partner for Ralph Lauren and Kelly Wearstler. After nearly a dozen years of designing visionary spaces both residential and commercial, Korban, 35, is now intently focused on

building his own brand. His 40-piece collection, which debuted at High Point Market in North Carolina in April, features adaptations of the sleek, sexy pieces he's custom-created over the years for his fashion clients, such as a curvy, blush-colored lounge chair originally made for Aquazzura's Madison Avenue boutique and a tailored, tight-back sofa done for Balenciaga. It's all just the start.

Aside from EJ Victor, Korban has a license with Niermann Weeks for lighting—his debut range features white plaster Brutalist-looking lamps and sconces—and he is currently at work on new pieces for it, as well as his furniture line, both to be shown at High Point in October. Additionally, he is knee-deep in creating an e-commerce platform that will sell an expanded range of products, including case goods, occasional furniture, bedding, and upholstery for his new in-house line, Korban. He has been at it for six months, and so far it has proved no easy task.

Korban's furniture line, manufactured by EJ Victor, includes the Halston sectional, Ferra ottoman, Bois coffee table, and Owen end table.

"We're trying to be more direct-to-consumer, which is difficult to figure out when you're selling high-end product that has a lead time, and is hard to ship, and priced differently for the trade," he explains. As for when it's expected to launch? "Last month," he says wryly, taking a sip of iced tea.

In an ideal world, Korban's products would prove so successful that he would have the option of saying no to job offers. "I don't love doing residential," he readily admits. "But people want it. I'm giving the people what they want!" And indeed he is. At the moment, he is working on eight different homes, ranging from a 2,000-square-foot pied-à-terre at The Pierre hotel to a 25,000-square-foot house in the Hamptons. He is also designing the interiors at 40 Bleecker, the much-anticipated luxury condo in New York's NoHo neighborhood. The penthouse he conceived just hit the market for a cool \$15 million. And he has partnered with the Ritz-Carlton to design key units for its residency complex in North Hills on Long Island.

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"I have project managers, architects, kitchen consultants, pool consultants...there are so many people I interface with every day, I'm going to drop dead," he says. Korban, who lives on the Upper East Side in a townhouse apartment with his partner, fashion stylist Andrew Mukamal, and their ever-growing pack of toy dogs, goes to bed every night between 2 and 3 a.m., thinking about all the more things he should have gotten done that day. He is understandably exhausted.

Korban's Upper East Side apartment.
Photograph by Fran Parente

This is the second time this week he's been to Michael's, where he is always seated at the prime front-window table. He likes the restaurant because of the flowers and the decor, which includes a pair of François-Xavier Lalanne sheep, a lot of forest-green upholstery (a favorite color of his), and art by the likes of Dennis Hopper and David Hockney. It also has a way of boosting his morale, especially when he's feeling a bit rundown. "I spent a lot of my time and career downtown. I was the young and new one—the cool one," he says, surveying the older, besuited crowd. "When I come here, I feel that way again."

And then there are the moments when he is standing in a room with his architect, structural engineer, project manager, lighting manager—the whole team—all of them working together to realize his vision. "That's what really makes me feel good," he says. "That's when I'm like, *wow*."