

Living à la carte : 3) Waking up to tropical bird song. Is the beauty of exotic locations calling you? Our global portfolio of elite residences, hotels and resorts will give wings to your dreams of living in luxury.



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Portfolio

A choice offering

Aya Global's campaign for IFA Hotels and Resorts emphasizes experience and elegance over bombastic buildings, explains creative director Kalman Dreisziger by Adam Grundey

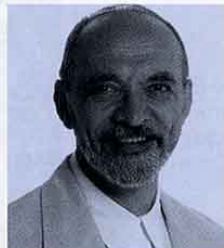
As a Hungarian-born Canadian working in Dubai, Kalman Dreisziger, creative director of Aya Global Communications, is used to standing out from the crowd. He's a creative director who started as an account guy; an architecture graduate who – having discovered that architecture didn't allow him "to build buildings that would make people feel good" – decided that advertising presented less of a conflict with his humanitarian leanings ("Perversely, because I knew advertising was a business, it was OK," he explains); and he's one of the few people we know who has a good word to say about Morris dancers. (Morris dancing is an old English folk dance. As artistic director of North America's largest Hungarian folk dance and music ensemble, Dreisziger is an ardent fan of all forms of folk dancing. Even when the participants wear garters and bells.)

It's no surprise, then, that when Aya was asked to come up with a corporate campaign for Kuwait-based IFA Hotels and Resorts, to explain the company's range of products and leisure services to potential investors and tourists, Dreisziger did his best to come up with ads that were, as he puts it, "un-Dubai."

AS YOU LIKE IT. "IFA has residential and real-estate investments all over the world. It's also the biggest developer on The Palm [island, in Dubai]," explains Aya's managing director, Fadi Abu Ghali. "Hotels and serviced apartments are the main business, but they also have a jet-ownership club and a yacht-ownership club, where you pay an annual fee, you travel to a destination like Cannes, for example, pick up a yacht there, sail it around the Mediterranean, come back, drop off the key and that's that. Fully serviced."

The company develops hotels in partnership with hotel-management companies, who then run the properties. "You can use the different amenities and services," Abu Ghali says of the serviced apartments, "from room service to the hotel swimming pool to valet parking. Or you can choose not to."

IFA needed a corporate campaign to properly explain its varied offerings and turned to Aya, "because they wanted to fit all of this in and they needed some place to start from," Dreisziger says. The campaign fell into place once Aya had come up with the tagline: "Living à la carte."



KALMAN DREISZIGER:
creative director of Aya Global
Communications

RICH EXPERIENCES. With its yachts and jets, IFA, clearly, is aiming at the top end of the market and looking to establish itself as a luxury brand. Many such brands have realized recently that focusing on products and services is no longer enough to appeal to the type of consumer they want to attract. Experiences are what sell.

"A number of years ago I read an article in Harvard Business Review where they showed a pyramid of values in terms of marketing. At the bottom were commodities, next was products, then services. And that – a number of years ago – was where things generally stopped," Dreisziger says. "But these guys were saying that there were two tiers above that. The next tier was experience and the top tier was transformation. And one of the things we really like about IFA is that they seem to have realized that this idea of experience is a much more seductive idea than just plain old property as a product. So they try to structure their offering to the market in terms of experience. And that's the handle that we took with, 'Living à la carte.'"

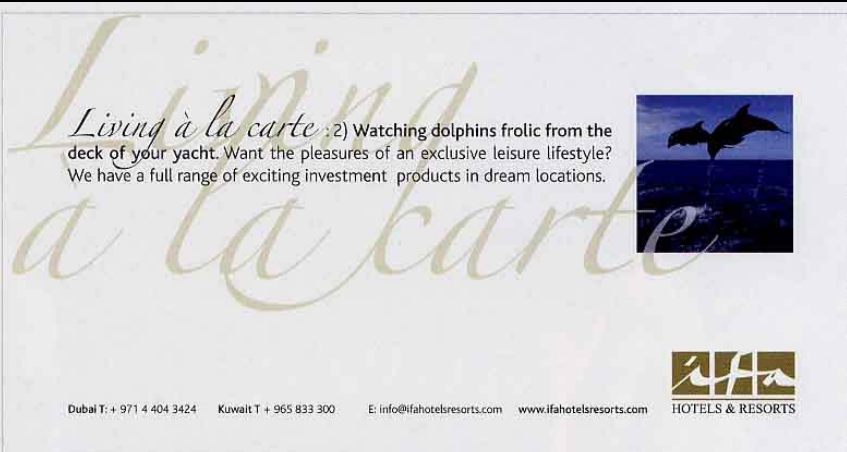
It's an angle that Dreisziger believes is particularly effective in Dubai.

"Most of [the advertising] in Dubai is centered on individual properties," he says. "It tends to be all about the bricks and mortar of the property. OK, so it's gilded bricks and diamond-strewn mortar, but it really is all about the property. I think the market is maturing, and it's ready to move away from the opportunity to make money and towards experience. And that's what we tried to do here: take it away from the realm of selling properties and put it into the realm of enjoyment of an experience."

The lines between vacation and home, says Dreisziger, at least for the mega-rich, are increasingly blurred. People like to be pampered all year round, and many end up living in hotels or serviced apartments. And while they're there, they like to feel in control, so giving them the power to choose from a range of options is vital. That experience is what the campaign had to convey.


THE AGE OF THE UNDERSTATEMENT. "There's a whole slew of inflated adjectives in Dubai property advertising," Dreisziger says. "We tried to understate things, rather than do the hyperbole." This was, he says, down to recognition of the fact that not everyone in IFA's target market is concerned with brash displays of wealth. Many prefer understated elegance, which is the feeling Dreisziger wanted to convey through the campaign.

The campaign consists of five ads, offering five different definitions of how IFA offers "Living à la carte." From "Room service bringing a midnight snack to your home," through "Waking up to tropical bird song," to "Building a sandcastle on your private beach," each ad presents a vignette of one of IFA's offerings. In each ad, the copy, "Living à la carte" underlies the text and image, to enforce the fact that it is the basis for the whole campaign.



Living à la carte 2) Watching dolphins frolic from the deck of your yacht. Want the pleasures of an exclusive leisure lifestyle? We have a full range of exciting investment products in dream locations.

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"We wanted to work in the idea of living à la carte suffusing the whole message," says Dreisziger. "So, visually, it's what everything sits on. But there are so many aspects to it that we had to tackle them one at a time. Our approach was to build little instant stories. 'Watching dolphins frolic from the deck of your yacht' puts you into the framework of a little story, as does 'Waking up to tropical bird song.' You can then say, 'Oh, that would be nice. I'd like to do that.'"

Stories, he explains, are important to him, both personally ("I like to digress," he tells us at the start of the interview) and in his job. "The story is coming into its own in advertising. Simply because human beings understand things best in terms of stories."

The ads are laid out to look like dictionary definitions ("to add a little appeal and class," says Dreisziger), and each is accompanied by a small picture that ties into the "story." Another deliberately understated choice.

"Instead of hitting people over the head with a large visual bang, we tried to intrigue people with a small enough visual that they would go to the story from the picture," Dreisziger says.

SPACIOUS PROPERTIES. The use of white space is another factor that Dreisziger believes makes the campaign stand out from the average property ad.

"There's often a feeling of, 'Well, if I'm paying for a full page, I'm going to fill it up with something,'" he says. "It's an understandable battle, but it's a battle that we're trying to

fight and say there's a different way of doing things. So these are very unusual ads for the market, with so much white space."

The campaign, he hopes, brings out IFA's human side. Something that many of the region's developers fail to present to the public.

"Because [the Dubai property market] is all about 'iconic' – everything has to be taller and bigger and glitzier and more glamorous and more luxurious – everything is incredibly serious," Dreisziger says. "It's all Tarzan advertising. [Beats chest]. 'Me, me, me. Look at me.' That kind of thing. But I think it will mature, it'll get more and more human, and it'll maybe get away from this idea that everything has to be a peak experience."

It's important, he says, that advertisers start to realize hyperbole has its limits. "Although, in our lives, we tend to remember the peak experiences, 90 percent of our time is spent in between those experiences. And a really congenial society, and really congenial advertising, recognizes that everyday, human aspect of things. A lot of the best advertising is very centered on the human being and the foibles and the warmth of the human experience, as opposed to these huge, peak-experience kinds of things." And this campaign was an attempt to convey some of that warmth.

There are other reasons, too, why Dreisziger feels it was important the ads avoided the big image/epic headline approach of most regional property ads.

"If we want to get very high and mighty, we can also talk about the fact that agencies – to a certain extent – might be looked on as people who have a certain responsibility to visually educate the public," he says. "So, this idea of dumbing stuff down is not necessarily always the right thing, because if you take it to its logical conclusion, then you'll have really, really dumb people looking at really, really dumb advertising. And where is that going to lead?"

"I think agencies actually have a responsibility to foster good taste in their audience," he continues. "And, certainly, we've picked up that challenge in this campaign."



Living à la carte 4) Building a sandcastle on your private beach. Want to make your childhood dreams come true? We have exclusive residential resort properties on three continents.

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