

## Architect and Restaurant Designer Jeffrey Beers Spends His Free Time Blowing Glass

The award-winning architect talks about his experience working for I.M. Pei and how he forged his path.



MICHAEL GEORGE

by [SAM DANGREMOND](#)  
APR 26, 2017

Since 1986, [Jeffrey Beers](#) has been a go-to architect for top chefs and hoteliers who want their projects to stand out. Beers's ethos stems from his love of glassblowing, a skill he cultivated as an architecture student at the Rhode Island School of Design, where he studied with noted glass artist Dale Chihuly. "I realized that blown glass is like a mini-building—form, surface, texture, finish, and color are all married together in one discipline," says Beers (*pictured above at [UrbanGlass](#) in Brooklyn*), who went on to join the office of I.M. Pei and managed hotel and entertainment projects around the world.

Here, he tells *T&C* about what it was like working for the distinguished architect (who celebrates his 100th birthday today) for nearly a decade and how he's forged his own path.

### **What was I.M. Pei like to work for?**

I was always struck by his gift for diplomacy. In our line of work it is not uncommon to come across delays, or to go over budget, and Pei had a remarkable ability to calm clients down, diffuse a situation, and keep the project going.

### **What did you learn from him?**

Early in my career I became intrigued with the science of glass and what is called curtain walling—detailing the facade of skyscrapers with glass. I.M. was one of the forerunners. I was honored to work with him and explore the technical components of glass.

## **How did Pei influence your own work?**

To this day I am very moved by Pei's use of materiality, detailing, and layering of artistry in his buildings, such as The National Gallery of Art—East Building in Washington, D.C. and the Hancock Tower in Boston . The emotion pushes me and my team of designers to go into every detail of our design starting with the overall floorplan, then to the choice of wood, stone as well as fabric, and finally to the last details such as a frame around a photograph or the placement of glass vase.



JEFFREY BEERS DESIGNED THE DINING ROOM AT PORTER HOUSE BAR AND GRILL IN NEW YORK'S TIME WARNER CENTER.

## **How did you decide to open your own firm?**

Shortly after I returned from a project in Singapore [Raffles City], I was at a party out east and by chance I met the restaurateur Philip Scotti, today's owner of P. J. Clarke's, who had just acquired a very long—200 feet—and very narrow—33 feet—space on Broadway. He had no idea what to do with it and I suggested he build the longest bar in New York City stretching from Broadway to Mercer. Bar Lui was my first independent hospitality design projects and its success in the 1980s opened the door to more hospitality clients—and to my starting my own interior architecture and design firm in 1986.

## **What are some of your favorite projects?**

They include Bar Lui, China Grill, Rum Jungle in Las Vegas, Fontainebleau Miami, the Hartford Wing at the One&Only Ocean Club in the Bahamas, and the soon-to-open Atlantis Sanya in Hainan, China, which will be the first Atlantis Resort in the Asia-Pacific region.

## **Describe your perfect day in your neighborhood or your perfect night on the town (or both).**

My perfect is spent out east on my boat deep sea fishing with my two sons off the Hamptons.

## What's your favorite restaurant to eat alone?

[Sushi Seki on First Avenue.](#)

## What's your favorite restaurant to celebrate a milestone?

Chef Daniel Boulud and I are longtime friends, and I wouldn't hesitate for a moment to celebrate a milestone at [Daniel on East 65th Street.](#)

## What meal would you get on a plane for?

I've always been an admirer of the Italian way of life, especially their art, design, food and wine; I would get on a plane in a heartbeat for a meal at Chef Massimo Bottura's [Osteria Francescana in Modena.](#)



THE HARTFORD WING COURTYARD AT THE ONE&ONLY OCEAN CLUB IN THE BAHAMAS

## Favorite place to go on vacation?

In the summer, I am happiest taking my boat from East Hampton along the New England coast to Cape Cod. In the winter, I love the warm beaches of the Caribbean, especially the Dominican Republic and Anguilla.

## What is your best travel hack?

Once I arrive and check into my hotel, I immediately go on a long brisk walk to discover the local architecture and design trends, as well as to help my body adjust to the new time zone.

## Is there anyone who makes you feel starstruck?

I have been glassblowing since my architecture study days at RISD, and I would certainly feel starstruck meeting [Venetian glass artist Lino Tagliapietra](#).

**If you could only shop at one store ever again, it would be...**

I've always been fascinated with bookstores, and it would either be [Rizzoli in New York](#) or [Heywood Hill in London](#).

**What's your favorite place to buy a last-minute gift?**

[Sherry-Lehmann on Park Avenue](#). You really can't go wrong with a bottle of champagne for special occasions, as well as a good Bordeaux or Barolo as a thank-you gift.

**What's the last thing you bought online?**

We're a few months away from summer, and I'm already stocking up on deep-sea fishing gear.



THE MEAT LOCKER AT JEAN-GEORGES VONGERICHTEN'S RESTAURANT SEARED AT THE ONE&ONLY PALMILLA IS A DISTINCTIVE DESIGN OBJECT.

**When I feel like I have nothing to wear, I reach for...**

Black or navy, and my Panerai watch.

**What is your necessary indulgence—something you'll always splash out on and can't live without?**

Magazines and books! Our office bookshelves are overflowing with architecture, design, and art books, and our coffee table is covered in magazines ranging across a wide variety of topics including food, travel, and political affairs.

### **What is your go-to drink?**

A glass of Bordeaux. I recently tried a bottle of [Léoville-Poyferré, \(St. Julien\), 2006](#), and it's drinking beautifully.

### **Twitter or Instagram? Who are your must-follows on the platform?**

Instagram, as [I am a very visual person](#). Too many to pick, but let's say I generally favor influencers in the design world such as [Interior Design magazine Editor in Chief Cindy Allen](#), new rising [artists like Dannielle Tegeder](#), and iconic chefs I have had the pleasure of designing for like [Boulud](#), [Jean-Georges](#), and [Michael Lomonaco](#).

### **What is your favorite holiday tradition?**

I love hosting Thanksgiving dinner with my family at our home in New York. It's the perfect opportunity to cook with the ones you love, and to entertain your closest and dearest friends. Ours tend to go quite late into the night.

### **Do you have a hidden talent?**

I am a glassblower, and on the rare occasion I have a free moment in the city, I can be found at [UrbanGlass in Downtown Brooklyn](#) crafting a vessel of some sort.

### **People are most likely to come to me for advice about..**

Good design, and the atmosphere of a restaurant or bar.

### **What is the best advice you ever got?**

My grandfather always told me that you can be scared but don't be afraid.