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Winter Holben plans expansion of services, and team

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Shown (from left) are: Dan Fleckenstein, Emily Wiggin, Kevin Guay, Marissa Ellis, Douglas Schmidt, Brandon Holben, Elisa Winter Holben, Jenni Corbett, Justen Frechette, Robert Whiteamire, Judy Miamis,

George Brown, Genevieve Rickon and Zachary Smith. Photo credit: Alyssa Duncan Photography

Kittery, ME Capping off a period of business growth, Winter Holben plans an expansion of its lines of service, growing breadth of work and bigger team to support it all. Originally founded by principal & CEO Elisa Winter Holben in 2011 as an independent design firm, Winter Holben became a multidisciplinary architecture and design studio when joined by her husband, principal architect Brandon Holben, in 2015. Since then, the firm has maintained its founding belief that “design positively shapes the human experience, from the everyday to the extraordinary.” This commitment to design has guided the expansion of services, business growth and the development of a multi-talented staff of 14.

“Brandon and I started this firm based on a shared love of design and a belief in the power of multidisciplinary thinking. This has resonated with like-minded clients as well as the talented architects and designers who have joined our team. Despite a challenging hiring environment, we have been able to find (and be found by) people who share this commitment. And in turn, we are committed to creating a great working environment. Over the past year, as we’ve doubled our staff, we’ve also expanded employee benefits, launched a profit-sharing program, built out our operations and technology infrastructure. This latest step, an expansion of services – is a reflection of how much we’ve evolved – while staying focused on design, first and foremost,” said Elisa Winter Holben, principal & CEO.

Expansion of services and integrated design approach

The expanded lines of services announced today are defined within four areas of expertise: “Design Strategy & Branding,” “Architecture & Planning,” “Interior Environments” and “Experiential Graphic Design.” While each of these services may be accessed as standalone services, the firm specializes in “integrated design” projects in which all four of the services are combined in a holistic approach that taps into the firm’s collective creativity, technical expertise, and strategic thinking. The results of an integrated design approach are demonstrated in a seamless physical environment that connects branding, site, structure, and human behavior, and can be applied in projects across industries, from restaurant to retail to museum and cultural institutions.

Growing demand both close to home and across the country

The firm continues to see steadily increasing demand from both commercial and residential clients in the Seacoast and New England region. Current Winter Holben projects under construction or in development include the soon-to-open Buoy Shack in Kittery, five craft breweries in New Hampshire and Massachusetts, including Stoneface Brewing Co. in Newington, N.H., master planning and design reinvention for a popular Maine lakefront resort destination and a number of mixed-use developments. Additionally, Winter Holben continues to donate design services to non-profit institutions and community organizations, most recently to the Seacoast Science Center in Rye, N.H., to develop the new Gulf of Maine exhibit and museum entrance area, in support of the museum’s ocean conservation education programs.

Demand for the firm’s services has also grown dramatically over recent years on a national scale, in particular the firm’s work for retail client Bank of America. In 2018, Winter Holben was selected as a dedicated creative partner to Bank of America’s Financial Center and Market Growth Strategy team, supporting ongoing design efforts for financial centers across the country and in 2021, the firm was awarded additional work creating a scalable placement approach for the bank’s retail branding, merchandising and art programs, including implementation of the groundbreaking ArtLifting program, through which Bank of America is providing a nationwide platform for underrepresented artists.

Building a bigger team, keeping a “small-studio” feel

Over the past year, Winter Holben has more than doubled in staff. A design-focused culture, coupled with a collaborative and flexible studio environment has helped attract seven new talented team members to support the growing body of work, including operations leadership and support,

project architect, project designer and multiple experiential graphic designer positions. In addition, several designers were promoted to “design lead” positions, with responsibility for distinct portfolios, and the firm is actively hiring for several new positions.

“What started as a creative partnership with the two of us has evolved into something much bigger. We feel a real responsibility to the talented people on our team and a deep commitment to supporting our wider community. Our goal is to continue to be a great place to work, where we provide opportunities to work on big ideas and innovative design, but never lose our small-team approach,” said Brandon Holben, principal architect.

Winter Holben is a multidisciplinary studio built around the concept of seamlessly integrating architecture and design to create innovative experiences in the built environment. Inspired by the creativity and cross-pollination of ideas inside their studio and the world outside their walls, the firms bring big ideas and a small team approach to projects of all types, size and scope, both in New England and around the country.

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