Archispeak 321 - AU - New Trends in Custom Residential

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Evan Troxel: [00:00:00] Welcome back to the Archispeak podcast. I'm Evan Troxel.

Cormac Phalen: and I'm Cormac Phalen

Evan Troxel: In this episode, we are doing another Archispeak University this time on new trends in custom residential, and these are very custom residential. I would say the, the, the guy we're speaking with in this episode is at the height of custom residential, I would say.

Cormac Phalen: I would say that he's at the tip top. He doesn't have the average client, um, with the average client budget. So, uh, he gets to field a lot of crazy requests and fulfill all sorts of crazy dreams.

Evan Troxel: Yeah, and I think what's so interesting about this is that this is an opportunity that any architect could get into, but.

Cormac Phalen: Yeah.

Evan Troxel: It's a different mindset. And Danny Wang, who is our guest on this episode, is a designer and a builder, so he's definitely coming at it with a [00:01:00] end-to-end approach.

Right. He's, it's a, a turnkey service and product, but at the same time, he built an audience on social media and his clientele comes from that, and he plays that game really, really well. And I think that's what is a little bit different about his approach is he's not approaching this as a traditional design build or a traditional architectural design service. It's really a modern one, and I think that's what makes it unique.

Cormac Phalen: Yeah, it was a good conversation. I mean, they were definitely . Times where he was telling stories that were slightly jaw dropping. 'cause we all wish we had those clients and he's got 'em.

Evan Troxel: Yeah. And, and he has them from a very grounded place. he doesn't come at it from an egotistical place at all. It's very much like I, there's a lot of responsibility involved in this as well, and, and I, some of the takeaways toward the end of the conversation I think are really solid and apply to people who are [00:02:00] interested in this different kind of approach because it's really about responsibility and ownership over the process. Uh, one of the, one of his favorite things that he said that I clued into was how it's our job to worry about all of this stuff, uh, when it comes to making these projects happen. And he tells the client that, like, that's what you pay me for. You pay me to take care of that stuff. You pay me to worry about that stuff. he is ultimately the one who is delivering the project.

Cormac Phalen: Right, And if we only could have, you like that on the, uh, larger commercial side of things,

Evan Troxel: Well, let's give people a little bit of a, of a foreshadowing here. Some of the projects that he talks about, residential projects here, I. Are in the tens of millions of dollars, and I don't want to give the numbers yet because he gives them in this episode. So I want to tease it a little bit here and and again, I think this is it within reach, if you want to play a [00:03:00] completely different game than what I think traditional architects are trained to do, which is much more of a traditional service industry.

Cormac Phalen: And though we really didn't talk about it a lot with Danny, one of the things that we could obviously do another show about is have him come back and talk about how we leverage social media as a marketing and business development tool. Because he's leveraged it to a point where he is got, you know, a million Instagram followers.

He's got, a very vibrant YouTube channel. I mean, it, people follow for progress of, you know, of these projects and, and he gets, real true marketing out of it.

Evan Troxel: Absolutely. and that's the game that I'm talking about that he's playing that I think a lot of architects aren't playing.

And so he, out of a million followers, how many clients do you need with those Big, big, big budgets.

Just a couple. Right? And I think he alludes to that in this [00:04:00] conversation and those lead to other people with budgets like that. So it is a, it is a really interesting conversation. There's a lot of fun stuff that we talk about that Danny's doing, and there's a lot of really interesting kind of trends and in residential that you might hear about in this conversation. You ready to jump into it?

Cormac Phalen: Let's,

Evan Troxel: Well, Danny, welcome to the Archispeak podcast. It's great to have you here.

Danny Wang: Great. Great to be here today.

Evan Troxel: it's going to be a fun conversation because of the work that you're doing and maybe you can, tell everybody who's listening about what you're doing.

Danny Wang: so I'm a design build firm we design all over the world and now we build in mostly Southern California. We try to do fun and crazy things all over the world.

Evan Troxel: Nice. So give an idea of what those fun and crazy things are. I mean, the, the focus of this episode is really around Residential [00:05:00] projects, indoor outdoor kind of blending of living space and, and the, the work that you're really specializing in. But, but give us a flavor of what, of what that is when it comes to the work that you're specifically doing.

Danny Wang: So, you know, we're kind of now known for just doing really extravagant outdoor, indoor projects. usually people come to me to think of, you know, super crazy ideas. So that's kind of what I do now. I just come up with a, come up really crazy things to, to, to design and then create how to build them. So,

Cormac Phalen: kind of live in the dream, everybody's always looking for that, uh, that client to come to us and say, you know, I've got a wild and crazy idea.

Danny Wang: yeah, so that's, I mean, it's definitely comes with a lot of challenges. Um, it's not easy, but it's very rewarding.

Cormac Phalen: so when they, when they come to you, do they have kind of like a, an inkling of an idea and then you just have to kind of pull it out of them or is it a very symbiotic relationship where you kind of [00:06:00] just work through the flow of like, you know, what is right and also what is constructible?

Or do you even worry about that?

Danny Wang: you know, of course, uh, I think nowadays we kind of build our self reputation on social media. So a lot of them, they'll let me, you know, they'll let me do what I want to do or I could show them what I want to do, right? So I have a lot of creative freedom in that aspect. so. It's more of, this is what I want, and then, you know, they'll give me a checklist, and I have to go and, you know, wow them, yeah.

Evan Troxel: give some ideas of what those kinds of things are. Or maybe, maybe let's start off with just like, what has surprised you? When, when it's like, I would have never seen that coming kind of a thing. Because I think the things that I've seen in your social media feed is like, They're, they're extravagant, they're, they're beautiful, but at the same time, I can't imagine that, that you've always been able to, list out what, the standard list of things, it's, it's got to be something where it's like, whoa, I didn't see that coming.

Danny Wang: For the clients or for me?

Evan Troxel: Yeah, yeah, from the [00:07:00] clients. Well, let's do both. Yeah, let's do clients

Cormac Phalen: was gonna say or do

Evan Troxel: do you.

Danny Wang: um, so let's say today I just had a meeting off, uh, it's a, 50 million project. it's a really small space, but we're doing a pool that's over, their basement, like home theater, gaming area. Uh, and then we thought, we talked about putting acrylic windows from the pool so you could, you know, you could see below and also from below you could see above. And one of those windows is located where the jacuzzi is. And, because water's a very good transducer of light.

So I said, there's one job that I designed where I used the acrylic on the ceiling and the water above, I used it as a chandelier because you could change the color, you could, you, let's, let's light through and you can see the really nice glimmering.

So that was, you know, that's pretty crazy, right? It's just not everybody has a, you know, a jacuzzi as a chandelier, right?

Cormac Phalen: so let me ask when you have that kind of a project where it's, there's [00:08:00] basically, an aquatic space above a, an occupied space, are you doing both of the spaces? So that you're basically building it. It's not, I guess, so I've got my little project manager, mind kind of rolling and it's just like, please tell me that this isn't an existing space that he's going to have to come back in and rip a bunch of stuff out and build a bunch of stuff over it that he's going to, have the opportunity to do it all at one time.

Danny Wang: Yeah, so we have, uh, most of these are brand new builds, so we're able to do it all at once, yeah. But still, it's, uh, it's challenging, but it's fun. I'm doing a couple of those right now. Another one, they got kind of like an indoor tennis court. so that one, the architect and the client brought to me, I was like, oh wow, I've never seen, I mean, indoor tennis court is pretty impressive, right?

And, and then we're putting a koi pond on top as an entry.

Evan Troxel: wow.

Cormac Phalen: Interesting.

Danny Wang: Yeah. So as he, as you walk in from the garage, You're walking over this koi pond, and then underneath the koi pond, it's a tennis court.

Evan Troxel: So that's kind of a [00:09:00] soothing way to get ready for the match. I mean, it's like

Danny Wang: well, I

Evan Troxel: for the

Danny Wang: just, you know, it's pretty impressive that people have, because I mean, I've seen indoor basketball courts, I've seen indoor, you know, gun range and things, but indoor basketball, indoor tennis court is pretty like, wow, that's, uh, you know, and then on top of it, have a koi pond on top.

Cormac Phalen: how has your business grown from, I'm kind of assuming, and please correct me if I'm wrong, it was, it was more conventional kind of creative spaces, but a little more conventional to, as you started to explore a little bit and you started to get a little bit more adventurous that people are like, this guy can do it, you and then you've just gotten, am I assuming that, just grew from like, let's get this, test how crazy we can get.

Danny Wang: Yeah, so, I mean, I think a lot that I have to do my, that has to do with my background. so I started out as a contractor. I didn't even know I could design, right? So, I never even dabbled into designing. And then, ten years in, in my contractor career, what happened was, I started [00:10:00] using 3D programs, and a couple of my designers, they were so, they were so busy that I had this project that I really had to get done.

So, I started playing with it, dabbling with it, and started, Creating those ideas in the program and more and more I did that, it kind of allowed me to say, well, what if I did this? Right? Like, what if I kind of express, you know, like what I could do, right? so with the 3D program, I was able to do a lot of that.

And then, um, I was also very busy at the time. So I said, okay, you know what? I want to suggest this crazy idea to a client, right? The crazier, the better, right? Because if I, if I don't get the job, then I don't really care. And what happened was the more I explore, It's well recepted by the client because they're like, Oh, that's a fresh idea, right?

Cause one of those first ones were, I wanted to put this tea garden inside a pond. I did that. I did kind of like a sunken tea bar, tea garden. You're kind of sitting [00:11:00] there, surrounded by water. And then over there by the water, we had this like floating, not floating, but over there by the water, we had this like Zen garden.

And

Cormac Phalen: mm,

Danny Wang: on the other side, we had this, outdoor cooking area. Cause the client owned the restaurant. He was in the restaurant business. So I was like, okay, let me create something that's really, wow, outdoor environment. Because most of the restaurants are kind of indoor. This one was kind of unique, cause then, let me create a really nice outdoor experience.

So we had, you know, teppanyaki bar, and behind it, there's a water wall. And then we had this sunken seating tea area. We could, have afternoon tea. So that was, more and more after that and just like, okay, you know what, uh, seems like what I have to offer people is people like it.

Right. And they're willing to spend more money on it. Uh, what happens if I go crazier and crazier and crazier and crazier? Right. So it just kind of like what, what could I imagine today? Right. Yeah.

Evan Troxel: what's interesting about that strategy, I mean, I don't, it sounds like you, you, you didn't really plan that [00:12:00] strategy out, but it happened and it proved itself and then you took it to the next level and it proved it and you took it to the next level. So it's been this iterative building thing over time.

And what's interesting to me about that is there's so many people in business who double down on just what they're good at becoming more and more efficient and offering that very specific service. What you're talking about is something completely different than that. And you were pushing yourself, you're pushing what you're capable of designing, you're pushing what you're capable of building.

And at the same time, you have to deliver it, right? So you're, you're putting something, you know, some kind of boundary on this to just. know that you can perform it. But I mean, talk us through that, because I think that's super interesting. A lot of architects who listen have pigeonholed themselves into the kinds of services and designs that they offer.

And I know it's kind of a harsh word, but at the same time, like, I can't think of anything better at the moment. So maybe talk about that because I'm sure that like, this has been exciting for you. Like you said, it's still difficult to, these are [00:13:00] difficult, challenging projects, but I'm sure that's also part of why you're doing what you're doing.

You like the challenge of it.

Danny Wang: yeah, um, and I think what's really nice about it is because I was a person that, honestly, I worked with tons of designers and I think where I could design literally comes from them, right? If I'm working with all the top designers and I'm kind of, it's like osmosis, right? Like if I'm the one

Evan Troxel: Mm hmm. Mm

Danny Wang: of it, I kind of absorb a lot of it.

So what's made it really successful is I knew how to build a lot of this crazy stuff already. So then it's just like, okay, let me, it's almost like I know how to build this. This is the limitation of what I could build. How could I change it, right? And a lot of that is Also, because at that point I was pretty good as a builder already and people refer me pretty complex jobs So, I already [00:14:00] had the reputation of doing pretty complex projects and you earned the client's trust already because I built projects for them. So that was very, that was a pretty simple transition because I already had proven myself as a builder and now I'm just adding my own flavor to it. So that, that was actually not as difficult as, you know, let's say if I just started out and I didn't know how to do anything.

Cormac Phalen: Have you, through this process, let's call it a journey, as a builder to a design builder, have you kind of been able to not only just push what you, are learning and, and now kind of like excelling at the design aspect of things, but it's even pushing what you can build. And now you're like, okay, 10 years ago, I might've only been able to build this.

Yeah. But now, you know, the, you know, trial and error and everything else, and just being able to, to kind of use the design build aspect as a [00:15:00] proving ground. You know, you've, you've grown to be able to say, Oh, I didn't know steel could do that.

Danny Wang: Yeah, you know, and this is where social media is great, right? So now we kind of build a reputation. There's clients that come to us and say, okay, this is what, you know, go push the limit, right? So now there's the money's there, now you start to come up with the idea.

So that's really. What's helped a lot is also because, let's say I'm building a 1. 5 million pool, right? The client wanted me to go build a million, 1. 5 million pool, right? It wasn't like

Evan Troxel: them. Yeah.

Danny Wang: Yeah, I didn't have to convince them. It just said, hey here I want to go build the craziest thing that you could think of.

Then it's like, okay I could think of, you know, this, this, this, this, this, this, right? And whether you like it or you're crazier, you know I could always go crazier. Yeah, so it's just I think that's what Is good about doing that is, and it's executable, right? I think that's one of the things that, as an architect or designer, right, like when you design something that's super [00:16:00] crazy, you'll know if it's gonna get built right, because of cost, because of engineering.

So when we go through this process, we already eliminate a lot of. Right, so that saves, that actually saves a lot of time, I think that's why we're able to do so much because there's a lot less back and forth. It's like, okay, let me come up with this idea, okay, it's going to be a million dollars, that's, you know, and then it's like, oh, that's ten times over my budget, let's value engineer it, and then let's, oh, that's still ten times, you know, five times over my budget, let's go do this, right?

So versus in the beginning, we just said, okay, Let's come up with this. This is probably going to be half a million to a million. I don't know the exact number yet, but it's that within your comfort zone of spending, right? And if it is, then okay, we move forward. Let's get engineered. Let's go do this. Let's go do that.

So we're spending a lot of time doing that. And we're spending a lot more time into, okay, let's just hire, build this project. Cause the, you know, the pricing's correct. I'll give you a range. we know how to build this, uh, the design you like. So that's [00:17:00] really saves a lot back and forth between, and also because it's all in house, right?

It's all in house. It's not like, Oh, let me go talk to archetype. Let me call it to an engineer. Let me call it to a contractor. Let me go talk to, you know, whoever else is involved in the project. so that's really where. I think it has benefited us because, you know, let's say I'm designing something. I'm pretty confident that we're going to build it. Right. And whether that costs, and I already told you the range. so the likelihood of closing a deal is pretty high because I already, I already explained all the unknowns, right. And now it's just doing it. So that's, that's, I think one difference between a lot of my competitors and, and myself, it just, usually you don't have someone that's. That could do that, and going back and forth, back and forth, back and forth, and there's limitations, there's unknowns, it just you know, it takes a lot longer.

Evan Troxel: full service. One of the ideas of that, that we're architecture as an architect only just providing that service is that that [00:18:00] process is quote unquote wasteful. And I think a lot of architects might have an allergy to me saying that because it's what they do. It's what we do as architects, but at the same time, it's

Danny Wang: it's,

Evan Troxel: Well, it's,

Danny Wang: wasteful. Yeah.

Evan Troxel: buy the project, that's what your clients ultimately want, and, and it's a necessary waste that, because it is the design process that, that takes the ideas and, and, and synthesizes them into reality, but at the same time, like, nobody's buying a set of plans, they want to buy, they want the final thing, right?

And so, the re, you know, this, this idea of you eliminating steps along the way, Because you do it all in house, I think it's just an, it's an interesting thing for people to hear because what you're talking about is by removing uncertainty along the way and reducing risk because you have answers is something that clients find desirable in the process that they normally don't like about the process with working with architects and then moving it on, [00:19:00] handing it off to a contractor,

Danny Wang: Yeah. I mean, I, I got in trouble for saying this, in one of my previous podcasts, and I got, I got a lot of heat, you know, most of my clients, they don't want to be part of the, we call it the sausage making, right? They just want, they want to spend a lot of money and then they want to finish project beautifully.

Like they don't want me to bother them with it. They don't want me to say, Hey, we have this, issue today or, I don't know how to do this, right? They don't, they don't have time for that. Right. And they, they're, most of them, they're not, they don't have the time to be also involved in my projects because they're making, you know, they're busy making money.

So it's almost like, I kind of attribute this also to, because a lot of my clients run really large businesses and they trust the people they delegate, these, Priorities to, the people that they work on, that work on their own. So that's really helpful because then, they know that they don't need to get in your way.

Right. You hire a good person, you let them do your thing. [00:20:00] Uh, I have some clients, you know, I don't talk to for, you know, six months. Right. So it just, it just, you know, that,

Cormac Phalen: Well, we. We tend to not really have necessarily that luxury, whereas, we've got clients who really want to kind of get their hands into the mix of everything. So it's actually kind of, you know, rewarding to do a design build type project like that. That's a little bit more hands off, they know what they want, they know that you can deliver it.

And, you're able to just basically kind of step back and say, let me do what I know

Danny Wang: yeah. And if they really want to be involved, then they should go hire someone else, right? Yeah, because then I can't

Cormac Phalen: or even if they do want you involved, I mean, they're going to know, where the limits are of, what they can and can't do

Danny Wang: and then, I think this is where press and past projects and things like that, it's just like, hey, these projects all want a lot of awards feature on magazine covers. Right? If you want to get involved, it's not going to be [00:21:00] any of that. So, it's not going to be on the cover, it's not going to be on, right?

Because, right, unless, just, uh, But, again, at the end of the day, they're my clients, so what we do need to do is we need to take in what they want, but then after I get the list of what they want, let me go create, you know, that's why you hired me. Let me go do my thing. Yeah.

Evan Troxel: I love that. I, I, I love that because it's like, uh, I think there's a lot of people out there who want to tell that to their clients, but

Danny Wang: yeah, and you just have to

Evan Troxel: just, just

Danny Wang: you, have to be bold, right? You just, you have to say, hey, I'm willing to not, uh, and I think that's really what helped us, is just, you know, saying no to, I say no to probably 99 percent of people that call me, right? I just say,

Evan Troxel: Hmm.

Danny Wang: this start doesn't align, the price is not right, the project's not impressive, so whatever, right?

But you gotta stick to your guns, say, okay, this is what I do, if you're gonna let me do my thing, then I need to be in charge, and this is why you're paying me, right? If you want to be [00:22:00] involved, you should just go do your own design, and then hire your own contractor, and, you know, go do that, right?

Evan Troxel: Yeah.

Danny Wang: yeah, so.

Evan Troxel: Well, I appreciate you giving us a taste of all that, and I'm sure we'll get into a few more specifics as we go through this, but I'm interested to hear from you, from kind of this, um, educational perspective of this episode, if you could talk about the transition of, and I'm making an assumption here, that through the time you've been doing Design Build, that projects were indoor Plus outdoor.

And now now we're seeing a more merging of indoor and outdoor integrated. And and so the idea of that and where you're doing your projects, I'm sure has quite a bit to do with that, but now you said you're, you're working internationally.

And so maybe there's some new challenges in that regard, but can you kind of talk about that transition that you've seen happen over the last few years? Because I think COVID was a real big

Danny Wang: Yeah. So I think that was, uh, obviously, you were doing outdoor [00:23:00] living before. But, so I first started doing indoors, and then I got kind of bored. And then I started doing outdoors. And then what started happening was I was doing outdoors for my clients. And they're like, well, you just did my outdoors, but now my indoor doesn't match or it looks, you know, it doesn't look that nice, right?

So then it's like,

Evan Troxel: look as good.

Danny Wang: let's go indoors, right? And, and that's kind of how I, I always tell people how I design space. Uh, I think that's more like a personal philosophy. I designed the outdoor space to blend in with the indoor space. Because, especially lately with all the big windows and doors I could open in and out, I treat that as all one aesthetics.

So, I particularly do not like where your outside looks completely different than your inside. Even the materials, everything, I like it to, blend seamlessly. Because once you open those doors, you want it to feel like it's natural, right? You don't want it to be where your eye can distinguish, [00:24:00] Oh, this is clearly outside, right, and this is inside.

So even like tiles, we'll use indoor tiles. Same pattern, and then we use the outdoor one, the same pattern. And the nice thing is a lot of manufacturers are into that now. So they'll make tiles that could be used outside also for inside. So you just kind of, everything's seamless. Um, and I always say the ability to do that, you literally double your space, right?

Because now you have outdoor space, especially where we're at in Southern California. It's, you know, open the doors, go outside, right?

Evan Troxel: Yeah.

Yeah.

Danny Wang: So that's,

Evan Troxel: So talk about that. Talk about why so many people have shifted outside. Is it, is it, do you really feel like it was because people were feeling stuck inside and that really drove a shift to the outside? Or do you think it was more about getting more for their money with the real estate that they have kind of a thing?

Maybe it's a little bit of a of

Danny Wang: yeah, I think all of the above, right? You have, okay, for a period of time where you don't go outside, uh, you could work from home, right? You could,[00:25:00] also, yeah, real estate price went up, right? And I think people realize, You know, when in the pandemics people realize, Hey, a lot of their personal wellbeing is important, right?

It's just like, okay, I can make all this money and die tomorrow. Right? Or I, I used to spend 1 hour, 2 hours commuting, but now I have all this extra free time. I should take care of myself. And then now you're spending more time with your family, your, you know, yourself, just a lot more time is discovered.

And. I also attribute that most people before they spent a lot of time outside the house, so they actually never realized how nice their house could be, right? They might have the fancy office. They might have this and that. It's like, well, how come my house doesn't has none of that, right? So, so just, I think that just kind of, it's like a clash of, you know, it was kind of like the perfect trifecta, right?

The perfect storm where it's like, okay, now that we're promoting outdoor. First, we're probably staying home. You could [00:26:00] work from home. You could do this and that. You don't have to commute. You have extra time. All that stuff, you know, kind of just pushed forward this outdoor, indoor living for the last couple of years.

Cormac Phalen: So what are some of the, uh, attributes of the outdoor space that you've seen kind of escalate? And I don't know if it was maybe a shift from, okay, now I'm going to be spending a lot more time, like say during the pandemic, I'm going to be spending a lot more time at home. Were they asking for more things that, weren't really giving them beforehand because it just wasn't of interest to them?

Danny Wang: Yeah. Um, so one big push is more, more room. So we're doing a lot more room additions, pool houses, uh, ADUs, additional dwelling units,

Evan Troxel: the idea of utilizing the space that you have more effectively because you're spending more time there, your awareness of it is just been expanded, right? And all of a sudden it's like you realize you don't have all those amenities there because you've been going out to do all that stuff. [00:27:00] So

Danny Wang: Pretty nice, right?

Evan Troxel: Yeah. Right. I mean, and, and so can you talk about like some of the types of amenities that you're, you've mentioned a few of them, but, but even more specifically, are we talking about like ice plunge pools? And are we talking about saunas? And we're like, give, give a rundown, like a laundry list of the kinds of things you're talking about.

Danny Wang: Basketball court, pickleball court, combo, uh, ice plunge, sauna, steam room. Those also picked up a lot. Uh, of course, outdoor kitchen, you know, outdoor heating, all that picked up quite a bit as well. And then swimming pool. just outdoor living,

Cormac Phalen: Does, does, uh, swimming pools somewhat, and I say this somewhat tongue in cheek because I've seen your portfolio and I've, and when I say this, people need to go and, and take a look at your website and some of the extremely amazing, pools that you've done, but do pools seem almost pedestrian in comparison to some of the other crazy asks that you've been getting? And, and again, I say that because you've got some [00:28:00] pretty awesome pools you've done.

Danny Wang: Yeah, no, so I think we, we also integrate that, right? So this morning I was at a project walk, uh, we're doing this really crazy project right now. you start incorporating different elements inside the pool. So, you know, now my pools have sunken bar, you know, sunken seating, you know, sunken spa, right?

Slide, lazy river, right? So then the pool you're building, it's almost like a canvas, and then you're plugging in all the spaces in the pool. Yeah,

Cormac Phalen: right.

Danny Wang: so that's, that's just gets crazier and crazier, right? I mean,

Cormac Phalen: Have you done a, a swim out, summer kitchen yet, or, or outdoor kitchen yet?

Danny Wang: yeah,

Cormac Phalen: All right.

Evan Troxel: what?

Cormac Phalen: You know what? I mean, I kind of figured that that would be, something that would, they, they would ask, and pretty sure Danny might have done it.

Evan Troxel: okay, so, so I'm throwing up my hands here because, uh, This is not my reality, this is not my lived reality, but Danny, like you've done these, [00:29:00] well, but you've done these projects and, and like we alluded to earlier, because you've done these things, you take the risk factor way down for somebody to say yes.

Let's do that. And, and I think that's what's so interesting about the, like looking back and seeing the progression of what you've done over time and how it has escalated because you are able to say, Oh, we do this. This is what we do. Instead of somebody like me saying like, Oh no, I've never done that. I have no idea how much that costs.

I have no idea how hard it is. I, and, and, and I, I'm building Uh, outs into the conversation for somebody to say no, so that we don't have to do that, but you're like, bring it on. I think that's such an interesting, like, differentiation.

Danny Wang: yes. And I think earlier in my career, that is what differentiated us because no one else wanted to do it. You know, everybody, all the contractor wanted to go the safe route. I mean, for what we do is I feel it's pretty safe, right? But it just, you know, they, they're not comfortable taking that kind of risk.[00:30:00]

Cormac Phalen: is it safe only because you're Adventurous enough as it is that, you don't say no because, you know, like, you know, what's the point of doing it if you, if it's reserved and conservative and all this other stuff, you, you kind of just want to keep driving that, um, you know, that adventurous design.

Right.

Danny Wang: Yeah. I think a lot of it is driven by the, the contractor, right? Also the, the designers are usually pretty crazy. They're like, I want everything. Right. But usually it's the contractor is like, no, no, no, no. You can't do this. You can't do that. Right. So I don't think it's the architect or designers problem, right? It's the person that's building it. Right. Because ultimately I, I, I see why. Right. Because they're, they're on the hook for this. Yeah. And yeah. But for me, it's just. You know, building something complex, it's, you know, once we [00:31:00] visualize it, it's not that hard.

Right. I mean, you have enough resources, you have the engineers, you have the people that you're working with. Um, it's challenging, but it's doable.

Evan Troxel: So, is it really about a mindset there, do you think, then? Because, like, you're saying, no, it's, it's doable. And that's what I'm wondering is because I think there's a lot of ways that I see this manifest in the AEC industry, which is

This is the way we've always done it, or this is how we're going to do it, or we can do that, or we can't do that, and more often it's the can't part.

And I think it's interesting because you're saying, no, it's like, it's not that hard. And I, and I've been hearing, I hear other people who are very successful in what they do, repeating that kind of, uh, uh, you know, that, that's their, their feeling about it too. It's like, no, we'll figure it out, or it's not that hard.

Danny Wang: Uh, so I think, let me, let me take, take a step back. So I think it's actually not the contractor's fault, [00:32:00] right? Because some of these things I've never done before, right? I'm like, I don't know what it's going to cost, but I go to my client and I say, Hey, I don't know what it's going to cost, right? I could kind of guess what it's going to cost.

Are you willing to go on this adventure with me? And sometimes there aren't, right? So, so I think that's also one thing that funds it because they're willing to fund that unknown,

Evan Troxel: Mm hmm.

Danny Wang: right? Where most people, it's just like, no, I don't feel comfortable, you know, spending a million dollars on something like this, right?

Right.

Cormac Phalen: So do most of your clients come with that adventurous spirit

Danny Wang: not all of them, but the ones that we do take on, they understand that, Hey, it's going to be one of a kind. And those, and those, and those, those are usually the people that have enough money to do these kinds of things, right? It's just like, I want something that no one else has never seen before.

I don't care what it costs because I trust that you're going to make it one of a kind.

Cormac Phalen: Well, I was, I was more [00:33:00] like the clients that you do take on and that, go along with this ride with you, they've got to have some sense of adventurous spirit regardless because they know, I mean, if, if they're going to go on this ride with you, they know, you know, what to expect, they know what you're going to pop into the tape player and, and turn those jams up because they just know.

So, you know, it's, it's those people that, we're, I would say we're always looking for those kind of like adventure spirit ones, but then they're like, Oh, wait, it's gonna cost how much? Okay. Um, can you pull over and I'll jump out here.

Danny Wang: Yeah. And they jump out, they jump out. Right.

Cormac Phalen: Exactly.

Danny Wang: the nice thing is, you know, you get enough people to do it. And, and this is, I mean, we could probably use this for a quote, just in case I get famous. When the client says, Hey, it's going to be a lot of headache. And this is what I tell them, Hey, you pay me to handle all those headaches, right?

That's my job, right? Your job is to sit there and [00:34:00] enjoy the end product. So yes, of course there's going to be a lot of headaches, but that's what I get paid for, right? Like I'm going to do deal with all those headaches, right? Right. You sit there and enjoy the ride, right? Like make it as smooth, you know, like flying airplane.

I'll take you to the destination. I'll make sure what's of course is going to be bumpy, but you know, we'll get you there. So that's. Something that I think really helps is just, I try to make it as easy as possible for, for the end user and that way they could focus on doing what they do best. Right. You know, go make extra money or go do this or that.

Right. So, yeah, so I think that's really where a big difference is because some people like to make it. Of course, I'm building big, difficult project, right? Don't add to the stress, right? Like, you know, I think it's like a personality thing. I'm pretty calm. So, okay. Yeah. This is going to be difficult. We're going to have, you know, hundreds of problems.

I got this, right? You know, that's why I get paid. Some people will be like, Oh, he's going to have hundreds of problems. I mean, you guys probably deal with [00:35:00] contractors. I was going to have all sorts of issues. Like, well, isn't that what you're there for? Like you're, you're getting paid to handle all this.

Cormac Phalen: You exactly. That's

Danny Wang: don't, don't bring that back on me, right? It's like, okay. So I think that's, yeah, it's a mindset thing. It's okay. Yes. We're going to have infinite amount of problems, right? Okay. That's, you know, That's, that's, that's a given, but.

We're going to handle it, right? I'll take care of it. You know, that's my job.

We're going to problem solve, we're going to go through whoever we need to go through to get to solve. Right? So it's just anything is possible if we have enough resources and most of our clients do. So that's why it becomes a lot easier. Cause then it's like, okay, I don't know how long I built that or how much it's going to cost to build that, but we'll get it built.

Evan Troxel: Yeah, no, I think that is a great attitude and I keep thinking of this as you're talking about this kind of, we've talked about it already, right? But this, this mentality, this, this attitude about being up for the challenge, [00:36:00] this is an adventure. There are unknowns, there are risks. I will do everything I can to mitigate those risks.

I'm the professional, you pay me to do this. This is my expertise and I'm going to take the headaches away. All of those things kind of play into this. psychological behavior of what it takes to be successful, but also for them to feel at ease to go along this journey with you, because it is a multi year, very expensive project, and you want them to be happy with it, right?

Like that, that's the ultimate goal is that they get to enjoy it as soon as possible. And, and all of that has to play together.

Danny Wang: Yeah. And I always, I allude to this. This is when I'm. interviewing clients, it's almost like marriage, right? We're going to be together through ups and downs. You guys, there's going to be some times you're super angry at me. There's going to be times where you're super happy, right? You've got to go ups and downs together.

And at the end of it, you'll have a beautiful journey, right? So it just, it's life, right? And I think For someone to [00:37:00] do all that, you also have to be willing to take all the responsibility, right? Because typically when I used to work for designers, subcontractors, you know, all that kind of stuff, everybody points a finger at someone, right?

With this, it's just, you going in, it's, it's only going to be my fault, right? If this doesn't work out,

Evan Troxel: But it's also

Danny Wang: be able to work. Yeah. So you have to go in and say,

Cormac Phalen: Risk and reward. Yeah.

Danny Wang: Yeah, you have to go in and say, okay, you know, I'm going to get blamed for everything, right? It's my responsibility for everything. No matter what, designer, builder, whatever.

It's all my fault. So I think that's something that not everybody's willing to take on, right? Because there are a lot of people always like, oh, it's the architect's fault. It's the designer's fault. It's this person's fault. It's that person's fault. For us, right? It's all my fault. So I'm going to take all the, all the risk, all the things that's going to happen and whoever, messes up under my watch.

It's me, right? And I'm the only person to blame. So I also, I [00:38:00] think that's in a sense, a good thing too, because everybody that's been in this kind of building experience, they're so they're used to someone blaming someone else, right? It's like, Oh, I can't do this because that person, I can't do that because that person, right?

So there's too many restraints. It's like, okay, let me clear all the restraints and burn that to myself, right? If anything happens, it's only going to be my fault, right? Either I didn't manage this person correctly or this messed up or that messed up. I had to step up to the plate and address it and handle it.

So I think that's something that not everybody's willing to do because it's a lot. Yeah.

Cormac Phalen: absolutely a lot, but at the end of the day, when you can walk out to, your finished creation, take that deep, you know, deep breath and just look at what you've created and said, yeah, it was worth the risk.

Danny Wang: Yeah. So obviously you need to get compensated well for that. Yeah. So I think it's just, I think again, it [00:39:00] always goes back mindset, right? And it's just, uh, I'm going to do it. I'm going to be responsible and you know, there's no one else but me to blame.

Evan Troxel: mentioned a couple different product categories, and when we're talking about blending indoor to outdoor, can you just throw out some other things where you've really seen substantial, advancements in the last few years in those, categories that you might bring up. I mean, we're talking about indoor outdoor spaces.

So we're talking about maintenance. We're talking about glass. We're talking about cleaning things, you know, and there's got to be a few things out there that you've really seen some incredible new opportunities in design show up because there's been innovation or, neat ideas happening with building products as well.

Danny Wang: One of the things that's really changed a lot since probably, let's say five years ago is Now they're making porcelain tiles so durable, so realistic looking and indestructible. That has kind of been my go to versus using, you know, [00:40:00] natural stone, using this, using that, right? Because it's now, when you put them side by side, you can't really tell the difference.

Evan Troxel: It's incredible. Yeah.

Danny Wang: Porcelain tile, that's, and you could print textures, you could have fragilized slip, you could do this and that. Um, so that's one, uh, outdoor heating, smart homes, uh, integration of smart home outside. of the things that we're personally doing into and I'm building a showroom for is, a outdoor heating.

You know, that's, that's kind of gone a lot in advancement. Uh,

Evan Troxel: In what ways? Like, like, like what are the kinds of things that you're actually seeing happen in that category?

Danny Wang: yeah, so aesthetics, right? one good example would be, like the Bromic outdoor heaters, right? They're very clean and sleek looking. And some of them, they have, integrated with lights in them. So it just becomes more like functional than just having, this thing with two red tubes across, right?

Or the gas heater where it's off, it's just like little flames and thin [00:41:00] profile, very sleek looking. So I think that's advancement in design where it's like, okay, Hey, everybody designs this this way. But let me figure out how to design it that way and still get it to work. so that's been a very big, change and we're doing that a lot in my, in my own showroom and my projects.

another one is, audio. Right. I just, I just got a bunch of these speakers and they sound absolutely amazing outdoors because now again, people are demanding more of these amenities outside. Right. It's like before we'll get away with those little some sound speakers, but now it's like, no, I want, I want, I want, to have a whole surround sound experience.

Right. Uh, outdoor TVs. Um, I'm hopefully doing some that are like 120, 130 inch TV that pops out of the ground. Right. Before that wasn't required, but now it's like, Oh, I want to watch, I want to have people watch movie while I'm swimming. Right.

Cormac Phalen: But I think one of the things that's interesting about like all of the [00:42:00] different products, the heating, the speakers, the TV, even with, the tile, I mean, most of it is about being able to integrate it into the project without really seeing it there, because we always had these challenges like, Oh, we're not going to do heating because I don't want to see, you know, this big heating elements hovering over my head, you've got this limitation. And so now things like heating, things like the speakers, you're able to basically make them disappear and, be top quality, without really, sacrificing your design.

Danny Wang: Yeah. I have not personally done one yet, but I seen a couple and talked to a bunch of reps is the one that, you know, even like we're talking about swimming pool, right. The floor comes up and it makes it disappear. Right. So that's something that we haven't done, but. I would

Cormac Phalen: Oh, I'm sure it's on the horizon.

Danny Wang: Yeah. It was, I mean, right. It's, it works for certain, location. Like it's one of their most popular locations, [00:43:00] London. Right. Cause you have limited space. So the price is not an issue, but you have the space constraint. So now they have basement pools where it's okay.

You're not using it, make it into a, you know,

Cormac Phalen: A deck. Yeah.

Evan Troxel: something. else.

Danny Wang: So that's, that's something that's been pretty cool. Um, yeah, so I think that that's, that's just now this movement has kind of pushed people to say, Hey, you know what? Uh, I want the outdoor heater to look nice, right? I want the outdoor speakers to sound nice.

I want this and that, like just pushes the bars. Okay. Traditionally we're only here for that because no one cared about the outdoors, but now they're like, okay, let's now there's, you know, I guess money in it. Let's make it. You know, better. And also the competition's a lot less.

Evan Troxel: Mm.

Danny Wang: You might have two or three companies doing outdoors, outdoor speakers.

You might have, you know, a hundred that's doing indoors. So again, just differentiating themselves and say, okay, Hey, this is an outdoor opportunity. How do we make better things? To [00:44:00] serve that. It's challenging. I mean, like I was playing with outdoor speaker, making outdoor speaker sound nice for outside.

It's very challenging, right? Let's go through the weather. Let's go through this. Let's go through that. So but some people, again, they're very like minded people. They like that kind of challenge.

Evan Troxel: That sounds like the perfect place to wrap this up. And I appreciate you taking the time to hang out with us and tell us about this today.

Danny Wang: No, no problem. it's always nice to share the journey and, what we do. So,

Evan Troxel: Well, we'll have links to where everybody can find your site, your Instagram in the show notes for this episode, but Danny Wang Design, right? That's the name of the company.

Danny Wang: yeah. Danny Wang design. That's, you know, you can find me and then dannywang. com. That's my website.

Evan Troxel: All right. Well, thank you so much. This has been a really fun conversation.