

Canadian-Indian designer recalls his designs for Kuwaiti stamps

Interview by Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Stamps, the price paid to send a letter, were often utilized not only as a revenue source for the postal service but also as a way to commemorate a country's milestones or achievements. Designing those commemorative stamps are an important part of the process and often involve artists from all over the world.

One such designer is Denny Varghese Kurien, who won a contest to design stamps for Kuwait in 1998. Now based in Toronto, Kurien cannot forget his childhood memories of Kuwait and the iconic buildings he grew up seeing.

KT: Tell us more about yourself.

Denny: My name is Denny Varghese Kurien. My job title is Creative Director & Co-Founder of Rayvn Design (www.rayvn.io). It's a creative design studio based out of Toronto and Boston that does logo identity design, website design and digital and social media marketing.

KT: How long have you been working in Canada?

Denny: I've been in Canada since 2002. I'm currently residing and working in Toronto. I spent my childhood in Kuwait (from 1979 to 1996) before heading to the US to do my undergraduate degree. After that I returned back to Kuwait, worked for three years, then immigrated to Canada.

KT: How do you compare Canada and Kuwait?

Denny: Weather-wise, it's the exact opposite of Kuwait. It gets super cold and sometimes goes down to -40 C. Job-wise, I worked in Kuwait for three years (1999 to 2002) - this was right after I graduated from university. I worked in the marketing department of an IT company called Path Solutions, as well as the Commercial Bank of Kuwait in their marketing department. Since I work in the creative sector, I think working in Canada and the US is a lot more beneficial for me - there

are a lot more creative freedoms and creative opportunities for my kind of work. The people of Canada are super friendly, and I now consider it my home. I'm now a Canadian citizen - I've lived in Toronto for 15 years. I have a wife, a 7-year-old son, 3-month-old daughter and a dog.

KT: What do you miss most about Kuwait?

Denny: I have very fond memories of Kuwait - especially growing up in Hawally and attending the New English School (class of 96). I miss my parents and extended family (most of my cousins are still living and working there). Friends I went to school with at NES are now all over the world, and I still make it a point to keep in touch with them via Facebook or WhatsApp.

KT: Describe your favorite place/s in Kuwait when you were here and why?

Denny: I miss the food - Naif Chicken shawarma and eating at Mais Alghanim - these were popular hangout spots for me and my friends from high school. They don't have very good shawarma here in Canada. I also miss the KFC Spicy Zinger burger, Hardees roast beef sandwich and Caesar's mini-pizzas - we don't have those too here in Canada.

KT: When was your last visit to Kuwait?

Denny: The last time we visited Kuwait was in 2011. My parents and much of my extended family are still in Kuwait. My parents come to visit us in Canada every other summer. In January 2019, I'll visit Kuwait with my family for a couple of days.

KT: Tell us about your entry in the stamp competition. Where did you see the ad? What were the inspiration and the reason behind the design?

Denny: It was in 1998, when I was attending University of Denver (studying graphic design). I had come home to Kuwait



20 years ago.

KUWAIT - Photo shows the two winning designs by Denny Kurien, based on iconic Kuwaiti landmarks, parliament building (purple stamp) and the Grand Mosque (blue stamp).

— Photo courtesy Denny Kurien