



What Clients Want

International Interior Design Association

What Clients Want

Vol.2

Essential Conversations about Hotel Design

People | Practice | Process

Melissa Feldman

Editor | Writer

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INTERNATIONAL
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Foreword

Hospitality is a design industry sweet spot. Designers working in this vital vertical have the opportunity to redefine the end-user experience from the moment they cross the property threshold. Their designs can imbue a space with emotion and sense of place, while they must constantly anticipate and innovate. *What Clients Want* is a celebration of some of the best recent projects that truly reflect the evolution of the hospitality industry and this drive toward innovation. A crucial component in these success stories is the dialog between designers and their clients. The results of this collaborative process are inspiring projects that we can all learn from.

At 3M, we infuse this philosophy of problem solving and collaboration into all of our initiatives. We observe, we listen, we predict and we anticipate, and through this, we innovate intelligent solutions for even the most unarticulated or yet-to-be-discovered needs. For hospitality designers, anticipating these needs starts with an understanding of how people will react when they enter a space. A hospitality setting is a chance to make the impossible a reality. Guests expect a certain level of service and luxury yet they want to be surprised and transported. Consumers look to hotels to reflect the way they want to live their lives.

To create winning hospitality spaces, designers must approach the process thoughtfully and logically, choosing products that bring both beauty and practicality and, most importantly, maximize the impact to their audience. As we see in *What Clients Want*, striking this balance is key, leading to the longevity of the design and a positive working relationship. This is constantly front-of-mind at 3M. We ensure that our products bring pleasure to the client,

the designer and eventual end-user. Products like our LED light fixtures have an incredible ROI because they use less electricity, but they also serve as architectural statement pieces with their bold geometry or surprising color-changing capabilities. Product flexibility is also a key consideration for clients, and designers are increasingly able to accommodate these transformative desires without sacrificing beauty. The 3M printable DI-NOC Architectural Finish covering this book is a great example of this. These high-performing, decorative films offer cost-effective solutions to clients' demands to cover pre-existing surfaces—transforming a space in the matter of an afternoon.

Whether the end-users recognize it or not, an environment affects everything they do, from their mood to their productivity. The environment matters, and good design makes all the difference. *What Clients Want*, demonstrates this: how the human factor of an emotional reaction to a room is a direct result of the designer-client relationship. We may always be focused on product and big picture appearance, but how a person interacts and reacts to it is a true test of good design.

We are proud to support the second edition of this series and look forward to being a part of the hospitality conversation that *What Clients Want* generates.

Maureen Tholen
General Manager
3M ARCHITECTURAL MARKETS



Architectural Markets

By the date this volume is published, hospitality industry research and market data group, STR, estimates that there will be 187,000 hotels in the world, offering nearly 17.5 million guestrooms, globally. Hotel guests travel 40 percent for business; 50 percent for leisure and about 10 to 12 percent of guests exercise work/life balance by combining business travel with an additional two to four days of vacation time.

It is anticipated that Millennials will become the core customers in the hospitality industry in the next decade as they enter their peak earning, spending and traveling years. This group demand that their “stays” be in places that are digitally connected in every way, brand sensitive, well designed, culturally apt and authentic in experience. I don’t think one needs to fall into a specific demographic to have those desires. And when “downtime” happens, whether it is sought between meetings, or is the sole focus of a journey, they want service and amenities delivered with speed and precision. And when that service doesn’t happen—or doesn’t happen quickly enough—hotel guests no longer just tell the front desk, they tell “virtually” everyone. Literally. The hotel industry has a heightened awareness of the fact that the 21st-century is the age of digital referrals and the power of what’s posted on user-generated review sites like Yelp and Trip Advisor. Media-wide there are 3.3 billion brand mentions in 2.4 billion brand-related conversations within the U.S. every day and this “digital word of mouth” can drastically enhance or influence the guest experience, the property’s reputation and ultimately future revenue.

What else is important to hotel guests? Just as in the commercial and residential design sectors sustainability is the expectation and increasingly becoming the new standard. According to the U.S. Green Building Council, in the U.S. alone, hotels represent more than five billion square feet of space, nearly five million guest rooms and close to \$4 billion in annual energy use. That means putting in place environmental programs well beyond not leaving your towels on the

bathroom floor to be laundered that day. Eighty-five percent of hotel guests expect environmental responsibility and do not see that negatively impacting their comfort, or experience.

Who is travelling? Nearly everyone, it seems. The emerging middle class in Asia along with capital cities in Africa is contributing to a robust international travel market. It is estimated that China alone will contribute 100 million leisure travelers to worldwide destinations. And what these new travelers are seeking isn’t remarkably different than our forebears who sought intellectual and cultural élan with their “Grand Tours.” Those with pioneer spirit heeded the call to “go west.” Still later, the restless and eager post World War II generation in station wagons with 4 children arguing over backseats and window views, traveled to the orangey-blue fabulosity of Howard Johnsons promising sleep and an all-you-can-eat breakfast buffet.

We are indeed a world on the go, but when we “stay” we want to be immersed in comfort, convenience, a sense of safety and a bit of adventure; luxury that is affordable or sublime, an enhanced experience that allows us to work or play, exceptional service and expected amenities. (More outlets and free wifi please). This second volume of *What Clients Want* will be your guide to 16 hotels around the globe that exemplify design excellence and brand distinction. Each unique story features the designer, as well as an insightful client that understands good design always elevates the hospitality experience—and is, in fact, the most essential element.

My special thanks to my fellow global nomad, Melissa Feldman, writer/editor, and our generous partner, 3M Architectural Markets.

Cheryl S. Durst, Honorary FIIDA

Executive Vice President/Chief Executive Officer and *What Clients Want* Brand Founder
International Interior Design Association



Today travel is all about the experience. According to the U.S. Travel Association, last year \$167 billion dollars were spent on lodging both in the United States and abroad. As a child, after visiting monuments and museums my family would systematically drive to a Holiday Inn. When I was older we embarked on a road trip through the British Isles where hours were spent in the backseat, wondering where we might spend the night? In Ireland my Dad booked a suite at Ashford Castle, a real medieval fortress on the Galway coast. That property is now one of the Leading Hotels of the World and a far cry from the Holiday Inn we stayed in back home.

Once the center of high society, today hotels have transformed the social and cultural fabric of cities by providing not only a place to sleep but also democratic spaces to meet, plot, love and dine. “An enchanting old ruin,” is how Ralph Fiennes’s character in Wes Anderson’s film *The Grand Budapest Hotel* describes the alpine resort where he works as a concierge. That charming Old World behemoth is slowly becoming obsolete, and being replaced with hotels, akin to the ones profiled in *What Clients Want*. Along with Cheryl Durst and Dennis Krause, my cohorts at the IIDA, I’ve selected a range of properties from corporate brands including Hilton and Starwood to unique, one-of-a-kind companies exemplified not only by their unique design but also by a client’s brief and a design process that illustrates how the core concept evolved.

Thread count, bath amenities and what’s available in the minibar are all things we’ve come to anticipate when checking-in. Beyond comfort, location and a restful night’s sleep, a hotel’s atmosphere and mise-en-scene is perhaps the single most important feature when making a choice as to where to stay. Travelers have come to expect experiential accommodations that also attract like-minded guests.

Psychographic is the term being bandied about at lifestyle and travel conferences and one way in which companies are defining the behavior, values and attitudes of their customers. This is especially true in the hospitality industry which I have immersed myself in for the past year and half researching the second volume of the IIDA’s series *What Clients Want*.

Sleeping in a generic room versus an authentic experience in an existing landmark building underscores some of the design narratives outlined in this book. Hotels such as the Dorset Square in London from the Firmedale Group possess a proper, yet playful attitude that reinforces the concept, which emphasizes the game of cricket while also revealing details about the history of the place. The Armani Hotel Milano offers personalized Old World service delivered in a sleek, modernist en suite scheme, while the Fasano Boa Vista located an hour outside of bustling São Paulo is a discreet mid-century inspired hideaway. The Parkroyal on Pickering offers guests a tropical oasis of verdant green in the center of the city of Singapore. And millennial travelers now have multiple choices with upscale hostels like Grupo Habita’s Downtown Beds in Mexico City.

Designers and clients connect through various ways and means including previous collaborations, recommendations and competitions. But what’s essential to creating a successful partnership? Most of the participants agreed—it’s a personal relationship where both sides work in tandem, communicate and listen. There’s trust and dare I say an emotional engagement that develops along the way. I’ve heard clients describe their interior designer as friend, confidant, interpreter and collaborator. But at the end it also takes “a lot of togetherness,” as well as honesty and acting in your clients best interest.

Melissa Feldman
Stroll Productions

Hotel Bel-Air

Client **Christopher Cowdray**, DORCHESTER COLLECTION

Designer **Alexandra Champalimaud**, CHAMPALIMAUD



Nearest Airport
LAX



Currency
USD



Time Zone
GMT -8



Typical Guest
Aspiring Traveler



Telephone Code
+310



Design Vibe
Modern Regency

“I TOOK A LOT of references from the past,” says designer Alexandra Champalimaud when explaining her approach for the interiors of the iconic Hotel Bel-Air. **“My job was to preserve the culture.”** The hotel which was originally founded as Bel-Air estates in 1946, and was known for its discretion among the Hollywood elite. Over time it became a retreat for screen legends like Montgomery Clift, Grace Kelly, Tony Curtis, and Marilyn Monroe who all enjoyed wandering the meticulously kept grounds, which still flaunt swans and pink-hued Spanish Colonial-style buildings. The hotel changed ownership several times throughout its history with the London-based Dorchester Collection now the current owner—the hotel joins the company’s luxurious portfolio of hotels including the Beverly Hills Hotel, Hotel Plaza Athénée in Paris, and the Hotel Principe di Savoia in Milan, all operated by the Brunei Investment Agency.

The Portuguese-born Champalimaud launched her namesake New York firm in 1982 and has since become known for a mix of mod and traditional interiors for both residential and hotel projects, including the recently renovated penthouse suites at the Dorchester London. **“With all of our hotels it’s about authenticity. We were looking for a designer who would be able to understand what the Hotel Bel-Air was about and what the nuances are,”** says Christopher Cowdray, CEO of the Dorchester Collection, who worked with Champalimaud on the suites.



The Bel-Air’s signature pink Spanish Colonial architecture serves as a backdrop to the Presidential Suite’s pool.



LEFT

The Herb Garden Suite features a custom chandelier, and chic blue and purple hues.

TOP

Thanks to French doors, natural light floods the elegant living room of the two-bedroom Bel-Air Suite.

ABOVE

The 12 Canyon Suites were built into the hillside and offer outdoor fireplaces and infinity-edge spa pools.

When Dorchester took ownership of the Bel-Air in 2008, the company decided to take on a massive two-year renovation, which meant shuttering its doors. *“To close down for a renovation is a very big financial decision, so one of the biggest concerns was to maintain a schedule,”* says the designer.

Because Cowdray and Champalimaud had already worked together she was an obvious choice for this project. *“Some designers are good at guest rooms, others at public areas and restaurants and you have to be able to identify who will be right,”* says Cowdray. *“The next thing is chemistry. You build a relationship with a designer so they understand what your expectations are.”* The two spent time walking the property, getting to understand who the clientele was and how they could make better use of the space, particularly the public areas. *“As far as the Bel-Air is concerned, its seclusion, gardens and tranquility were very, very key,”* says Cowdray, adding, *“the design didn’t play into the serenity of the area.”* According to Howard Clarke, Dorchester’s project manager (and a former horticulturist), the major draw for clientele is its privacy. *“Once you were inside the hotel, nobody knew you were there,”* he claims.

Clarke oversaw the day-to-day construction and implemented a greywater recirculation system—treated water from sinks and showers was then re-purposed for landscape maintenance. The Los Angeles office of HLW handled the



The main swimming pool,
c. 1951.



“The whole process is emotional understanding—it’s not just looking at pieces of paper. You’ve got to have fun but I daresay, you get emotionally involved in these projects.”

Christopher Cowdray

views, sliding glass doors, outdoor fireplaces, decks and infinity-edge spa pools.

Champalimaud and her team spent time traveling back and forth to the job site but also presented PowerPoint presentations, mood boards and sketches through video conferencing. *“When you know a client you can talk to them in shorthand,”* she says, adding that as a team, they communicated almost every week.

“The whole process is emotional understanding—it’s not just looking at pieces of paper. You’ve got to have fun but I daresay, you get emotionally involved in these projects,” says Cowdray. *“I brought the right style, attitude and experience,”* says Champalimaud, adding, *“I had a vision and can be counted on, so we deliver what we promise.”*

architecture and renovation including new infrastructure—all foundations, walls and HVAC were replaced. *“We kept all of the historic colors, the terracotta tiles and all of the things people associate with the hotel,”* says Clarke.

The majority of work focused on the interior spaces. Champalimaud re-envisioned the lobby, spa, 58 guestrooms and 45 suites, and crafted 12 new lodgings nestled into the 12-acre hillside property. David Rockwell redesigned the restaurant as an indoor-outdoor space showcasing chef Wolfgang Puck’s cuisine, and fine-tuned the Oak Bar and Garden Ballroom.

Inspired by the California of the 1940s through 1960s, Champalimaud painted the interiors in a soft, neutral palette. *“It’s very liveable, has sparks of color, but is never very strong,”* says the designer.

“I think most people’s experience with hotels is emotional. It has to do with their feelings or expectations, their dreams and in the end, the design can contribute to that.” The construction of the dozen Canyon suites, meanwhile, *“were new and in a different vernacular,”* she says, which offer stunning

Opened
1946

Renovation Complete
2011

Guest Rooms/Suites
103

Company
**The Dorchester
Collection**

ABOVE

The cozy sitting area of the Grace Kelly Suite has oak floors, antique mirror glass and silk curtains.

RIGHT

A neutral color palette and residentially appointed furnishings outfit the Grace Kelly Suite bedroom.





CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Langham Chicago

Client **Katherine Lo, LANGHAM HOSPITALITY GROUP**
 Designers **Fiona Thompson, RICHMOND INTERNATIONAL**
Dirk Lohan, LOHAN ANDERSON
Lauren Rottet, ROTTET STUDIO

Nearest Airport ORD	Currency USD
Time Zone GMT -6	Typical Guest Global Jetsetter
Telephone Code +312	Design Vibe Mid-Century Neutral

THE LAST BUILDING architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe designed in his iconic style was for IBM’s regional headquarters in 1969. Located in downtown Chicago by the river, the black anodized aluminum and gray glass structure was landmarked in 2008 and is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Numerous plans including a condo conversion and a hotel were considered before the 52-story skyscraper was purchased in 2010 by Langham Hospitality Group, a subsidiary of Great Eagle Holdings LTD in Hong Kong, who carefully selected a team of designers to transform floors two through 13 of the office tower into a luxurious 5-Star hotel.

“Repurposing added new life,” says Katherine Lo about the building’s transformation, “even if it’s different from the original intent.” Lo is the daughter of billionaire Dr. Ka-shui Lo, chairman of the board and managing director of Great Eagle, and after learning about the project, joined as executive director of Langham Hospitality Group to represent her father’s interests in North America. “My background is actually atypical for this business,” says the 30-year-old who studied fine art and filmmaking before joining the family business.

Fittingly, local architect Dirk Lohan, grandson of van der Rohe, designed the hotel’s lobby, including classic Mies reproductions and some custom pieces. “We felt it was especially meaningful, because as a young man he’d been involved with

A Jaume Plensa sculpture graces the lobby entrance of the hotel, formerly the regional headquarters for IBM.



the original building,” says Lo about Lohan’s participation. “It was the ultimate way to show our respect to the Miesian heritage.”

And while the architect was well aware of his role as custodian and interpreter of his grandfather’s legacy, he felt the personal burden most pointedly. “Imagine if somebody was going to put a hotel in the Seagram Building, and the ground floor lobby would be decorated for a hotel. Obviously the sensibility and sensitivity of the design to the building would be of great importance,” he says.

London-based Richmond International, a company well versed in hospitality design including the Four Seasons Budapest and Peninsula Hong Kong as well as the Langham, London designed the 316 guest rooms and suites as well as the reception, club lounge, ballrooms, meeting facilities, Chuan spa and health club, and Pavilion lounge.

“There was tension,” explains Richmond principal Fiona Thompson, “between trying to follow the Langham brand standards and values in terms of luxury and obviously interpreting them in a much more contemporary way.” Thompson maintained the palette from the existing building saying, “we wanted to keep it fresh, light and airy.” Rosewood, onyx, walnut and travertine — referencing another Mies landmark, the Tugendhat House — are infused throughout, as are furnishings by Saarinen, Eames and Kagan, which are a nod to the modernism of the building. “The hotel is not full of mid-century modern but a mix with more contemporary pieces giving it a residential quality,” says Thompson.

Consistency with the historic façade was accomplished by utilizing very short venetian blinds, “a heritage requirement,” says Thompson. Local firm Goettsch Partners, which also handled the renovation of the Farnsworth House, another Miesian masterpiece, was the architect of record. When discussing the design team Thompson says, “there’s a lot of involvement from all parties, so you don’t go away and design in a bubble and

“The hotel is not full of mid-century modern but a mix with more contemporary pieces giving it a residential quality.”

Fiona Thompson

Built
1971

Renovation Complete
2013

Guest Rooms/Suites
316

Company
Great Eagle Holdings Limited

ABOVE

The main reception includes expansive 22-foot-high floor-to-ceiling windows and an art installation featuring 500 glass-blown pebbles suspended from the ceiling.

RIGHT

Lohan was able to design the lobby of the hotel, housed in a building designed by his grandfather, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe.





then present the finished product and say here it is. There's a process."

Another member of the team was interior designer Lauren Rottet of Rottet Studio in Houston, who selected, arranged and installed the art for the hotel. Inspired by the landmark building along with abstract expressionism, non-representational forms and color field painting, she infused the spaces with architectural photography, limited edition prints by artists Donald Sultan and Roland Fisher and paintings by Monique Prieto and Enoc Perez, among many others. "Art has to be meaningful," says Rottet, adding "and work with the space."

"I guess you could use the phrase father-daughter team," says Lo, "because we really worked together to try to bring our brand vision to life when paying tribute to the heritage of Mies." Lohan has the last word. "The client and the designer have to listen to each other, because each one brings something that the other needs to understand. The client particularly needs to have confidence in the designer, that he or she has his interests at heart."

"I guess you could use the phrase father-daughter team, because we really worked together to try to bring our brand vision to life while paying tribute to the heritage of Mies."

Katherine Lo

ABOVE

The Classic guest room features a cream and aubergine or olive color scheme paired with neutral accessories and black and white photographs.

RIGHT

In a guestroom, reproduction of a Mies van der Rohe 1930s Barcelona sofa is positioned to gaze out on the city below.



Langham Chicago, Illinois

Encuentro Guadalupe

Formerly Hotel Endémico

Client **Juan Yi**

Designer **Jorge Gracia, GRACIA STUDIO**



Nearest Airport
TIJ



Currency
USD



Time Zone
GMT -6



Typical Guest
Wine Aficionado



Telephone Code
+52



Design Vibe
New-Age Rustic

WHEN JUAN YI'S MOTHER planted grapes in the Guadalupe Valley almost 50 years ago, she never dreamed it would become a wine region known for 14 varietals including Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Zinfandel. That's thanks to Hugo D'Acosta, the man responsible for the wine revolution in the region, who has been called the Robert Mondavi of Mexico. D'Acosta spent time in Bordeaux before opening his four wineries including Casa de Piedra, or "house of stones."

Yi, who was raised in nearby Tijuana and moved to Ensenada, fantasized about one day doing something with his family's land. In 2000, he started work on his dream, which would evolve into the Encuentro Guadalupe (formerly Grupo Habita's Endémico), "an anti-resort," where people traveling south to Baja could come relax and taste the local wine.

"We wanted to do a small vineyard with an immersion experience into the wine and culture but also a hotel with a contemporary look," says Yi, who spent a year searching for the appropriate site before purchasing almost 250 acres in the village of Valle de Guadalupe in 2006. Yi had recalled seeing a copy of *Dwell* magazine with a cover story featuring architect Jorge Gracia's home who also happens to be a native of Tijuana. Yi was immediately taken with the young Gracia and through an introduction by a mutual friend brought him on as the designer and architect of his cutting-edge resort. "I knew



Twenty rustic pre-fab cabins overlook the Guadalupe Valley.



“The good thing is that because the client wasn’t ready to start building we had time to evolve with the idea.”

Jorge Gracia



Opened
2012

Guest Rooms/Suites
20 guest cabins

Owners

The Encuentro Guadalupe, formerly Grupo Habita’s Hotel Endémico was created in collaboration with founding partner Carlos Couturier and Juan Yi.

LEFT, TOP & BOTTOM

The winery includes 11 acres of vineyards overseen by winemakers Hugo D’Acosta and Thomas Egli. The resort offers many places where guests can relax and sip a glass of wine.

ABOVE

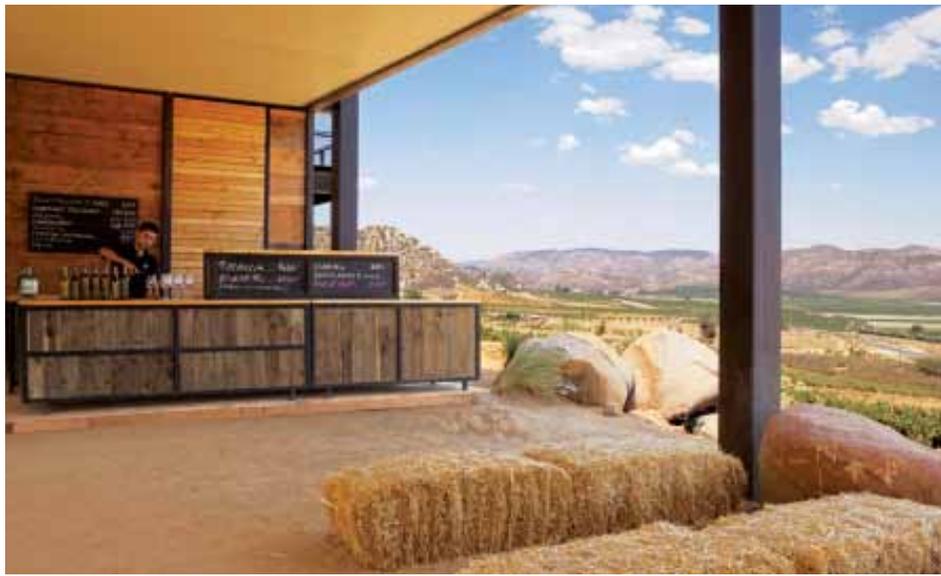
A pool built into the side of a hill provides guests with the option of an afternoon swim.

that I identified with him,” claims Yi, adding, “or that he would identify with me.”

Gracia’s small firm also has an outpost in Tijuana as well as San Diego and he’s worked on numerous residential projects in both areas since launching Gracia Studio in 2004. “[Lets do nothing, it’s so beautiful,](#)” was Gracia’s first response after taking a tour of the property. Yi was also convinced that they should do the minimum so that guests could enjoy the nature and beauty of the terrain. With a climate similar to that of a desert with warm days and cool nights, the typical guest alternates through the seasons—winter travelers from California, Colorado and the Northwest, and summer draws a clientele from California and metro areas including Mexico City.

Gracia is certain because of their shared heritage and evolving friendship that the project was off to a good start. Days and nights were spent on site before Gracia produced more than 200 designs, all iterations of a 215-square-foot cabin design that would be created in multiples and built into the landscape. “The good thing is that because the client wasn’t ready to start building we had the time to evolve with the idea.”

Technical data involving the land—soil tests and topographic and engineering surveys—was essential before the building process could begin. The good news: positive reports revealed soil strong enough to support the 20 stilted cabins and rich enough to nurture vines. The semi-rustic wood and corten steel structures were built to intentionally weather over time, and were outfitted with minimal furniture designed by Gracia Studio including a bed, private terrace and a beehive-shaped fireplace



“Jorge knew he wanted to create a contrast with the landscape. The challenge: to not interfere with the construction process, he needed to do pre-fab.”

Juan Yi

known as a kiva, which Gracia produced only 40 miles away as a way to connect the project to the local community. Yi says, “Jorge knew he wanted to create a contrast with the landscape. The challenge: to not interfere with the construction process, he needed to do pre-fab (structures).” Gracia built a full-scale model before proceeding with the building of the additional 19 cabins.

Yi describes his process with designers, claiming it’s important for him, the client, to give input but then to leave them alone. “He’s very hands on, he likes to feel things, to pay attention to details,” Yi says about Gracia.

When the financial crisis hit in 2008 the project was 70 percent finished with the winery, restaurant and hotel all under construction. Yi had hoped to open the property in stages but finally opened everything in June 2012. “But overall, we always worked with what we had. And I think obviously the reaction, the results and the objective were overwhelmingly remarkable,” says Yi.



ABOVE
A wine bar and tasting room are open everyday of the year. Every cabin has its own deck.

RIGHT
No TV, phone or room service but wifi is available along with furnishings all crafted in Mexico.





Wildwood Snowmass' whimsical, retro vibe starts with the reception desk, backed by a colorful handpainted mural by New York artist Lynda White.

SNOWMASS, COLORADO

Wildwood Snowmass

Client **David Wasserman, WASSERMAN REAL ESTATE CAPITAL**

Designers **Liubasha Rose, STARWOOD CAPITAL GROUP**

IN COLLABORATION WITH REUNION GOODS & SERVICES

 Nearest Airport
ASE

 Currency
USD

 Time Zone
GMT -6

 Typical guest
Snowboarding Family

 Telephone Code
+970

 Design Vibe
Mod-Lodge

“I CALL THEM THE ‘Grey Ladies,’” says developer David Wasserman, who grew up in a real estate family and insists his business is all about reimagining irreplaceable properties. **“We like to reinvent things for the next generation—reset the clock on great properties.** It’s not really historical rehabilitation because they’re generally not historic, but they’re historic to the communities.”

His latest is the Westin/Wildwood Snowmass Resort in Colorado, a redo of the Silvertree Hotel and Wildwood Lodge bordering the slopes of Aspen and located in the village of Snowmass Village. To collaborate on the project, Wasserman brought in Starwood Capital (as joint venture owners) and Starwood Hotels & Resorts to manage the properties.

Wasserman acquired the hotel and lodge in 2011 and kept them in operation for a year. On April 15th, the day after ski season ended in 2012, he closed the complex and then thanks to 400 construction workers and dedicated design teams, reopened both hotels Thanksgiving Day some seven months later—just in time for the winter season. With such a short timeframe, it helped that he had a clear understanding about what he wanted to create. “Sometimes designers think they’re the better developer because they’re the architect. In many instances the developer may not know what they want, so they’re looking for ideas. I really wasn’t looking for ideas. I was looking for execution in terms of interpreting this specific vision,” he explains.



“We like a fresh perspective — designers who are going to open our eyes and bring something new into the process.”

Liubasha Rose



For the Wildwood Snowmass, Wasserman along with Kemper Hyers and Liubasha Rose of Starwood Capital’s in-house design team decided to go the non-traditional route when it came to design consultants, even considering snowboarder Jake Burton, founder of Burton Snowboards, and advertising guru Andy Spade. After a serendipitous meeting, they took a chance on an ad-hoc group of arty design creative-types, Carleton DeWoody and Eric Adolfsen. For this project, they formed Reunion Goods & Services, an interdisciplinary firm, bringing in Laura Flam who had previously worked at hospitality firm Roman and Williams. As for the risk, explains Wasserman, “Was it the easy way to do it? No. But did it work? The answer is yes. Virtually every single concept they turned out was 100 percent on point and on vision. Their intuition was 100 percent right.”

The approach was also a good fit for Starwood Capital. **“When we hire designers, we don’t want anyone whose done hotels before and that’s problematic.** People who’ve gone through the process know what to expect and can react better, but we also really like a fresh perspective—designers who are going to open our eyes and bring something new into the process,” says Rose, Starwood’s design manager. “Eric and Carleton were full of energy, they’d been going to Snowmass for years, knew the local vibe and had their finger on the pulse of what felt cool. From the get-go we decided to make it very much an art hotel.”

Aiming for the “the snowboarder in his/her twenties or thirties with a colorful, neon outfit” the laidback, affordable hotel incorporates ‘70s nostalgia with vintage touches in fun and unexpected ways. For instance, the conference room features a butcher paper-lined table and galaxy-stenciled corkboard; a public bathroom hidden behind a fake bookshelf boasts a map of Snowmass Mountain highlighting special trails; in the guestrooms and public spaces, including the Bar, the Snack Shack, and Double Black Noodle Bar, an abundance of wood is mixed with green, blue, yellow and red furnishings and accessories; there’s a throwback pinball arcade; and whimsical touches, from scenic wall murals in the guestrooms to a deer head wrapped in a sweater hanging in the lobby lounge, delight throughout.

The project was a true collaboration. “In many ways I slotted in as the forth member of the design team. Reunion were inexperienced but had amazing ideas. We worked together like a design team and creative agency rolled into one. They needed a lot of guidance on the execution side, more than a designer who’d done this before, but that was the point,” says Rose.

It was a good relationship, which Wasserman claims included listening. “Being able to take whatever my vision might be, and take it from black-and-white to Technicolor. And to have the ability to tell me when I’m wrong.”



Opened
1967

Renovation Complete
2012

Guest Rooms/Suites
156

Owners
Starwood Capital Group and Wasserman Real Estate

LEFT, TOP & BOTTOM

Recreation also extends to the lobby lounge, where shelves are lined with books and vintage board games. The Scandinavian Suite includes a scenic wallcovering and alpine-inspired pillows.

ABOVE

The façade of the hotel, is a redo of an old lodge in Snowmass Village, a short distance from Aspen.

Downtown Mexico

Client **Carlos Couturier, GRUPO HABITA**

Designer **Abraham Cherem, CHEREM SERRANO ARQUITECTOS**



Nearest Airport
MEX



Currency
MXN



Time Zone
GMT -6



Typical Guest
Arty Explorer



Telephone Code
+52



Design Vibe
Historic Hand-made

THE CHALLENGE FOR Carlos Couturier, a founding partner of lifestyle brand Grupo Habita, was creating a hotel that felt Mexican, yet contemporary even though it was housed in a 17th-century colonial palace. The hotelier is known for developing unique properties throughout Mexico, including the newly opened Hotel Escondido in its namesake surfer beachtown. Downtown Mexico opened in July 2012 in the former Palacio de los Condes de Miravalle in Mexico City, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The property had been through many incarnations including a jewelry atelier, palace and hotel before it underwent a gut renovation which included the addition of two restaurants, shops, a rooftop bar and pool terrace as well as the hotel and a hostel called Downtown Beds.

Couturier and his partners the Micha brothers purchased the property in 2010, just when Mexico was recovering from a few tourism setbacks. “We had the swine flu, then bad press,” says Couturier. **The concept of combining a hotel and hostel was inspired by the locale.** “We discovered through research that a lot of the guests staying in the Centro Histórico were mainly Europeans and backpackers,” he says. The palace structure was already divided and Couturier had an idea to convert the spaces into two experiences: 17 guest rooms situated on the first and second floors intended for a sophisticated traveler while the servants quarters would accommodate 78 beds for a more youthful guest. “I’m a very instinctive

The hotel and hostel are housed in a 17th-century UNESCO World Heritage Site in the Centro Histórico borough of Mexico City.





LEFT
A vertical garden towers over outdoor seating at the hotel's restaurant.

ABOVE
On the outdoor patio is a wall painting by Mexican muralist Manuel Rodríguez Lozano.

BELOW
Lounge chairs line the rooftop pool.

person, so I sense how people will move around the hotel," says Couturier of the design scheme he was envisioning.

With a knack for discovering talented designers who fly under the radar, Couturier again wanted to work with a young team who was open to ideas but would also work within the constraints of a tight budget (\$2 million) while overseeing the manufacturing of the furnishings in Mexico. "For this hotel we wanted someone who had a strong Mexican background, was based in Mexico City and could come up with something that felt creative, fresh and new," explains Couturier. "We wanted to make it a hotel that when you come you can see and feel that you're in Mexico." The Mexico City firm of Cherem Serrano Arquitectos got the job. "We had a good chemistry," says Abraham Cherem about working with the Grupo Habita team.



"We wanted to make it a hotel that when you come you can see and feel that you're in Mexico."

Carlos Couturier



“You want to work with someone who has a clear vision, knows what they want to do and can still be flexible.”

Carlos Couturier

Couturier insists, “You want to work with someone who has a clear vision, knows what they want to do and can still be flexible.” Many of the materials like the ceramic lattice tiles were produced in Mexico and incorporated into the guest rooms and the hostel. “You can see the lattice in the rooms, the hallway, the bunk beds, always treated in a different way. *I think that feeling of handcrafted in Downtown was very important,*” says Cherem, pointing to the fact that the Mexican workshop of Paul Roco was commissioned to produce all of the wood furniture including the beds, desks, sofas, lamps, stools and armchairs, some of which were upholstered with fabric from Oaxaca. Established by Rodrigo Berrondo and Pablo Igartua in 2008, the Paul Roco atelier, offices and factory are located in the San Rafael District in the heart of the city.

As for the renovation, Cherem wanted it to feel authentic, yet current. For instance, in order to contemporize the space, existing tiles recovered from the site now cover the restaurant floors, kitchen walls and some bedrooms. “It was like a jewel you could polish and it would be really nice,” explains Cherem about the process and meticulous restoration of the palace.

“Grupo is always very involved in the design process and that makes it very interesting because sometimes you have clients who aren’t involved in anything. I think they make the project richer in a certain way,” says Cherem.

Built
17th Century

Renovation Complete
2012

Guest Rooms/Suites
17 Guest Rooms/78 Beds

Owner
Grupo Habita



LEFT

The hotel’s hostel, Downtown Beds, includes bunk beds made from ceramic tile with a lattice motif.

ABOVE

The spare, unadorned rooms feature textured exposed concrete walls and tiled floors.



The main entrance showcases Inigo Manglano-Ovalle's Cloud Prototype No. 4 sculpture suspended from the ceiling.

BAL HARBOUR, FLORIDA

St. Regis Bal Harbour

Client **Keith Fordsman, STARWOOD HOTELS & RESORTS**

Designer **Glenn Pushelberg, YABU PUSHELBERG**

✈️ Nearest Airport
MIA

💰 Currency
USD

🕒 Time Zone
GMT -5

👤 Typical Guest
Weekend Thrillist

☎️ Telephone Code
+305

🍸 Design Vibe
Deco Inspired

BAL HARBOUR has a fabled past that includes mythic luxury digs like the Americana, built by the Tisch family and designed by Miami Art Deco master architect Morris Lapidus in 1956. The exclusive property became the Sheraton Bal Harbour in 1980, one that was frequented by the likes of many American presidents including Bill Clinton. The challenge facing Starwood Hotels & Resorts who acquired the property in 1997 was how to convert the nine acres of waterfront in this exclusive enclave on the northern tip of Miami into a St. Regis. And there lies the dilemma: to renovate the old hotel or tear it down and begin anew?

Management sadly decided on the latter, demolishing the iconic Lapidus building while adding three condominium towers to the development in collaboration with Related Miami. "It's probably our greatest investment in a single property or a single development that we'll ever pursue," says Keith Fordsman, vice president and project executive for the company whose job was to broker the communication between Starwood's operating arm, brand leadership and the designers and contractors. (Fordsman is the latest link in a chain of executives that spanned three different management teams since the project began.)

A year later, Starwood hired Sieger Suarez Architectural Partnership, a local firm with a great track record as well as a knack for gaining approvals from zoning boards George



“We’ve had tremendous experience with Glenn and George over the years, dating back to the creation of the W Hotel in Times Square.”

Keith Fordsman

LEFT

The Grand Hall includes faceted mirrors in a “bracelet” motif, large rock crystal chandeliers and dark Chinese Godflower marble.

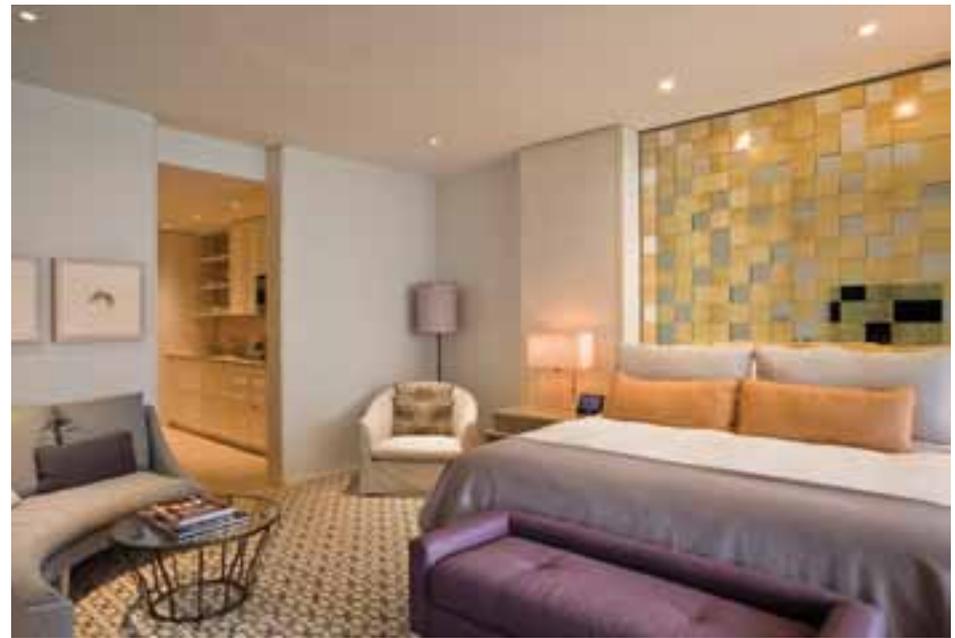
ABOVE

A bejeweled deer sculpture covered in crystal beads by Japanese artist Koehi Nawa stands in the reception area.

Yabu and Glenn Pushelberg, founders of award-winning Toronto firm Yabu Pushelberg, were chosen for the design of the hotel and the public areas of the condominium, because of their prior relationship. “We’ve had tremendous experience with Glenn and George over the years, dating back to the creation of the W Hotel in Times Square,” says Fordsman. “They understood Starwood, and they also understood the end user.”

The relationship was an unusual one for the designers. “In hotels, usually your client is the developer, and the hotel operator is your other client. In this case they were one and the same,” says Pushelberg. (In January 2014, Starwood sold the hotel to a Qatar investment group but still manages the property.)

The project took an especially long time because due to the recession in 2009, the hotel was temporarily put on hold. It became a lesson learned for Pushelberg in relation to other long-term jobs. “By the time they’re getting ready to open and it’s year seven or eight, materials have changed, fabrics have changed and your view of life has changed,” Pushelberg says. “Fortunately for us, the client also realized that.” The designers tweaked their original scheme and specified all new furnishings—six months before the opening date—with the mandate, “let’s update just to keep it fresh.”



ABOVE & LEFT
 Reception of the Remède Spa was designed in a palette of soothing neutral colors combined with chartreuse accents. The spa's couples treatment room features marble floors and walls and a generous soaking tub for two.

RIGHT
 The Deluxe Ocean View guest room takes advantage of the hotel's spectacular views and is decorated in a range of cool blue, purple and gray hues and mirrored surfaces.

One of Yabu Pushelberg's goals was to turn the St. Regis complex into a social center. To achieve that, they decided they needed to reinvent the glamour of Miami Beach of the 1950s and '60s, but in a more residentially inspired modern way. "Art was a huge component," he says, partly because of Miami's emerging role as a cultural center.

The lobby is a study in black and white, while the floor, a very rare marble the designers found in China, features green markings that are almost like animal footprints. The Great Hall was inspired by 1940s legend Dorothy Draper, and is filled with group seating—places to see and be seen.

For an airy feel, the 227 guest rooms—large enough to feel like suites—are wrapped in bleached sycamore panels, while headboards are made of sparkly layers of glass and mirrors.

For Fordsman, a good design team creates "a balance between registering what we want and helping us understand what we need—bringing their experience to the equation and helping plug the gap where a developer or global company isn't able to." Another key element: strong communication. "It's the ability to listen with the same amount of intensity with which you speak. If both teams allow more time to listen, then I think the total investment in the dialogue will be a lot shorter."

"You have to lead the process in order to get something good at the end," adds Pushelberg. "Because they go on so long, one of the key things is to not only come up with a strong set of ideas at the beginning, but to hold on to that concept through all the machinations of building things."

"You have to lead the process in order to get something good in the end."

Glenn Pushelberg

Renovation Complete
 2012

Guest Rooms/Suites
 227

Owner
 Al Rayyan Tourism
 Investment Company



BOGOTÁ, COLOMBIA

B.O.G.

Client **Nicolas Manrique, NICOLAS MANRIQUE CONSTRUCCIÓN S. A.**
 Designer **Nini Andrade Silva, ATELIER NINI ANDRADE SILVA**

 Nearest Airport BOG	 Currency COP
 Time Zone GMT -5	 Typical Guest Business Elite
 Telephone Code +57	 Design Vibe Golden Glamour

“WHAT I LIKE to do with my clients is develop a friendship and then I say, ‘Trust me, believe me, I’m going to do a very good thing.’ And, funny enough, they believe me,” says designer Nini Andrade Silva. The Portuguese native who grew up on the tiny island of Madeira studied interiors, architecture, graphic design and painting before graduating in design from the Institute of Visual Arts, Design and Marketing (IADE) in Lisbon. The energetic designer debuted with her namesake firm in Lisbon in 2000 before opening several offshoot offices including Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Beijing and has created hotels such as the Vine Hotel, Funchal, and the Beautique Hotel Figueira, both located in her homeland.

When Silva traveled to Bogotá, Columbia in 2009, the first thing she did was tour the city. Her client, builder and developer Nicolas Manrique Camejo, was skeptical upon her arrival, as he had invited her to work on a new hotel he was developing. Her sightseeing trip included a tour of local monuments and shops, as well as a visit to the Museo del Oro (Museum of Gold), where she viewed its collection of pre-Hispanic gold including necklaces, masks, rings, bracelets and figurines. Afterwards, she spent two days locked in her hotel room drawing and designing. Upon returning home, Silva had a design epiphany—she produced 3D images and sent them off to her client for his response. They were approved, and the design process on B.O.G. began.

A gold motif is highlighted including a fiber sculpture by Colombian artist Olga de Amaral.



ABOVE
Modern furnishings like a chesterfield bench and sleek sofa are strategically arranged in the open plan room.

RIGHT
A gold-mirrored wall in the guestroom divides the space to accommodate a bath and bedroom.

“He didn’t want just tables and chairs. He wants a story That’s why I used gold and emeralds.”

Nini Andrade Silva



Opened
2012

Guest Rooms/Suites
55

Owner
**Fidecomisco
Hotel B.O.G.**

Manrique Camejo had built residential and office buildings in Bogotá, but never a hotel. Design Hotels, a company representing and marketing independent international boutique properties, helped connect Camejo to Silva while he was in the process of identifying a designer. Camejo upon hearing of the Design Hotel properties, visited several including the Fontana Park in Lisbon before meeting Silva and offering her the job.

Silva fell in love with Bogotá, with its art and culture, and paid homage with a design scheme that incorporates a gold motif, a nod to the museum’s gold exhibition she toured. Commissioned art installations are mixed in throughout, including a knotted fiber sculpture by Olga de Amaral that drapes down from the ceiling in the lobby, and most of the furnishings—including the guestroom headboards and tables—are custom designed by Silva and handmade in Colombia. “He didn’t want just tables and chairs. He wants a story. That’s why I used gold and emeralds,” says Silva about her client’s design vision.

“The typical B.O.G. guest is a business traveler, high profile, looking for luxury but nothing overstated,” says Manrique Camejo’s son Nicolas Manrique Sánchez, and the project manager of the hotel. Housed in a granite, stone, aluminum and glass block building crafted by Bogotá architect Guillermo Arias of Octubre Arquitectura, all that gold raised the total



“I always say to my clients, ‘The important thing is not what you see, it’s what you feel.’ And I have to have the same feeling.”

Nini Andrade Silva

cost of the project to \$15 million. “It was a bit more expensive than we expected, especially because of the arts and crafts, which is something we didn’t have in mind at first. But in general it was a reasonable budget,” says Manrique Sánchez.

“Fortunately there was good chemistry between us, Nini and Guillermo, so everything went smoothly and as originally planned,” adds Manrique Sánchez. “Nini is a very sensitive person who has really good ideas. Some were a little wild, and sometimes we had to limit her.”

Silva confesses, “I always say to my clients, ‘The important thing is not what you see, it’s what you feel.’ And I have to have the same feeling. If you have the same feeling, you can play around. But you can’t lose that feeling; you can’t lose what you feel inside.”

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE

Along with gold, the color palette of the furnishings in the lobby is bronze, green and gray.

The adjacent bar allows guests and locals to mingle while having a drink.

The hotel’s exterior is a mix of granite and natural stone.



Dorado Beach, A Ritz-Carlton Reserve

Client **Federico Stubbe, PRISA GROUP**

Designer **Michael Crosby, WILSON ASSOCIATES**



Nearest Airport
SJU



Currency
USD



Time Zone
GMT -4



Typical Guest
Vacationing Mogul



Telephone Code
+787



Design Vibe
Mythic Modernism

A FORMER ROCKEFELLER resort-turned-Hyatt in Puerto Rico has a new life as a Ritz-Carlton Reserve, the brand's second outpost and the first in the western hemisphere. Built by Laurance S. Rockefeller more than 50 years ago on a former plantation amid acres of tropical vegetation and pristine beaches, *Dorado Beach was the Caribbean's first luxury eco-resort and the playground of choice for the rich and famous* including luminaries like Elizabeth Taylor, Joan Crawford and President John F. Kennedy.

Rockefeller built the fabled Puerto Rican resort in the 1950s after he purchased the 1,400-acre property from Clara Livingston, an American heiress. Livingston turned the land into a private showplace, complete with a four-bedroom, pink Colonial-style hacienda dubbed Su Casa, which has since been meticulously restored as a presidential villa (price tag: \$30,000 a night).

Federico "Friedel" Stubbe, a partner in the Prisa Group, a major developer on the island has been involved with the project since Prisa purchased its undeveloped land in 1990 to build condominiums and private homes. The hotel itself came on the market in 2007 after being sold by the Pritzker family, who had established a Hyatt on the grounds, which later faltered and eventually closed. Stubbe's company later joined forces with the Caribbean Property Group (CPG) to redevelop the entire property, and enlisted Ritz-Carlton to be the hotel's operator.



Guest rooms at Dorado Beach boast private plunge pools with ocean views.



Phase one of the \$342 million undertaking, boasts a mid-century vernacular with its 100 guest rooms, 14 suites, arrival building, restaurant, bar and grill, golf and beach club, fitness center and world-class spa. After a worldwide search and review of dozens of firms, Stubbe formed his dream team: SB Architects, Bensley Design Studio (who handled the landscape design and the spa) and interior design firm Wilson Associates.

The company, founded by Trisha Wilson in 1971 (she retired in 2013 and Olivier Chavy has taken over as CEO), has earned a reputation for its hospitality expertise with seven offices and 350 employees around the globe. Michael Crosby, design director and principal in Wilson's Dallas office and senior designer Liz Dauwe shepherded the project, with Crosby handling the space planning and 3D sketches and Dauwe in charge of all FF&E selections. The guest rooms hovered around \$14,000 to \$15,000 a key while the suites were upwards of \$17,000 a room.

All three of the teams worked well together, with numerous brainstorming sessions and a retreat held at the Calistoga Ranch in California's Napa Valley where they critiqued each other's work. **"We had a couple of design charrettes where you literally had pen and paper and you started the process with planning,"** says Crosby, adding, "It was a really good way of getting everybody to collaborate and be on the same page."

Stubbe was clear about his mandate. "We wanted something unique, and unique means talking about traditions, our culture and our climate," he says. The landscape was an important factor and inspiration. "The Stubbe family didn't want something too radical because they didn't want to upset everybody who lived there," says Crosby. "The idea was to recreate Dorado Beach in a 21st-century way, but nothing too different."

The end result: low-key elegance. The new hotel is built in the footprint of the demolished one so that every room faces

"We wanted something unique, and unique means talking about traditions our culture, and our climate."

Federico Stubbe

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT

The property's original hacienda, Su Casa, is now a four-bedroom VIP villa. A dramatic night view of the hotel's open-air arrival pavilion. Horizontal banding on the lobby's stone walls allude to the striated rocks found on nearby Dorado beach.





Cutouts referencing Taino tribal motifs appear in the ceiling of the open-air Positivo Sand Bar.



the ocean; guest rooms are clustered in 11 low-scale beachfront structures while every room is equipped with an elegant outdoor shower. Rooms on the ground floor include their own infinity pools while the second-floor suites feature cabanas and rooftop pools.

Crosby and Dauwe spent considerable time researching Rockefeller’s legacy and the island’s history. Dauwe incorporated the local Taino tribal motifs that she discovered into hand-embroidered custom bed linens and woven rugs. Raw materials including natural woods, lamps crafted of sea glass, as well as hammered bronze and shagreen finishes pay homage to nature and the spirit of old San Juan. The color palette is decidedly neutral with accents of coral, gold, cool gray and blue hues inspired by the tropical forest, sand and sea. “It was also important to use green materials—organic and recycled products—as much as possible because it’s a LEED property,” says Dauwe.

“We had a very good design team, which proved to be very successful,” says Stubbe. “It takes a lot of togetherness. It’s a whole team of people and designers working together that make the best product.” Crosby confesses, “The client presented some challenges to us and we’d never thought about those things before. And some of those things made all the difference.”

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE

The Livingston library pavillon at dusk. Guest rooms are outfitted with a neutral color palette including accents of coral, gold, blue and cool gray. An indoor-outdoor bath experience is incorporated into every suite.

Opened
1958

Renovation Complete
2012

Guest Rooms/Suites
114 & 1 Villa

Owner
Prisa Group and Caribbean Property Group (CPG)





Lakeside lounging at Fasano Boa Vista, which also offers a spa, equestrian center and two 18-hole golf courses.

PORTO FELIZ, BRAZIL

Fasano Boa Vista

Client **Rogério Fasano, FASANO HOTEL GROUP**

Designer **Isay Weinfeld**

✈️ Nearest Airport
GRU

💰 Currency
BRL

🕒 Time Zone
GMT -3

👤 Typical Guest
Pampered Brazilian

☎️ Telephone Code
+55

🍷 Design Vibe
Natural Nirvana

THE FASANO CLAN has operated restaurants in Italy for decades and when Vittorio Fasano migrated from Lombardy to Brazil in 1902, he instantly opened Brasserie Paulista in the heart of São Paulo in Antonio Prado Square. So it's no wonder Vittorio's great grandson Rogério—who inherited an appreciation for fine wine and food—launched a successful restaurant and hotel business in the 1980s. With 14 restaurants and hotels in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Punta del Este and now Boa Vista, Fasano figured out a winning combination for hospitality that pairs luxury, chic design and fine dining all under one roof.

Fasano's partner in crime is Brazilian architect Isay Weinfeld who has helped shape the brand beginning with the flagship hotel, which opened in 2003. With two new Fasanos underway in the state of Bahia, one in Salvador and the other in Trancoso, Weinfeld says of the partnership, "I'm a person who has a lot of respect for those who find my telephone number and call me to do a project."

Their friendship is straight out of a Judd Apatow bromance and not typical of a client-designer relationship. Says Fasano, "We've worked together for more than 10 years now, so Isay knows me very well. **We're always in contact when creating a new project. Ideas, feelings, dreams and needs become part of the research.**" "First of all I'm a good listener. For me this is essential in my work," claims the soft-spoken architect. "I

always do what my client wants, but through my eyes, in my way but not [what I want] imposed on a project.”

Located 60 miles outside of the center of São Paulo in Porto Feliz, the Boa Vista Fasano (created with the JHSF Group) opened in 2011 and is a series of 39 modernist retreats including 12 duplex suites and 45 private villas. Nestled on a vast 2,750-acre estate complete with tennis courts, two 18-hole golf courses, a 164-foot swimming pool, heliport as well as gym and spa, every amenity and leisure activity has been carefully considered from the trails and stables to a petting zoo.

Fasano describes the typical hotel guest at Boa Vista as a high roller, world traveler, 39 years old and mostly male, which makes sense given the clubby atmosphere and leisure offerings. **Calm, quiet and timeless is how Weinfeld describes the hotel’s vibe.** Luxurious rustic furnishings all made of natural materials including stone, exotic woods, stucco and brick as



“We always have some of those awkward moments when creating a new project. Ideas, feelings, dreams and needs become part of the research.”

Rogério Fasano

LEFT

The exterior of the hotel including terraces are clad with Madeira Freijo, a Brazilian hardwood.

BELOW

All suites have views of the scenic property, which includes 100 acres of woods and 14 lakes.





“I hate places that are designed to please your eyes. Comfort for me is essential.”

Isay Weinfeld



Opened
2011

Guest Rooms/Suites
39

Owner
**Fasano Hotel Group
and JHSF**

**CLOCKWISE FROM
TOP LEFT**

The expanded lobby area is furnished with classics from Hans Wegner including his Papa Bear and Easy lounge chairs.

The terrace is off the lobby. Though bedrooms are minimal they're furnished with luxe details including upholstered headboards.

well as leather-tufted headboards are all sourced from Brazil. The lobby is reminiscent of a mid-century home and is decorated with an eclectic mix including Danish armchairs by Hans Wegner, an abstract wool tapestry by Jean Gillon, sofas by Brazilian talent Sergio Rodrigues—as well as assorted Brazilian and Italian vintage pieces.

“I hate places that are designed to please your eyes,” says Weinfeld, adding “comfort for me is essential.” And while spaces shot for a magazine might lure guests, “that’s not the place I want to stay,” he adds. Weinfeld’s hotel interiors, while minimal, are also warm, cozy and comfortable. “We are crazy about quality and detail,” says Weinfeld, whose office in São Paulo employs around 35 architects who design everything from residential to exhibitions to furniture. He’s been an architect for more than 40 years and insists, “I am not the guy who uses a formula and repeats.”

“We always have some of those awkward moments when building a dream. But nothing stopped us from achieving this unforgettable countryside experience,” says Fasano who is 10 years younger than Weinfeld though the two men share many interests including their taste in rock music and of course food. “Rogério today is one of my three best friends,” exclaims Weinfeld. “He trusts me. Then it’s not so difficult for me to understand. I already know what he wants.”

Dorset Square Hotel

Client & Designer **Tim and Kit Kemp**, FIRMDALE HOTELS



Nearest Airport
LHR



Currency
GBP



Time Zone
GMT +1



Typical Guest
Discerning Collector



Telephone Code
+44



Design Vibe
Tailored Textiles

THE REOPENING OF the Dorset Square Hotel in 2012—just as sports enthusiasts were descending on London for the Summer Olympic Games—was a coming home of sorts for Tim and Kit Kemp. Originally called the Broadway House, the then 2-Star hotel was built in the 1980s and the first property operated by the hotelier-designer couple. According to Tim, due to a lease system, even though they were the hotel's operators, they did not own it outright. The Kemps sold the lease in 2002 but then jumped on the opportunity to re-acquire the property in 2011, and quickly rebranded it with Kit's signature style on the interiors. "The Dorset Square is one of our smallest buildings and it felt like an old friend because it was the very first one we did," she says.

The pair have been married for more than 30 years—almost as long as their company Firmdale Hotels has been in operation. Though Tim started his career in law, he knew early on he'd be happier working in a different profession so he launched a construction business, finding a niche in renovating and creating student housing for American universities. Simultaneously, Kit worked for an architect before starting her own design firm called Barnacle. "I realized early on that Tim was a complete workaholic and unless I got involved I was never going to see him," she explains, and it wasn't long after they became romantically attached that Kit started working with Tim.

Cricket bats adorn the mantle in the main drawing room, which also includes a custom-made striped rug by textile designer Christine Van Der Hurd.





TOP ROW

All 38 rooms are one-of-a-kind, each with its own color palette and fabric scheme.

LEFT

The library is outfitted in calming shades of gray on the walls and upholstery.

Built
1811-1820

Renovation Complete
2012

Guest Rooms/Suites
38

Owner
Firmdale Hotels

“As a guest you should not be aware of a brand because I think that’s a dated thing to do”

Kit Kemp

Marylebone is the neighborhood where the charming Regency-style townhouse is located that is the Dorset Square Hotel. Located beside Lord’s Old Ground where Thomas Lord, a famous English cricketer, played in the late 18th century, the hotel plays homage to the sport with its lively décor filled with funky artwork and collectibles. “I found fabulous cricket bats all over the world including Barbados,” says Kit about the memorabilia strategically placed on the walls. A traditional color palette including ointment pink, heritage green and burnt sienna reflects the Regency style, while the 38 guest rooms, bar, restaurant and lobby are one-offs with a mix of patterns and fabrics from British textile designers



“We do everything bespoke. We’re not Coca-Cola. We’re not going to be bottled today. In our case, every bottle is different.”

Tim Kemp

LEFT

Regency-inspired colors and custom wall colorings define the guest rooms.

ABOVE

The Potting Shed Restaurant features unique artworks like Martha Freud’s installation of 198 flashing lights messaging cricket-inspired truisms.



like Christopher Farr and Christine Van Der Hurd. “We try to reflect the spirit of the building and the definition of the area,” says Tim when discussing the unique character of each property. “There’s always going to be an identity, obviously because with every project you don’t throw out the baby with the bath water,” says Kit. “There’s always something you take with you that you want to explore for the next project.”

And even with a design staff of 10, she is still hands-on in the design process: “When the site is found you have to work around that, or if it’s a new build then you have to create, so I’m there right from the beginning and talking with the architect about what we want to achieve,” Kit explains. **The most interesting part of each property, she says, is how to make the building come alive.** “As a guest you should not be aware of a brand because I think that’s a dated thing to do,” she insists. “It should look as if it’s meant to be. It should trigger something, which makes you curious and makes you want to put your feet up and stay.” Tim is of the same mind, explaining, “We do everything bespoke. We’re not Coca-Cola. We’re not going to be bottled today. In our case, every bottle is different.”

As for the client-designer relationship, Tim says, **“We are close. We’re husband and wife. It’s not an issue.”** And while Tim represents the guest’s point of view, Kit explains there are very few decision makers in their company. “It’s kept to a minimum and that gives us strength. Otherwise you find very often that your contractors and even your architects can divide you. We know precisely what we want and we’re not going to let anyone else get in the way,” she remarks.

Tim adds, “I get on with my thing and she gets on with hers, so it works very well. She’s got a distinct idea of what she wants, which I don’t consult her on because there’s no need.” On the other hand, “We’re a bit like old female revelers, we know when to circle round and when to go in for the kill; we’ve learned how to do it better as the years have gone by,” Kit says with a laugh.



GSTAAD, SWITZERLAND

Alpina Gstaad

Client **Marcel Bach, REAL ESTATE ENTREPRENEUR**

Designer **Nathan Hutchins, THE GALLERY, HBA**



Nearest Airport
BRN



Currency
Swiss Franc



Time Zone
GMT +1



Typical Guest
Sporty Socialite



Telephone Code
+41



Design Vibe
Mountain Lodge

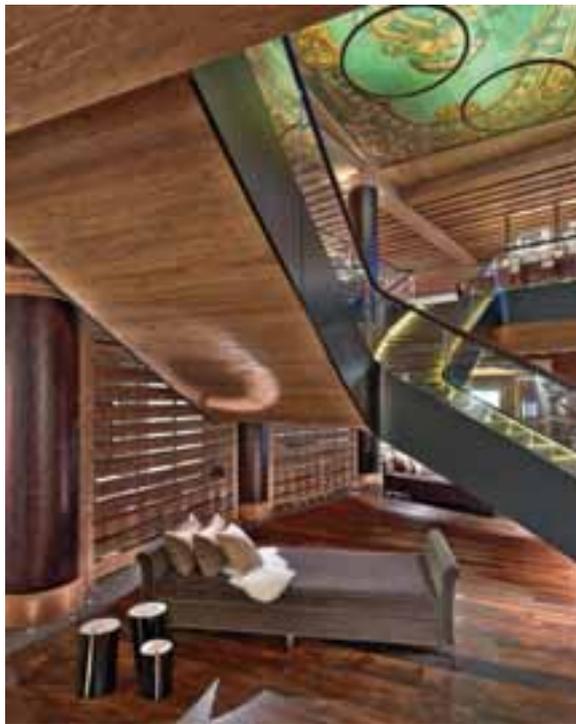
A 56-ROOM boutique hotel nestled in the Swiss Alps, and the first to be built there in 100 years, didn't seem a likely project for HBA (Hirsch Bedner Associates), a firm recognized for its interiors for major luxury hotel brands—Grand Hyatt, Four Seasons, Waldorf Astoria, to name a few. But as it so happens it was perfectly suited for The Gallery, the 30-person, London-based branch of HBA that specializes in high-end boutique projects.

For 10 years the Alpina Gstaad's owners, Jean Claude Mimran, head of a vast empire founded on West African sugar, and Marcel Bach, a local Swiss real estate entrepreneur, had been in the preliminary stages of construction on the mixed-use \$337 million complex, which also includes private chalets and apartments.

The development is located on five acres in Oberbort, the most exclusive neighborhood in this very exclusive village. "Gstaad," explains Nathan Hutchins, a HBA senior associate who headed up the Alpina project, "is a little slice of the world that's known for its understated luxury. **This is where a lot of the people who run the world spend their Christmas holidays.**" Some of those bold-faced names include Julie Andrews, Valentino and Formula One billionaire Bernie Ecclestone.

Bach found HBA through consulting group Rembrandt Poortiers, who had proposed he stage a design competition. Bach's design brief was simple: he wanted a warm, cozy,

The 5-Star hotel was constructed by Chaletbau Matti, the go-to source for chalet-style architecture.



“When you do a competition, your first presentation has to be damn good.”

Nathan Hutchins

authentic Swiss Alpine hotel and instructed the designers to return in a few weeks and tell him what they thought the hotel should be. The HBA team traveled overnight to Gstaad by train to meet Bach, and in the morning, were woken by cow bells outside their window with breathtaking views of the valley.

“When you do a competition, your first presentation has to be damn good,” says Hutchins. “We took the client’s word to heart and developed what we believed he wanted for his hotel.” They won the job. “We selected HBA because they obviously know the hotel business and we had the feeling that they were flexible enough to create something special for the mountains,” says Bach, who wanted a hotel that couldn’t be found in New York, London or Los Angeles.

HBA developed all of the hotel’s guest rooms, with no two rooms alike, as well as the public areas, including a subterranean movie theater and a cigar lounge. French talent Noé Duchafour-Laurance was commissioned to design the Japanese restaurant Megu, while the spa was handled by Thai firm P49 Deesign & Associates. Hutchins explains that there was no overlap with the spa because it was a completely discrete space, but with the restaurant opening out onto the lobby, a bit of collaboration with Duchafour-Laurance was necessary. “It was delicate,” admits Hutchins, adding he was more than happy with the final result.

ABOVE

The main stairway leads from reception up to the lounge.

RIGHT

The reception desk is hewn from a single ash tree trunk with an artwork by Bosco Sodi hung beside.



“The team we worked with were not only professional they were nice, enthusiastic and able to accept our ideas and put them into practice.”

Marcel Bach

The design, Hutchins explains, is all about materiality and tactility. “Some of the public areas are more traditionally crafted, whereas the fifth floor, with its gabled roof and individual suites, has a more contemporary language. All the wood here is actually sandblasted and has a beautiful rough texture.” HBA made extensive use of Swiss Ringgenberg limestone and reclaimed barn timber following the lead taken by the hotel’s architects Jaggi & Partner AG, to use locally



Opened
2012

Guest Rooms/Suites
56

Owner
Grand Hotel Alpina AG

**CLOCKWISE
FROM TOP LEFT**

The three bedroom, duplex Panorama Suite includes its own spa.

All the guest rooms are timber-clad with no two alike, like the Deluxe Suite, with original driftwood art by Emily Hesse.

A detail of the wall in the private cinema with Baxter chairs and fabrics from Maharam, Holland & Sherry and Dedar.

sourced materials. Elsewhere, substantial columns are clad in rich, embossed leather, bespoke furnishings are done in goat hair, quartz, stone and polished fir, and suites feature carved wood ceilings, antique painted cabinets, fireplaces and cowbell lamps. Says Hutchins, “We used a lot of natural materials, a lot of linen and horsehair as well as wools, and we tried to use very sumptuous fabrics—a lot of things you wouldn’t necessarily use in a bigger hotel because they are not necessarily the most durable and the client was well aware of that.”

“The team we worked with were not only professional they were nice, enthusiastic and able to accept our ideas and put them into practice,” says Bach. **The biggest issue: time.** “I know it sounds silly to say that about a hotel that has only 56 rooms and took 10 years to develop, but it was a very complex project,” explains Hutchins. “By the time HBA was on board, there wasn’t much time to do the procurement and installation. And in Switzerland, once you commit to a date, you can’t miss it.”



A staircase in one of the Armani Signature Duplex Suites.

MILAN, ITALY

Armani Hotel Milano

Client **EMAAR PROPERTIES PJSC**

Designer **Giorgio Armani, ARMANI S.P.A**

✈️ Nearest Airport
MXP

£ Currency
EUR

🕒 Time Zone
GMT +1

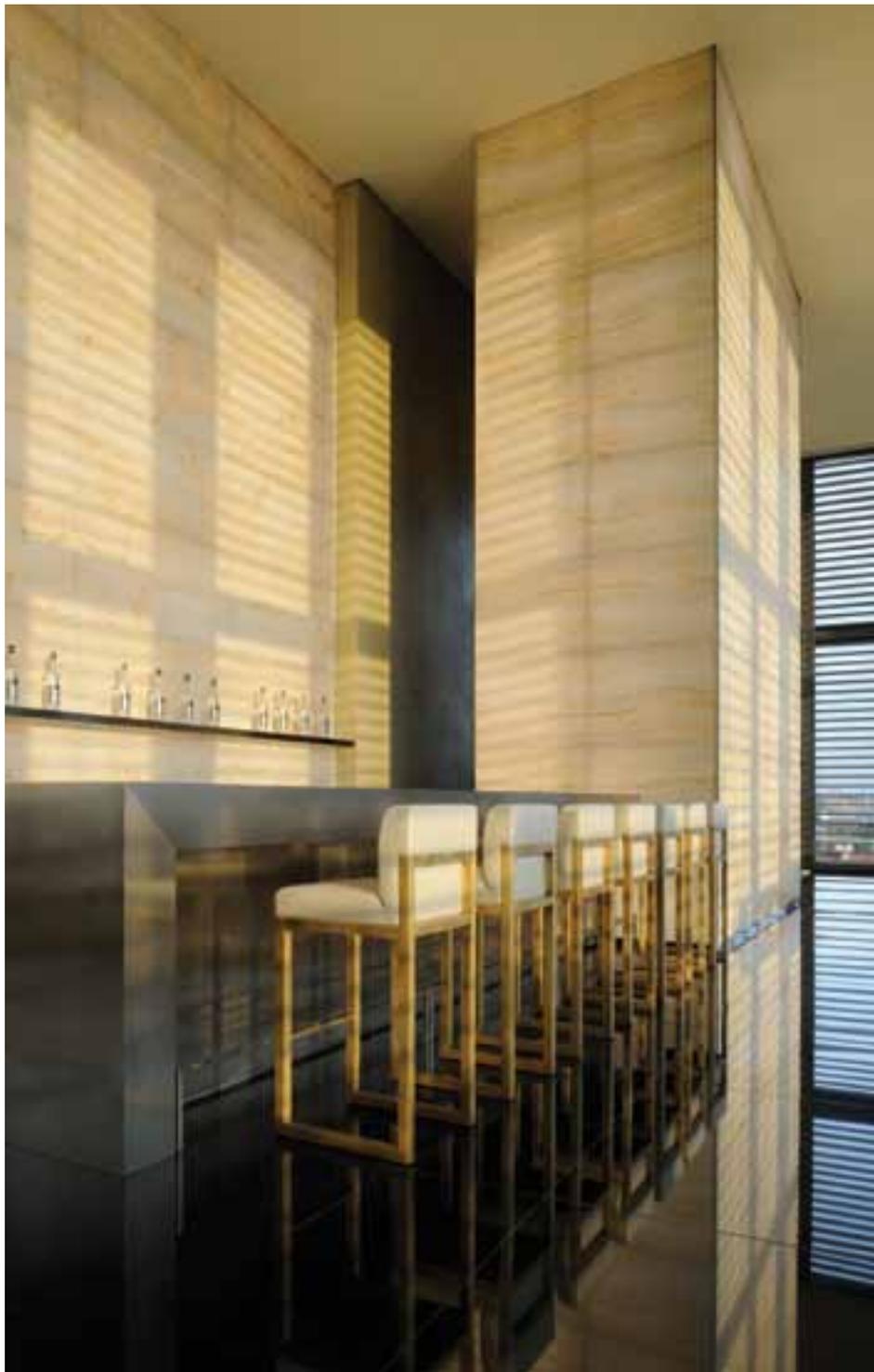
👤 Typical Guest
Euro-chic Explorer

☎ Telephone Code
+39

🍷 Design Vibe
Bespoke Elegance

WITH NINE HOMES (and a yacht), 79-year-old Giorgio Armani might appear ready to take it easy and enjoy the good life he so deserves. Yet the fashion impresario is still hard at work expanding his trademark brand to also include hotels. Emaar Properties, the developer of Dubai's Burj Khalifa, the tallest building in the world, partnered with the designer in opening the first Armani Hotel in Dubai in 2010 with the Armani Hotel Milano following the year after. "My clothes attract people who share my taste for timeless elegance, so do my hotels," says the designer about his loyal clientele.

Located in a former palazzo in the heart of Milan's fashion district known as the Quadrilatero della Moda, the renovated building was formerly Bar Pasticceria Alemagna, a famous and traditional Milanese café, which closed in 1995 before the property was converted. In 2000 the Armani concept retail mall opened complete with a Nobu restaurant and store showcasing his signature home furnishings, all on the ground floor. "Armani Casa is a project very dear to my heart. For many years before the official launch I wanted to expand my aesthetic into the area of interior design," says Armani. After debuting his home furnishings collection, the designer considered developing an architecture and interior design department within his company that would tackle projects on a larger scale. As a result, the request for interior design increased with



“The Armani aesthetic is all about elegance, sophistication and timeless style, as opposed to chasing transient trends.”

Giorgio Armani

private clients, corporate developers as well hotels, those wanting the “Armani look.” “I always find it interesting and exciting to work with experts in sectors different from mine,” he says of the agreement reached in 2005 with Emaar Properties to develop the first Armani hotel.

“I had an audacious idea: take over the building where my existing concept store is located and turn it into a sophisticated hotel,” says Armani. That 1937 landmark, designed in an Italian modernist style, was the former headquarters of the Assicurazioni Generali, one of the biggest Italian insurance companies. “Like me, Mr. Alabaar [of Emaar] saw only the potential in what we were doing and did not seem to have any concerns or reservations. We had already established a good working relationship through our collaboration in Dubai, with a level of mutual trust that is essential for a successful partnership—especially one that seeks to create something truly innovative.” And although Emaar was the official developer, because of Armani’s connection with Milan and his deep involvement with the brand, he served as de-facto client too.

As for his design philosophy: “The Armani aesthetic is all about elegance, sophistication and timeless style, as opposed to chasing transient trends. This is something that can be applied to interiors and architecture as well as to clothing so thinking about what my hotel should have looked like was not such a stretch for me. In reality it was the service aspect of the project that was most challenging,” he says, adding, “I was adamant that a guest in an Armani hotel should feel as welcomed and as cared for as a friend of mine would feel while staying in one of my own homes.” Armani set about creating the idea of Lifestyle Managers—the Armani version of a personal concierge, or butler, with 24-hour customer care.



LEFT
The Armani/Bamboo bar has floor-to-ceiling louvered windows with spectacular views of the Duomo.

ABOVE
Low modular seating in sleek upholstery and dark floors make a dramatic statement in the lounge.

The designer requires a lot from his employees but admits, “We don’t have strict rules. I just expect my team to be entirely in-sync with the Armani aesthetic of timeless elegance and functionality.” His inspiration comes from travel, books and particularly film, but confesses he’s also inspired by “simply observing the way people live and behave.”

“The spaces were designed to encourage a fluid and logical journey through the hotel. This is a principle I adopt when designing spaces in my own homes.” The designer is partial to the idea of interconnected zones that create the sense of a unified, harmonious whole. “I always like to add a reference to the geographical and cultural context in which it is located, whether it be a material or pattern,” Armani adds.

Luxurious materials like onyx, marble and ebony are all combined into a chic neutral palette including ivory, black and taupe that are punctuated with metals and walls upholstered in silk georgette.

No detail was left to chance including the bottled Acqua Armani, which is stocked in the room's mini-bar fridge. And while guest rooms are situated on floors two through six, the public areas are all located on the 7th and 8th floors and include the Armani Ristorante, Bamboo bar and lounge, spa, pool and gym, which all include spectacular views of the Duomo and city below. It was that panorama that inspired Armani to install the spa on the top floor instead of in a typical subterranean space

"Armani Hotel Milano has now ushered in a new genre of hospitality, one that is bespoke, elegant and unparalleled," says Mohamed Alabbar, chairman, Emaar Properties PJSC.

As Armani says, "I have a particular idea of interior design, comfort and service that I could not completely find anywhere I stayed, though of course some hotels are much nicer than others to spend time in. In part it was precisely this lack of what I considered to be the ideal hotel environment that motivated me to create my own."

"The spaces were designed to encourage a fluid and logical journey through the hotel. This is a principle I adopt when designing spaces in my own home."

Giorgio Armani



Built
1937

Renovation Complete
2011

Guest Rooms/Suites
95

Owner
Armani Hotels & Resorts

LEFT
Gray and deep green are paired in a modernist work area in one of the suites.

FROM TOP
The bedroom is outfitted in signature Armani furnishings. Twin sinks, a soaking tub and shower are included in the minimal yet luxurious bathroom.



A grand marble staircase and a feature wall covered in backlit African onyx make a dramatic statement in the lobby.

DUBAI, UAE

Conrad Dubai

Client **Larry Traxler, HILTON WORLDWIDE**
 Designer **Marcos Cain, STICKMAN DESIGN**

✈️ Nearest Airport
DXB

🇦🇪 Currency
Dirham

🕒 Time Zone
GMT +1

👤 Typical Guest
Global Expat

☎️ Telephone Code
+41

🍷 Design Vibe
Festive Fixtures

THE NUMBERS SPEAK for themselves: at 58 stories and 555 rooms, the newly opened Conrad Dubai was built by 200 engineers, 100 architects and designers, and 3,500 construction workers clocking in more than 32 million hours for eight years.

SRSS (Smallwood, Reynolds, Stewart, Stewart) handled both the public areas and the lobby, melding a modern Arabic design aesthetic with traditional European touches. Dramatic details in the lobby include solid stone pillars carved with a native flower of the Emirates, a dramatic 1,300-square-foot African onyx wall and a grand marble staircase. *Having a firm grasp both the architecture and the interior design is uncommon*, says Larry Traxler, senior vice president of global design for Hilton Worldwide, the operator of the Conrad Dubai. "We like to split those disciplines so we have some constructive tension between the architectural design of the building and the interior architecture of the building."

Traxler took over the project some five years ago (three years into it) after leaving Hyatt (top hospitality companies including Jordan Mozer & Associates, HBA, Wilson Associates and Ian Schrager Hotels) to join Hilton. "When I joined the company the design department in Dubai was pretty much non-existent," says Traxler who admits there are now three full-time design team members who support project management, architecture and construction. "As you can imagine, it's

pretty impossible to budget appropriately for an eight-year-long project. By the time I was involved, [SRSS] had pretty much exited the project after specifications were issued, and most of the procurement had taken place, through what was probably a three-year design and ground-breaking process. We had very little involvement with them during the design process," he says, adding that tweaks were made to ensure the design was timeless, "but Stickman was still involved with the F&B at that point, because we like to bring in food and beverage concepts and consultants later on in the process; it doesn't have as long a shelf life."

Dubai-based Stickman Design handled almost all of the hotel's F&B venues, including Ballarò, Marco Pierre White Grill, Cave, Purobeach Urban Oasis and Suga as well as the spa. "It's really difficult to work with a client and project from an ID perspective when you're given expected delivery dates and suddenly they change, or double or quadruple, depending on so many variables," explains Marcos Cain, co-

owner of Stickman Design, who admits that he and his team started the project while working for another large firm and then took it over once they formed Stickman in 2008.

For Cain it was music to his ears that Hilton thought about each venue as a separate entity with its own unique identity. "Each F&B outlet was a separate profit center with a separate marketing program and a complete separate process that would go outside the Conrad Hilton brand guidelines, which was fresh and new," Cain says.

For instance, he and his "very boutique" design team took cues from France's chalk caves for Cave wine bar, incorporating rustic leather straps and backlit grill racks. Fabrication for prototypes of all the FF&E and joinery were done in Vietnam and Indonesia, and travel to Southeast Asia was necessary for approval.

The designer says the secret to success for his firm is to not only craft the interiors, but to also create a complete brand identity for the concept. "The flatware, tableware, naming, guest experience, uniforms and all the collateral so you have a holistic and synergized identity," he says. Even if the operator changes through the process, the vision remains



"You have to do your homework; you have to understand what the brand is about, what we are trying to achieve with that brand."

Larry Traxler

Opened
2013

Guest Rooms/Suites
555

Owner
Hilton Worldwide

CLOCKWISE FROM
TOP LEFT

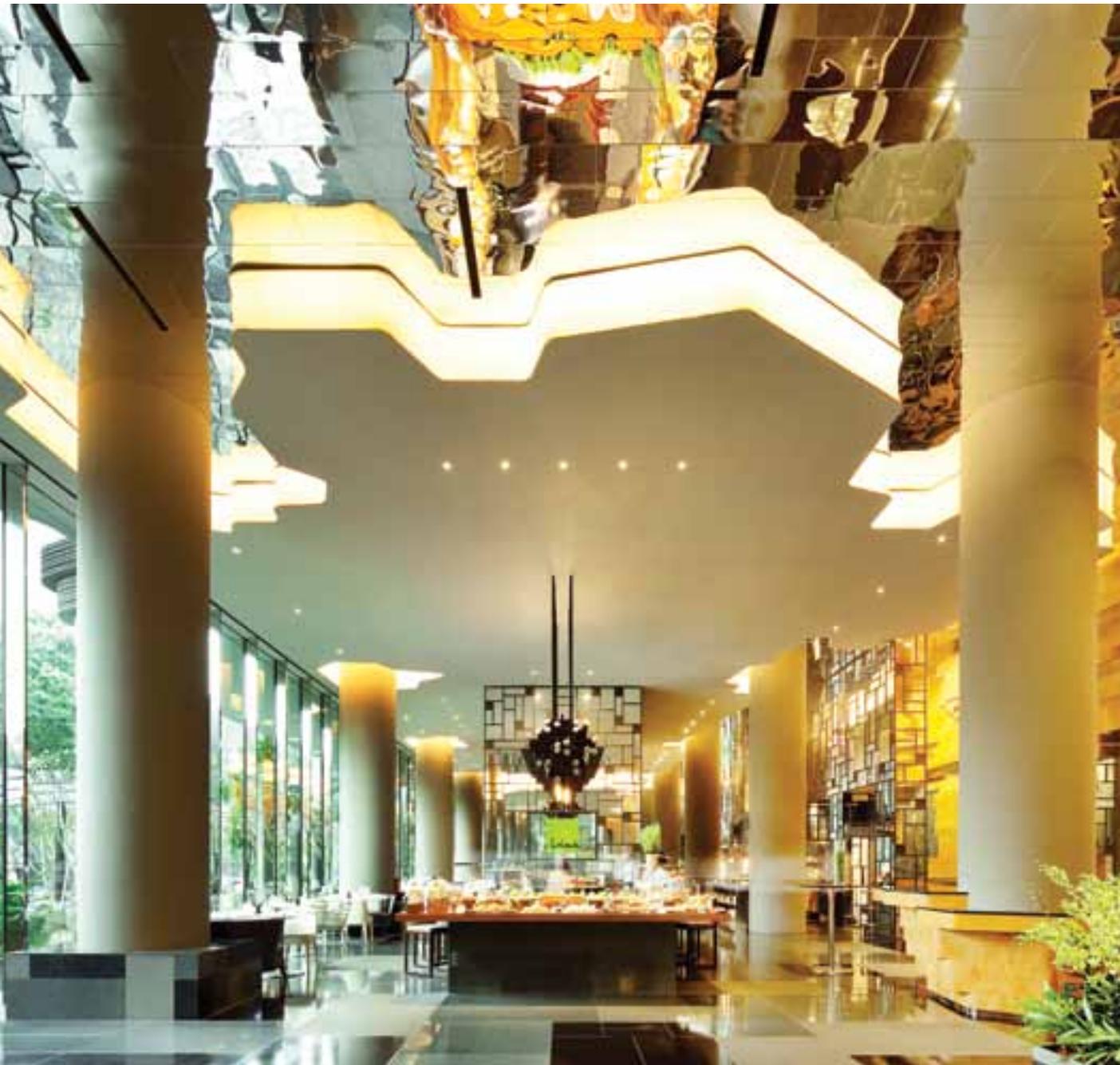
At Marco Pierre White Grill, guests dine under a ceiling of frosted light bulbs, which give the illusion of a sparkling star constellation. The Old World-meets-urban-style design for wine bar Cave incorporates an abundance of stone and more than 500 wine bottles. Another view of Cave. Guests at Ballarò can watch the chefs in action at the live cooking and antipasti station adorned with authentic woven baskets, fruit and vegetable displays and Sicilian ceramics.

clear. "From our philosophy, we're always looking at the ROI with what we're developing and designing," says Cain. "I come from an operator background. Essentially we look at practicality in the design, operational adjacencies—we're always thinking about making money, and then we'll pull it back to the theme."

The million-dollar question: How does a firm get on the short list for Hilton's ever-growing portfolio? Traxler explains, "Before a firm even enters into consideration, we send out a questionnaire to try to assess and review the types of design projects the firm has completed, the number of people on the team, languages spoken, whether they can do full documentation, in-house renderings or whether they're only concept people; whether they have architectural disciplines: interiors, landscaping, engineering. Then we have the design firm submit a portfolio for review. We have a series of checklists that assess whether they've done work of a similar scope and scale in that region, how successful it was, what type of role they played in

each project. And the levels of scrutiny step up as you move up through our brand lineup. So the level of detail that we get into on a Hilton Garden Inn is much less rigorous than what we would do, say, for a Conrad or a Waldorf Astoria. If the firm makes the cut, we add them to our approved consultant database, and they then become able to be nominated for projects."

With 1,000 hotels in the pipeline, Traxler is always in pursuit of talent. "We're always trying to find new people that maybe haven't broken out. They may be moving up from residential or out of restaurant design and we're going to try to help them elevate their game to a whole hotel." Ultimately though, Traxler says it comes down to two things. "You have to do your homework; you have to understand what the brand is about, what we're trying to achieve with that brand. [And] obviously, being responsive and timely while still being creative—we have schedules and budgets, and every day that we miss a deadline, that's costing somebody money."



The hotel's ground floor promenade includes all-day dining where mirrored ceiling panels create a visual illusion.

SINGAPORE

Parkroyal on Pickering

Client **Liam Wee Sin, UNITED OVERSEAS LAND**

Designer **Richard Hassell, WOHA**

Nearest Airport SIN	Currency Singapore Dollar
Time Zone GMT +4	Typical Guest Eco-Tourist
Telephone Code +52	Design Vibe Sustainable Surroundings

THE TWO FOUNDING DIRECTORS

of WOHA, the Singapore-based architecture and design firm like to ask, “Why can’t we?” This kind of inquiry has led them to take on a variety of commissions—including a church, an underground mass transit station, institutional as well as commercial, residential and hospitality projects.

In 2007, WOHA began designs for the Singapore Parkroyal on Pickering’s towers, which opened in January 2013 after a long delay due to the global financial crisis. The design brief from the firms longtime client, Liam Wee Sin, president of United Overseas Land [UOL] and director of one of its subsidiaries Pan Pacific Hotels Group Limited [PPHG], was “to create a flagship for the Parkroyal brand and to set new benchmarks.”

Thanks to their prior relationship, principal Richard Hassell says, “We didn’t have to compete for the project, however I think the reason they approached us was under the Singapore Master Plan the site had been identified as highly visible, so it had to go through an architectural excellence committee.”

A “Tale of Two Cities” view which encompassed public housing and a dense urbanscape was one of the drivers of the project as was the garden concept inspired by Hong Lim Park, which sits directly opposite the hotel. With the Pickering sited for a narrow strip of land, Hassell and his partner Wong Mun Summ decided to go with a vertical scheme and install



LEFT

The hotel entrance and lobby encompass double floor heights.

RIGHT

A view of the garden terraces from the sky lounge.



“When WOHA showed us the scheme, we said ‘Wow! This matches our investment criteria. In fact it outperforms it by giving us more quality rooms.’”

Liam Wee Sin

Opened
2013

Guest Rooms/Suites
367

Owner
Pan Pacific Hotels Group Limited

roughly 50,000 square feet of sky gardens, reflecting pools and green walls—an area equivalent to the footprint of the adjacent park itself.

Hassell asks, “Why can’t we have a resort pool and cabanas in a city hotel?” Plans for the \$137 million project incorporated an infinity pool and fitness and recreation facility on the 5th floor. With most of the accommodations facing the courtyards, Hassell points out, “The hanging gardens completely transformed all rooms into prime rooms.” This design strategy did not go unnoticed by Liam Wee Sin, the hotel’s developer, owner and operator who also holds an architecture degree and retains membership on several boards pertaining to preservation and design. Sin recalls, “When WOHA showed us the scheme, we said, ‘Wow! This matches our investment criteria. In fact, it outperforms it by giving us more quality rooms.’”

Sin asserts that in a land-scarce locale like Singapore, the logical way to go is up. “We’ve been working out how to create sky gardens in a very practical manner, so that they’re easy to maintain and construct,” says Hassell of the hotel property’s 16 landscaped floors, which include a self-sustaining zero-energy sky garden with solar panels, a built-in irrigation

The narrow plot of Hong Lim Park in the foreground of the hotel.





“UOL have seen the benefits of testing out new ideas with us”

Richard Hassell

system as well as automatic light, rain and motion sensors. Tierra Design was hired as the landscape consultant and the entire building was awarded Singapore’s BCA (Building and Construction Authority) Green Mark Platinum, the city-state’s version of LEED and its highest environmental standard.

In another unconventional move, WOHA located a single-loaded guest room corridor at the back of the hotel facing a colorful Chinatown view. “The room corridor is not just this internal, artificially lit, sealed thing that you get through as quickly as possible,” Hassell notes. “Here you can stand in the corridor and see the whole city life happening beneath you.” “We love it,” Sin says, “It provides another dimension of Singapore history.”

The Parkroyal is the culmination of the 20-year-old firm’s ongoing explorations of urban density, tropical climates and vertical landscaping, and their third project with UOL Group. “Each time we’ve collaborated with them, we come up with quite an interesting development through the process,” says Hassell. Sin describes their relationship as a rigorous exploration and decision-making process, “developing full-scaled prototypes, and simulating the sense of space, proportion and materiality, right down to the touch and feel of an idea.”

Sin insists having WOHA as both architect and interior designer “allowed for a more holistic approach to the design.” WOHA was able to carry the natural landscape theme of the exterior podium’s precast concrete contours inside, by using undulating horizontal layers of molded plywood in the lobby, while custom carpeting in multiple hues of green inspired by the Kyoto Gardens extends the garden motif. The guestroom interiors were furnished with a contemporary twist on Chinese cabinetry: white oak and wood laminate edging, shelving and details such sliding doors and box lantern lighting.

“We wanted WOHA to provide a design that was not encumbered by existing notions of hospitality,” says Sin. Hassell agrees with the experimental nature of the design process adding, “UOL have seen the benefits of testing out new ideas with us. Having that background with them enabled us to take a bit of a leap with this building.”



ABOVE

The Deluxe room affords a view of the sky terrace.

LEFT

A garden is accessible even from guest room corridors.



Feast [Food by East] is an all-day dining room located in a long, market-like space with simple, shaker-like décor.

BEIJING, CHINA

East Beijing

Client **Brian Williams, SWIRE HOTELS**

Designer **Lyndon Neri, NERI & HU DESIGN RESEARCH OFFICE**

✈️ Nearest Airport
BJS

¥ Currency
CNY

🕒 Time Zone
GMT -4

👤 Typical Guest
Techie Tourist

☎ Telephone Code
+86

🍷 Design Vibe
Utilitarian Utopia

“I’M A LIFE-LONG HOTELIER, a one-trick pony,” says Brian Williams, managing director of Swire Hotels, a Hong Kong-based brand that’s been redefining the hospitality industry in Asia, Great Britain and soon the U.S. Williams worked for the Mandarin Oriental Group for 17 years starting in 1985, when it was a much smaller company—today it has 28 properties throughout the world.

The Brit joined the company in 2006 and was tasked with building and re-directing Swire and has since launched two new boutique brands: House, a small-scale but high-end luxury collection, and East, which is on the lower end of the 5-Star spectrum but larger in scale—more guest keys with slightly smaller rooms.

When it comes to choosing a design collaborator, Williams says, “We like to deal with the person whose name is on the door, because we feel we get a very personal relationship on the project.” As to what will work he insists, “We don’t want a cookie-cutter approach,” preferring to select someone totally innovative who will also manage the budget. “We pitch, we analyze and we decide who is most appropriate. Sometimes we just appoint,” says Williams when referring to the selection of Neri & Hu Design Research Office to design East, “a business hotel with attitude.” It helps they successfully collaborated on the F&B for Swire’s Opposite House in Beijing in 2008.



ABOVE & BELOW
Hagaki is a Californian-
inspired Japanese
restaurant.
Hagaki's graphic entrance.

RIGHT
Local Beijing brick is
used to mark the entrance
of Xian, a pub, whiskey
bar and music venue that
embodies the industrial
chic feel of 798, the nearby
art neighborhood.

Opened
2012

Guest Rooms/Suites
69

Owner
Swire Hotels

The Chinese-American partners Rosanna Hu and Lyndon Neri made Shanghai their home when they opened a studio there in 2004. The couple each received undergraduate degrees in architecture at Berkeley, before Neri enrolled in Harvard and Hu landed at Princeton, where they respectively obtained their masters.

Hu was hired at SOM and eventually joined Neri at Michael Graves & Associates in Princeton where he continued to work for more than 10 years. "Rosanna and I are very different individuals, with similar sensibilities," says Neri. "Rosanna designs with her head, and I design with my hand." Their design studio employs almost 90 people with additional satellite offices in London and New York as well as three Design Republic furniture showrooms in Shanghai.

Challenging is how Neri described the process for East, which opened in September 2012, and confessed the project was more complex than the previous Swire assignment. Neri & Hu were brought in to create the two restaurants, bar, café and public spaces including Upstairs, a social business lounge. The hotel was planned as part of Indigo, a new shopping mall designed by Benoy, who did the hotel's masterplan, and were also commissioned as the architect of record as well as designers for the guest rooms. And while the project began in 2007, Neri claims, "If it wasn't for Brian I probably would have quit," he says of his straight-shooter client. "Once he likes it, or he understands that you've grasped the concept, he really supports you all the way.



There's a mutual respect. He's so persistent. He would not be afraid to delay a project just to get it right."

“There’s a mutual respect. He’s so persistent. He would not be afraid to delay a project just to get it right.”
Lyndon Neri

East is located in Jiangtai in Chaoyang on the outskirts of Beijing, very near to the 798 Art Zone, which is evolving into a cultural hub. The designers were charged with creating a destination within the public areas of the hotel where guests and locals from the IT parks could gather with laptops and work, eat, drink and socialize. There's Hagaki, a whiskey lounge, bar Xian, and Feast, the all-day dining café that Neri claims with its market tables is "almost puritan, shaker-like." Williams confides, "We like to do a more casual offering. We've come to the conclusion that even rich people who travel a lot get their fill of 3-Star Michelin dinners."

"We knew we wanted to work with Lyndon who understood us, Beijing and the consumer," says Williams, who, together with the designer and a restaurant consultant, wrote the design brief, while highlighting menus, prices, customer, hours as well as the level of luxe and comfort. "We're very careful in terms of who we select. We need to make sure that we know their studio, that we know their capacity, we know who we're going to be dealing with and that we feel comfortable with that."

QT Sydney

Client **David Seargeant, AMALGAMATED HOLDINGS, LTD**
 Designer **Shelly Indyk, INDYK ARCHITECTS**

 Nearest Airport SYD	 Currency AUD
 Time Zone GMT +8	 Typical Guest Scene-Be-Seen Aussie
 Telephone Code +61	 Design Vibe Eclectic Elegance

QT HOTELS, a quirky, art and design-driven brand has an emphasis on seen-and-be-seen restaurants and bars—the Australian equivalent of a Mondrian or Standard hotel. As for the name? “We wanted a very contemporary brand so we went with two very strong letters. *We found that the Q and the T worked really well together and people could make from that what they wanted. It could be ‘quiet time,’ it could be ‘quirky time,’ it could be anything you made out of those two letters,*” explains David Seargeant, CEO and managing director of Amalgamated Holdings [AHL], an entertainment and hospitality company specializing in hotels and cinemas. Seargeant’s entire career has been in the Australian hotel business, from the Commodore Hotel Melbourne to director of operations for South Pacific Hotels and founding Rydges Hotels and Resorts.

The first two QTs were conversions of resorts Amalgamated already owned. For the flagship in Sydney, Seargeant had the opportunity to “work within two iconic heritage buildings that gave us an incredible opportunity to create something that was quite unique,” he explains. Those buildings are the State Theater, built in 1928, which used to house Amalgamated’s corporate offices, and the former Gowings Department Store. Located next-door to each other in the city’s central business district, Seargeant kept the theater and utilized the floors above, while installing UK retailer TopShop in the base of Gowings.



QT Sydney’s quirky lobby is an eclectic mix of furnishings, colors and patterns.

“As large firms grow, I think a lot gets lost. To get the personal attention of the true creative driver, I think you do need to be with a small to mid-sized firm.”

David Seargeant

For the design, he enlisted the help of two longtime collaborators—Nic Graham, who designed the first two QT properties, and Shelley Indyk, who has renovated and created from scratch numerous cinemas for Amalgamated in both Australia and New Zealand. For Seargeant, **it was about selecting “a boutique design firm where the principal really was the firm.”** As large firms grow, I think a lot gets lost. To get the personal attention of the true creative driver, I think you do need to be with a small to mid-sized firm.”

With a budget of \$58 million (almost \$270,000 a key) and while paying respect to the buildings’ history and heritage details, Graham layered eclectic, bespoke, yet modern designs throughout the public spaces and various restaurants and watering holes—Gowings Bar & Grill, Parlour Lane Roasters and Gilt Lounge. Graham’s design brief says it’s a play on the contrast between the masculinity of Gowings



FAR-LEFT

A view of the bar at Parlour Lane Roasters, the hotel’s street-side café.

LEFT

The reception area at spaQ, the hotel’s luxurious day spa.

ABOVE

A funky mix of mirrors lines a wall in the European-inspired brasserie Gowings Bar & Grill.

Built

1928

Renovation Complete

2012

Guest Rooms/Suites

200

Owner

Amalgamated Holdings

“He said, ‘No, I just want it quirky, I don’t want you to theme it. I don’t want you to make those connections.’”

Shelly Indyk

and the femininity of the city’s Queen Victoria Building—he employed strong jewel colors, a digital artwork collection, a luggage wall installation, old theater stage lights and a front desk faced with 1930s armoires. “It’s having the ability to absorb all these elements that makes a stay quite rich,” says Seargeant.

Surprisingly, Indyk wasn’t aware of Graham’s direction for the public spaces as she developed the room concepts. The first of which—a theme based on the heritage context—was rejected by Seargeant. “He said, ‘No, I just want it quirky, I don’t want you to theme it. I don’t want you to make those connections.’” The end result is one based on contradictions for some 12 different room types. She used two color palettes



LEFT

One guestroom features wood paneling and midcentury-inspired furnishings.

ABOVE

The 200 guest rooms range in size and are offered in 12 different room styles.

(yellow, green and white, and red and brown), multiple types of wood, sculptural freestanding tubs, colored glass shelves lined with knickknacks and whimsical carpets. “We could have streamlined it into two different types of rooms, which is probably what people normally do,” explains Indyk, who traveled to China multiple times to ensure the right fabrics and finishes were used. “But Seargeant really wanted the rooms to have the ‘wow’ factor that often doesn’t happen in hotels—the public areas are fabulous and then you go up to a very simple bedroom.”

“The fact that we enjoy such a close working relationship makes it so much easier,” Seargant says. “My role in that process is to very clearly define what our outcomes are, who our customers are, what are our customers’ expectations are going to be and what are they’re going to be looking for in terms of an experience. So I’ve got to really get across that brief, so they can then execute creatively.”

Indyk concurs, “He is the sort of client that once you have proven your commitment to your work and you have excelled, he will then give you his trust. That doesn’t mean that you can just go ahead and do anything—but there is an underlying belief in you that is established. This is critical in a good working relationship.”



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Great clients are the ones you want to work with for years. You go the extra mile no matter what's involved and without explanation. They appreciate your skills, honesty, expertise and knowledge, which is why they hire you in the first place, and then sometimes, hire you again, and maybe even again. The end result of a complex project is always satisfying, but the process together is equally sweet. And if a camaraderie develops, and you meet for the occasional drink, share a few anecdotes and laughs, then you've managed to figure out that magical ingredient that is key to *What Clients Want*.

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