

on the cutting edge

WHAT DISTINGUISHES TOP CONTEMPORARY HOTEL DESIGN



Nini Andrade Silva

DESIGN AWARD WINNER: FONTANA PARK HOTEL, LISBON

Atelier Nini Andrade Silva won a European Hotel Design Award 2008 for Best Room and Bathroom Design for their work at Fontana Park Hotel in Lisbon. The hotel was also nominated in the interior design of a restaurant, interior design of a lounge and bar, and graphic design categories. Here, designer Nini Andrade Silva discusses the award-winning project:

The name of the hotel was the main basis of creation: Fontana Park—an urban park, sophisticated and with a great soul. The natural factor and the park itself were the main theme for this project, the reason for the color choice—green—used with the black and white. The color selection criterion was simple. When I embraced the project, black already dominated as a feature of the architecture by Aires Mateus, and mine also. This was fantastic and from then on I let it flow.

We created very simple lines and ample spaces. Huge photographs, a signature of my work, from the Dutch photographer Alma Mollemans (on the ground floor) and from the Brazilian photographer Alexandre Lima (on the lifts and in the Saldanha Mar Restaurant) convey us up to the parks. It's an urban hotel with contrasting and clean interiors, always with my signature. It's a "Ninimalist" design concept, with design objects everywhere and huge centenary roots used as furniture. The common areas are spacious and the existence of a garden in the backyard changed the scale significantly.

When people come in they immediately feel something different. It's not what people see but what they feel that matters the most and what gives uniqueness to spaces. Fontana Park Hotel is a special place. It has a trendy atmosphere, made for people who like different spaces, no matter how old they are. I like to be avant-garde, to mix new materials, new concepts and surroundings, to bring up

surprises at every new stage, transforming projects into something absolutely unforgettable. Singular design pieces, some of them unique, grant spaces unequalled character versus centenary objects that provides the desired class and strength.

One of the major challenges was to conceive a 4-star hotel with the dignity of a 5-star, and to design a different hotel with a world postal code. Is not by chance that the New York Times referred to Fontana Park Hotel as the best European hotel of 2008.

Details:

- The shades are essentially black and white with some green and magenta remarks.
- Some pavement areas are in black stone (in the hall and in the Bonsai Restaurant) – Zimbabwe granite, smoothed and tarnished; others are in white, such as the walls (in the bathrooms and in the Saldanha Mar Restaurant), where we used a stone composite.
- Different colors of carpets were used in the bedrooms—green, black and white.
- Green and black rugs were used on the ground floor in the hall and magenta in the Bonsai Restaurant.
- Black glass was used in the common bathrooms and in the bathrooms inside the bedrooms, and white glass was used in retro-illuminated volumes on the ground floor.
- Bluish-gray mirrors were used in the bedrooms, the Saldanha Mar Restaurant and in the first floor rooms.
- Black Corian covers the bar and the main cupboard of the Bonsai Restaurant; white Corian covering the Saldanha Mar Restaurant counter.
- Skirting-board in brushed stainless steel was used in all the bedrooms, where flooring is in white vinyl pavement with black junction.
- The furniture (shells, writing-desk and couch base) are made of MDF boxes, leaded to walls and suspended with the same finish of some of the bedrooms—venetian plaster, an innovative material.

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(right) the lobby at the Fontana Park Hotel

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The overall picture

A few general points regarding hotel design direction in Portugal today and tomorrow

BUSINESS IS BIG

Business rules in Portuguese hotels, says Margarida Ferreira of Injoy, Focus Group's interior design arm, even in the Algarve, where there is more of a mix with holiday but business is still an important element. That doesn't mean the look is not contemporary, Ferreira notes. "The language can be very up-to-date," she says, "but the attitude is more sober." That means serious colors—chocolate, black, neutrals and white—dominate, punctuated with strong colors like burgundy and blue. Materials are sleek: stainless steel, aluminum. And though the look is not trendy, Ferreira emphasizes, "there is always room in the common zones, in the bar or restaurant, for a unique focal point, such as a chandelier, a piece of art or a wall, for example, that marks the moment."

THE SHAPE OF THINGS

Ferreira also sees rooms becoming larger, more square-shaped instead of rectangular. "With greater width you gain versatility," she says.

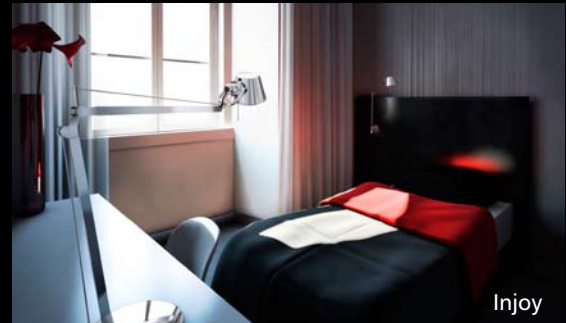
NO-FRILLS CHIC

No-frills chic in the hospitality industry is part of a larger consumer trend towards low-cost goods or services that are distinguished by telling details of high-quality design or service to create high-quality experience at low prices to appeal to hip modern travelers who are tired of the stuffy same-old and may well be feeling the effects of the crisis and looking to cut costs. (These hotels would then be the preferred alternative to the widely available no-chic low cost alternative.) Mini Price Hotels SA's Star Inn, a joint venture between Hotti Hotéis and Soares



The Vine Hotel

da Costa, became the first edition of this trend to open in Portugal when it launched in Porto in October 2008; creative architecture and high-style interior design are key elements in the concept. Lisbon, Coimbra and Aveiro are the next sites in the company's plan to open 10 more Star Inns in the next 5 years.



Injoy

HIGH-TECH HOSPITALITY

Technology is a central element in hotels today at every price point, and is being employed in increasingly creative and practical ways. Large international chains are teaming with technology companies to create computer lounges in their lobbies where guests can check e-mail, print boarding passes, play games and use webcams to send video messages home to friends and family. Westin has a deal with Nintendo to put Wii consoles and games like Wii Fit in some of its fitness centers to expand exercise possibilities. Some hotels are using home automation to add a "welcome home" function so that when guests enter a room the curtains open, lights turn, a personalized message displays on the television screen, the guest's favorite music starts playing and the temperature adjusts to his or her personal preference. The New York Times Technology section recently reported that high tech furniture (such as sofas with USB ports and tables inset with wireless battery chargers so guests can insert cellphones and recharge them without plugging in a cable) is next on the horizon.

FUTURELAND

Nini Andrade Silva is also thinking about that horizon. "Today and since ever the most important thing is to be original, create our own image and don't follow trends," she says. "Certainly some aspects are the same in different epochs, but the entire work of architecture and interior design conception for a hotel is done three years before its opening and for this reason, following trends doesn't work. We're always in constant change and the lines are becoming more curved and futuristic. We are tired of normal things and we must take a leap and think about large, global and ample spaces, different from what we've already seen. In my case, I am developing more aerodynamic lines; I am now thinking about and creating for the consumers of tomorrow."