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OCTOBER 2010

# Hotel Design

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# Hotel Design

TRENDS, FASHION & INSPIRATION



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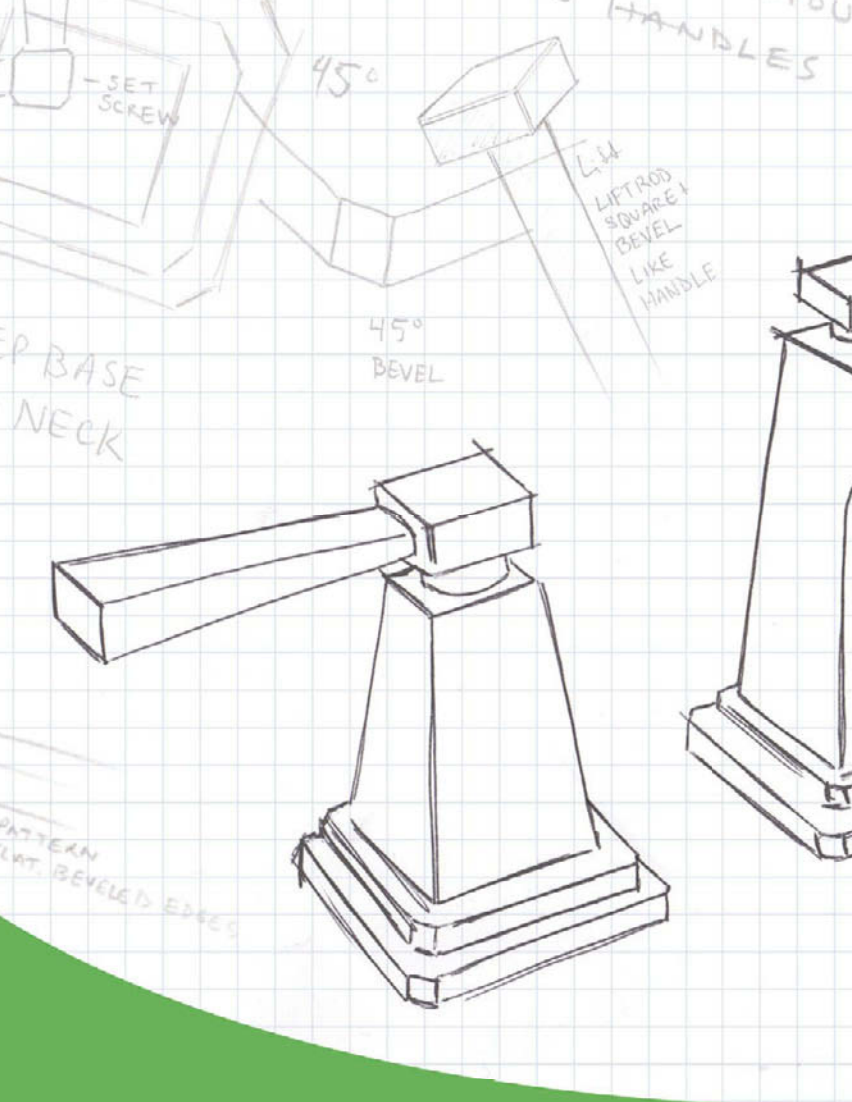
The Thompson Hotel Group at 6 Columbus in New York

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**David Eisen**

Managing Editor  
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It is important to work with designers who not only match a hotel owner's vision, but can bring something more to the table that will create those lasting memorable moments for guests.

## Design Matters

**L**ike anyone else, when I walk into a new hotel, the first thing I do is take an inventory of my surroundings. I look up at the lighting on the ceiling, down at the floor and left and right for how the entrance area is decked out. This same type of exercise happens once again after I find my way into my room.

Point being, aesthetics carry a lot of weight in the overall hospitality experience. If you don't believe me, it's actually been proven. In 1999, Joseph Pine and James Gilmore penned a seminal article entitled "Welcome to the Experience Economy," which set out a vision for a new economic era where consumers are in search of memorable experiences. It stated that there are four types of consumer experiences: entertainment, educational, escapist and esthetic (the four Es). Soon after, many researchers looked to apply Pine's and Gilmore's model to actual industries, including hotels.

Many surveys since have concluded this: out of all the experience variables, aesthetics prove to be the most important to consumers. That's right, not food and beverage, or even service. What most impresses guests and makes their experience most memorable are their surroundings—what they see and what they feel.

Think top designers aren't important? You can understand now why it is so important to work with designers who not only match a hotel owner's vision, but can bring something more to the table that will create those lasting memorable moments for guests.

Strolling down the endless rows of design firms showcasing their wares on the tradeshow floor at the 2010 HD Boutique show in Miami, I got to see firsthand the future of hotel design and the items—from chairs to lighting—that will create extraordinary guest experiences. There is no shortage of talent or passion! I also want to give big thanks to David Shulman of Project Dynamics for allowing me to shadow him on the tradeshow floor. He gave me an inside look at the role of purchasing firms and the work that goes into completing a hotel project. Like any business, it's all about relationships.





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## Oh, What a Night!



**Mary Malloy**

Publisher  
mmalloy@questex.com

"The Network of the Hospitality Industry is the premier networking resource for the business."

**N**EWH, as most of you know, is the bedrock of the hotel networking community.

When it was started 25 years ago, NEWH stood for National Executives of Women in Hospitality and was comprised of the strong female leaders in the hospitality business.

Today, the organization is much more open and is referred to as The Network of the Hospitality Industry. It is the premier networking resource for the business, providing scholarships, education, leadership development, recognition of excellence and business development opportunities.

On August 28th, approximately 800 of the industry's top designers, purchasing pundits, hoteliers and suppliers all gathered together for a black-tie gala to support and celebrate this networking group.

And if you weren't there, you missed the hottest ticket of the year!

The event included a fabulous performance by Cher (well, a very talented impersonator), who kicked the evening off after a wonderful dinner. Her performance of "I Got You Babe" and "Believe" brought everyone to their feet to dance to their hearts' content. Truly, this was one crowd who let their hair down to celebrate our industry and our ability to network with each other.

Other top "celebrities" spotted that night were Joan Rivers, who greeted each of us before the "step and repeat" and announced each of our entries into the event. (Appropriate, since the Emmy's were the following night at the Staples Center next door.) Also in attendance were President Obama and the First Lady, Michelle Obama. Dr. Phil and Oprah Winfrey also traipsed about for photo opportunities with guests. (Check out event photos on page 8.)

And, if you haven't figured it out yet, the gala was held in L.A.—where some of the greatest celebrity impersonator talents reside! While the real celebrities were not in attendance that night, the impersonators sure made for a fun time and great photos with the attendees!

NEWH, as always, put on a great event. And, it was all for a great cause!

# Hotel Design

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### Hotel Design mission statement

Hotel Design celebrates the design excellence of hotels, resorts, lodges and destination spas. Vivid photography, creative layouts and descriptive writing help present to the reader a broad focus on the new styles and fashion trends emerging in furniture, fixtures and the lodging spaces that provide a foundation for creativity. Hotel Design aims to be the source of inspiration for the individuals who help make it happen.





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## meet & greet

The NEWH held its 25-year gala at the JW Marriott at L.A. Live in Los Angeles on August 28. The black-tie event drew about 800 people from hoteliers and designers, to purchasing pundits and suppliers. Here are some shots from the event.



1



2

1) Kay Lang of Kay Lang & Associates and Mary Malloy of *Hotel Design* 2) Keith Stibler, Kettal North America; Amanda Jackson, Flick-Mars; and Carlos Alfaro, Kettal North America.



3



4



5

3) Laura and Harvey Nudelman of Fabricut with President Obama and First Lady impersonators 4) Fabtex's Brian Coughlin with Kent Hormuth of KENTT, Inc. 5) Todd-Avery Lenahan of ABA Design with Kathleen Curran of Janus et Cie and Rocky LaFleur of Kneeder/Fauchere 6) Robert Brown of RBF Group with Neil Locke of Neil Locke & Assoc. 7) Jayme Daltom Kalama, Jim Hesterly, and Amy Repsher Gerbig of Hallmark Collective 8) Anita Degan of D and D Design with Raj Chadnani of WATG.



6



7



8



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# The Thompson Blueprint

Thompson hotels are always hip for the moment, but designed to be timeless.

BY DAVID EISEN

**IN THE CLUB:** Gild Hall in New York's financial district is meant to exude the feel of an old men's club. It takes its interior design cues from the masculinity and refinement of a British gentleman.

At Thompson Hotels, design is a balance between pragmatism and vision. More to the point, it is a discourse between two of the hotel company's principals: the operations-grounded Stephen Brandman and the boy-wonder dreamer in Jason Pomeranc. The two, along with Jason's brothers, Larry and Michael, oversee the Thompson Hotel Group, which, with 10 hotels in its portfolio (two more on the way), is known for blend-

ing killer design with the kind of service you'd expect to find at a five-star establishment.

Just don't call them a boutique chain; it's a label that Brandman chafes at. He often refers to it in terms of the oversized-red-lampshade syndrome. "We are not interested in that kind of design touch," Brandman tells *Hotel Design*, from Thompson Hotels' headquarters, conveniently adjacent to its flagship property, 60 Thompson, in New York's



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## TOUR DU MONDE



HANDWOVEN OUTDOOR FURNITURE CREATED WITH WEATHER-RESISTANT DEDON FIBER

## cover story

Soho neighborhood. “So many times there’s that ‘oh wow’ moment when you walk into a hotel. The problem with that is by the second or third time you see it, you are no longer wowed by the red shade. It can be a turnoff. We don’t design hotels where you have those kind of moments.”

Instead, Pomeranc likes to refer to hotel design as the “intellectual soul”—it is not homogenous and is a reflection of location and neighborhood. The group’s Lower East Side property has a more industrial feel than its cross-town sister 60 Thompson and its American bohemian vibe; 6 Columbus uses the International Klein Blue to evoke 1960s mod style.

Brandman, 16 years with Inter-Continental Hotel Group, drew an important design lesson while there: “Be global, think local,” he says. “We have five hotels in New York and all feel like the neighborhood they are in.” He likens Gild Hall to a modern interpretation of an old men’s club. Makes sense; the hotel is smack in the middle of the financial district. “We wouldn’t pick that feel for Soho or LES,” Brandman says. “We understand that community plays a



great role. That’s what we do when designing.”

While Brandman is most concerned with design functionality, Pomeranc, while also conscious of budgetary limits and function, unquestionably indulges in the aesthetic and form. “I’m looking at design from the customer perspective, and when Jason’s looking at something, he would hope to believe he is looking at it with a customer in mind, but sometimes he is purely looking at the beauty of it,” Brandman says. “My role is to ensure functionality. I may look at a bed and say there are rough corners and guests are going to knock their shins into them. Or, we’ve looked at designing certain kinds of headboards where I look at it and know the

housekeeper will have a real difficult time cleaning behind them. There’s the give and take in the design process and that’s why we have been able to design some hotels that continue to get better, because we are always looking out for things and saying, ‘What does the guest need?’”

Design is a group-driven process, Pomeranc says. “My brother Michael is 54 and more traditional and likes woods and Victoria homes; my brother Larry (the eldest Pomeranc) likes the laid-back lifestyle. Stephen goes back and forth and I like the lofts and industrial edge,” he says. “It sounds schizophrenic, but it’s not. We are trying to achieve the goal of comfort and luxury; the feeling of richness and public spaces that

are social and sensual. Above all, we aim to make it aspirational.”

It also has to last. “We are more interested in long-term design,” Brandman says. “We don’t design for the moment. If of the moment means bright neon, well, that’ll be out of fashion in 18 months. We want design that survives time, so we don’t follow design cycles too much because then you’ll be out of date.”

Thompson avoids using the same designer for each project. While the group does listen to presentations, they, at this point, have an inkling going into a project of whom they’d like to use for it. “We want to make sure that depending on the location, who can interpret what we want,” Brandman says. “We would never use one designer

**A FAMILY AFFAIR:** Thompson Hotels began its foray into the hotel market in 2001 with its first project, 60 Thompson. Since then, it’s expanded to 10 hotels, including five in New York alone. It will add hotels in London and Seoul next. At left, from left: Michael Pomeranc, Stephen Brandman, Jason Pomeranc and Larry Pomeranc.

**STARTED IT ALL:** The bar area of 60 Thompson (below). The hotel, in New York’s Soho neighborhood, draws an eclectic crowd. The bohemian chic vibe was captured by designer Thomas O’Brien.

## Hotel/Designer

60 THOMPSON: Thomas O’Brien

6 COLUMBUS: Steven Sclaroff

GILD HALL: Jim Walrod

THOMPSON LES: Collaboration between Jim Walrod and the building’s architect, Ed Rawlings

SMYTH: Yabu-Pushelberg (lobby only)

THOMPSON TORONTO: Studio Gaia

DONOVAN HOUSE: Studio Gaia

HOLLYWOOD ROOSEVELT HOTEL: Dodd Mitchell

THOMPSON BEVERLY HILLS: Dodd Mitchell

BELGRAVES: Tara Bernerd

THOMPSON SEOUL: Studio Gaia





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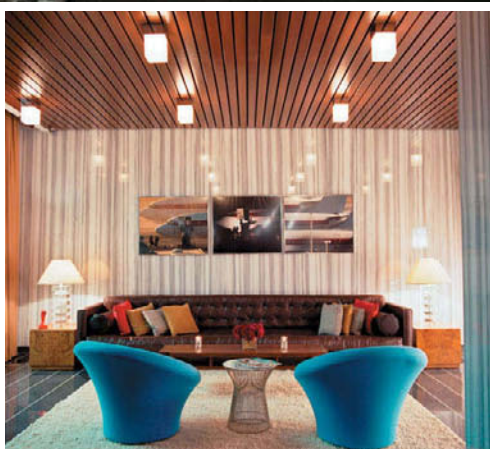
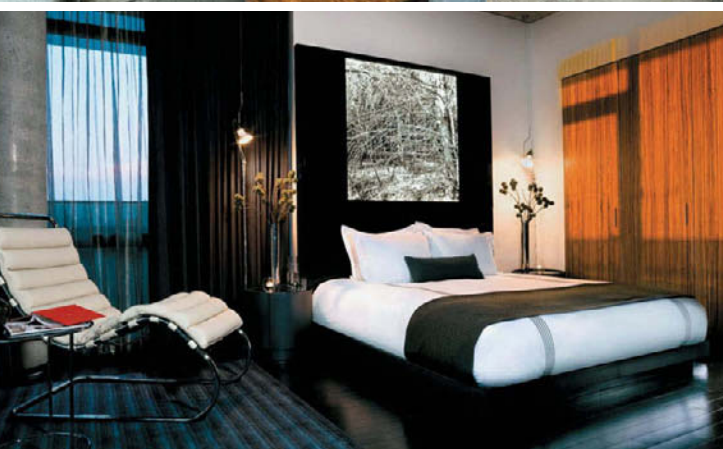
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## cover story



**A DESIGN MIX:** The lobby at Thompson Toronto (left); a king standard room at Thompson LES (below left); 6 Columbus' lobby (below right). "We are interested in long-term design," says Stephen Brandman. "We don't want to be of the moment."



for the company. We look at a location and see who can interpret the message we are trying to communicate. Not everyone plays in every market well." He refers to Tara Bernerd of Target Living, the design firm behind Thompson Belgraves, opening next year in London. "She gets what we are trying to accomplish," Brandman says. "You have to always embrace location."

Pomeranc says the design process itself is one of incremental growth and movement. "We start out with the project as a small visual in the mind," he says. "We choose designers who want to work

within a genre they have a passion for or the product will suffer. It's a combination of personality, location and how does their life, work and focus reflect on desire."

Then, it starts. "In the beginning, you give the designer a brief overview. First the technical aspect, like the number of guest rooms and beds; then psychologically, I'll give them a certain iconic design reference." After that, Pomeranc leaves them alone for a while. "Maybe a couple weeks later, I'll go back and see what they came up with," he says. "At this point, it's still probably a drawing, but I can see what direction they are going

in, particularly their visual feel, like for the furniture, since its representative of where they are going with the interior architecture. From there, it's a lot of tweaking and playing with change."

Pomeranc, at every point, is involved in the designing process, from sizing up and choosing fabrics to deciding the look of a bathroom. When it comes to procurement, Pomeranc jokes that he "looks for competence" when selecting a purchasing firm to work with. Like designers, he knows what he wants. "Purchasing is a hard thing," he admits. "We have our contacts and try to steer toward

people who have come through for us. We also try and avoid certain people who haven't. Organization is key. When you are on a project, it's about keeping the flow on the purchasing side. They help a lot in the value-engineering process."

According to Brandman, the eventual design architecture of a Thompson hotel is one based on the concept of "urban compound." That is to say, if they are designing and doing their jobs correctly, a guest will have no reason to leave the property during a stay. "Design is important to this," Brandman says. "There are two important questions guests ask when they check in: 'Where can I get a good meal and where can I get a drink?' It all melts together—great food, great design, comfortable environment—and no great design works without all those elements. It is important to create individuality of design. All too often, brands replicate something everyone is doing, so it becomes a *mélange* of nothing. We are sensitive to that."

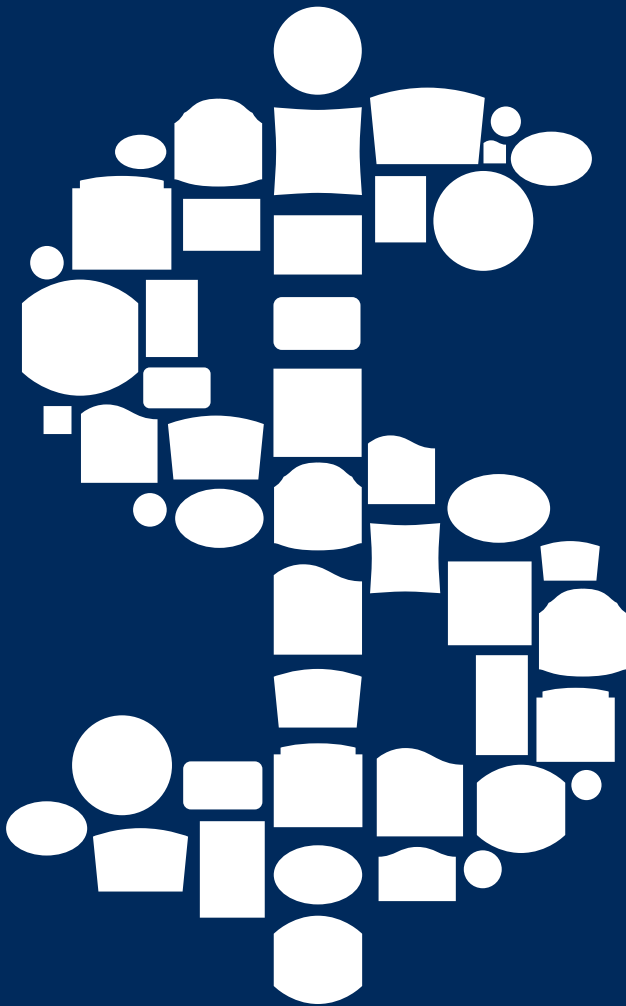
Thompson Hotels will soon embark on renovations in several of its hotels from the Hollywood Roosevelt (design to be done by Roman and Williams) to 60 Thompson (Yabu-Pushelberg, which also designed the lobby space of Smyth in Tribeca, will be the driving force behind the renovations). "It's really about working with great designers that understand and appreciate what we believe is the design of the Thompson Hotels' DNA and going out and interpreting our desires," Brandman says.

Both Pomeranc and Brandman say they get inspiration for design through their various trav-



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## cover story

els. More telling, Pomeranc says iconography plays a big role, too. A new Yves Saint Laurent book recently has his attention. "It's easy to open up a design magazine and pull out a picture of a faucet or chair and say 'this is great,' but that's not what we do, we create something completely new," Pomeranc says. "It's very difficult to take an image of a mid-century house or a piece of furniture from Tom Ford's apartment and say this is how it translates, because it's not literal, it's inspirational. That's where a designer's skill set comes to play; they're good translators and interpreters, they make that vision into something tangible, fresh and new."

Pomeranc also uses mood boards (similar to storyboarding a



**WEST SIDE LIVING:** The Hollywood Roosevelt in Los Angeles. The hotel will soon receive renovations courtesy of design firm Roman and Williams.

movie), which often find their way onto the walls of his office. They are filled with inspirational images, which Pomeranc says helps him throughout the design process.

Two hotels certainly are on Pomeranc's and Brandman's minds these days: Belgraves, a Thompson Hotel, opening next year, and Thompson Seoul, slated to open in 2012. "London is going to be the most eclectic of all our properties," Pomeranc says. "It's

posh, reflective of Belgravia (a section of London, Pomeranc says, which reminds him of Madison Avenue in the 60s and 70s in New York), but also has a spirit of rock 'n' roll." Seoul, meanwhile, will have a "members' club feel" and is designed to truly capture its location and local flavor: it will have a three-floor golf driving range.

Nowadays, the Thompson guys aren't only concerned with hotel design. They oversee Do

Not Disturb Restaurant Group, which manages and operates high-end dining and nightlife spots. Projects include venues at Thompson LES and Gild Hall in New York, Donovan House in Washington, D.C., Hollywood Roosevelt in Los Angeles and Thompson Toronto, Thompson's newest hotel, which opened in 2010. Pomeranc says designing restaurants and bars is not all that different from designing hotels. "It's not a dissimilar process," he says. "Rules can get thrown out the window because a lot of it is subjective design. You do follow a certain degree of logical structure, but once you get down to color palettes and theme, it comes to what kind of place you want to put out there." ■

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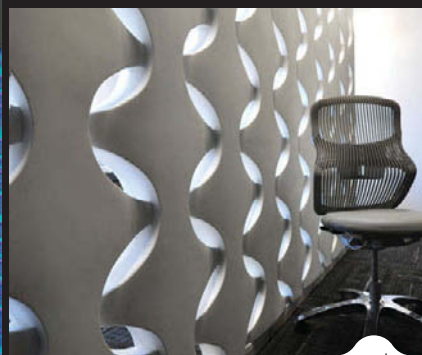
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# Bar Décor

Three New York hot spots that are quenching both a guest's thirst and design eye.



## SIPPING IN STYLE

The bronze bar at Upstairs at the Kimberly (above) is sheltered by a walnut trellis and English ivy and evokes a feel of the 1940s.

Kastel at Trump Soho (right center) is inspired by industrial artist lofts.

The Red Room at Hotel Gansevoort (below right) channels a European bistro.

Catering to revelers and romantics alike, the new industrial-cum-opulent Kastel lounge in Trump Soho is putting its mark on the neighborhood with its red-hot design work. Envisioned by Gregory Stanford and Penelope Fischer-White from the Rockwell Group, the bar draws inspiration from the '70s and '80s art scene (think Warhol and Basquiat).

"We chose materials from the urban streetscape and then combined it with the fashion and style of the people of Soho," says Fischer-White. "There is a contrast between the large architectural scale of the building and a softer layer that's really approachable and very intimate."

Kastel, which opened in May, couples raw, rustic elements like reclaimed wooden walls and a concrete floor with more sultry pieces like copper-clad tables, black velvet banquets and a canopy of sparkling lights. Kastel's design echoes Soho's distinctive society of artists and fashionistas—individuals with a keen eye for aesthetics.

The color palette is surprisingly monochromatic, highlighting black and other muted tones with amber-colored rosewood tables and geometric leather stools with gleaming steel legs. With Kastel, however, the trick is all in the details, which add a definitive decadence and sensuality, offsetting the somber hues. Behind the bar, guests will find a surface







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## — | nightlife design

of shimmering squares crafted with glass and mirror, hung on undulating cables. "It's a little kinetic," says Stanford. "The operator, [Nicola Siervo], wanted a downtown kind of vibe—that really cool sophistication that is not ostentatious. Kastel is loft and gallery-inspired but the art is really the people that are in the space."

Inspired by the chic style of the '40s and '50s, emulating iconic New York hotels like the Algonquin and the Carlyle, Farnaz Mansuri of De-Spec created the Upstairs at the Kimberly Hotel as a reinterpretation of heritage and "legacy," coupled with an unexpected dash of punk. "We wanted an aesthetic that had the classic spirit of New York, older hotels which have slowly become landmarks," says Mansuri. "We wanted to achieve that kind of longevity, but with 'a twist of resistance.'"

Offering a retractable glass ceiling for the more-than-balmy months and a fireplace for the less-than-steamy nights, the space continuously offers sweeping views of the East River and the

bustling streets below. Upstairs highlights its rooftop and alfresco essence with a secret garden-esque influence. Green walls of English ivy are coupled with suspended carnival lights and glowing street lamps for an added touch of whimsy.

Countering these more playful elements is the highly modern furniture sourced mainly from Moooi through B+B Italia. Mansuri utilized neo-wingback chairs and charred wooden tables for seating, while the come-hither bar is crafted from die-cut bronze intricately carved into a lattice pattern. The metal panels on the wall are an additional edgy element with embossed bronze mixed with steel in a gun metal finish and the cabinetry are of dark walnut, oil finished to a high shine.

Collaborating on the interior work with Mansuri was Sylvia Tosun of Pentasia Designs while Brian Orter was taken on to design the highly theatrical lighting. Orter created an effect which looks as though guests are standing beneath a tree; leaf shadows fall faintly across the floor.

**STARRY SKYLINE:** The neo-Gothic Upstairs at the Kimberly offers a panoramic view of the Manhattan skyline.





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## nightlife design

Though Mansuri says “it took hundreds of hours of meetings to make sure everyone owned the design and everyone liked it,” in the end they used the very first rendering they presented and have been running at full capacity since they opened June 12th.

While Andi Pepper has designed two Gansevoort properties already, one in the sun-drenched sands of Miami Beach and the other in Manhattan’s meatpacking district, her latest design work at the Gansevoort Park Avenue, which opened this past month, could be the most impressive incarnation of the brand to date. The tri-level rooftop bar and lounge, Plunge, is a pivotal element of the new



**ART SCENE:** The main bar at the Gansevoort Park Avenue features the photography of Deborah Anderson on the bar.

hotel, serving as a testament to one of New York City’s most illustrious streets, celebrating the sophistication, style and savvy of Park Avenue and the people thriving on its streets. “Different styles have to mix together,” says Pepper. “There are finance people but also fashion people—it’s how the uptown and downtown meld together, how the meat market meets Park Avenue.”

While the space is divided into different “rooms,” the three floors can be combined into one lavish space for private parties. The Red

Room is decidedly cozy, featuring warm hues and soft fabrics. Offsetting the cool gleam of the marble fireplace are red faux-leather tufted walls, cream leather banquettes and yellow velvet straight-back chairs. “The bistro mirrors in the antique glass frames mimic the fireplace,” says Pepper. “You can also look at people on the other side of the room. It’s a flirting device.”

The Blue Room is steeped in 1950s Vegas, featuring an amoeba-like cutout style ceiling, leather vinyl on the walls and banquettes,

a glinting blue glass column, wooden floors and zebra accent pillows for a playful pop of pattern. Deborah Anderson’s ethereal artwork of lithe floating woman is also featured prominently throughout the property, adding a sliver of sexiness to the décor.

The main space features an impressive backlit bar coupled with a wall of glass offering unobstructed views of the skyline while whimsical chandeliers, evoking delicate twigs, twinkle from the double-height ceiling. “Plunge really creates a scene at night,” says Pepper. “It has an aura of, ‘something is happening here and I need to find out.’”

—Katie Tandy

## WELL HUNG

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3-4 p.m. View from the Top  
4-4:45 p.m. How to De-stress a Hotel  
4-4:45 p.m. Strategies from Asset  
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5-6:30 p.m. Networking Reception

### **November 2**

8-9 a.m. Breakfast  
9:15-10:45 a.m. Special Servicer Panel  
10:45-11:15 a.m. Networking break  
11:15-12:15 p.m. Banker Panel  
11:15-12:15 p.m. How to keep cost savings in  
place on the upswing?  
12:30-1:30 p.m. Lunch with Keynote speaker  
Judith A. Canales  
1:45-2:45 p.m. Keeping Brand, Banker and  
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## bath trends

### HIGH STYLE

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This One&Only Reethi Rah Beach Villa bath is elevated for ocean views.

# Comfort, Not Modernity, Is The New Wave

Percentage wise, hotels split their efforts between room and bathroom approximately 50/50. Today's designs show that a bathroom can occupy up to almost a third of the space of the entire room.

"People want a luxurious bathroom in a hotel room," says Jan Clausen, principal and owner of Clausen-Chewning Interior Design. "With hotels you want the bathroom to be a little more grand than what you might have at home."

Among the trends in today's market, Clausen says that four- and five-fixture bathrooms rank high and that this trend is still a wave of the future. Incorporating natural light is also at the top of the trend list. Clausen recently completed a project at the Four Seasons Residences in Denver, where she was adamant about capitalizing on natural light.

"At the residences, we positioned the bathrooms so that the doors open to the bedroom so you

can always look at natural light and capture views of the mountains," she says. All of the residential bathrooms, whether they are the second or master bathroom, have natural light in them.

The aim in the resort world, especially in warmer climates, is to get rid of the division between indoor and outdoor, especially in terms of the bathroom. This includes outdoor showers and other outdoor bathing experiences so that guests can maximize on the natural environment.

Clausen has also worked on the bathrooms in the guest rooms at Mandarin Oriental, Miami and One&Only Reethi Rah in the Maldives.

"Cozy" is a term that is sure to be thrown around a lot more with bathroom design. "There is a subtle underlying movement away from the pure modernist idea and back to historical elements executed in a modern way," says Colum McCartan, principal of design firm McCartan. Big, open showers are on their way out, as they can often create a colder environment, however trendy they may look. "I have a feeling we'll be putting doors back on showers very soon."

Clausen agrees that this cozy model has been catching on for the last couple of years. "Especially in light of the economic downturn," she says, "people

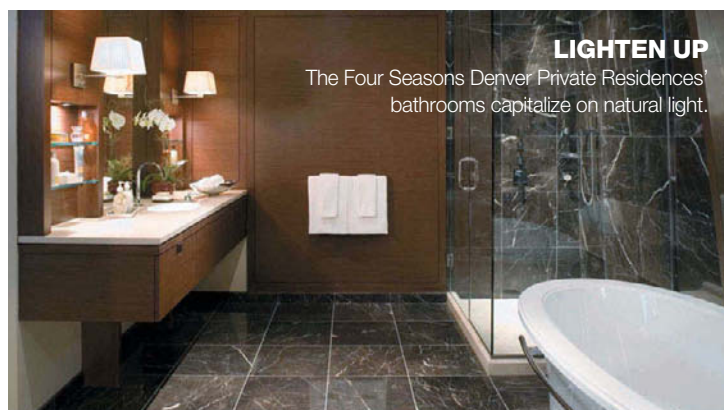
want to feel cozier."

The move away from the futuristic bathroom model translates to the fixtures, as well. "A lot of modern fixtures are so clean-line and pure than on first usage guests are a little unsure as to what lever does what. I anticipate a move back to a literal explanation as to the way things are designed," says McCartan.

Todd Weber, director of product public relations for Kohler Co., says that some of the most popular items ordered from Kohler are contemporary-styled products such as the single-lever faucets, toilets and sinks.

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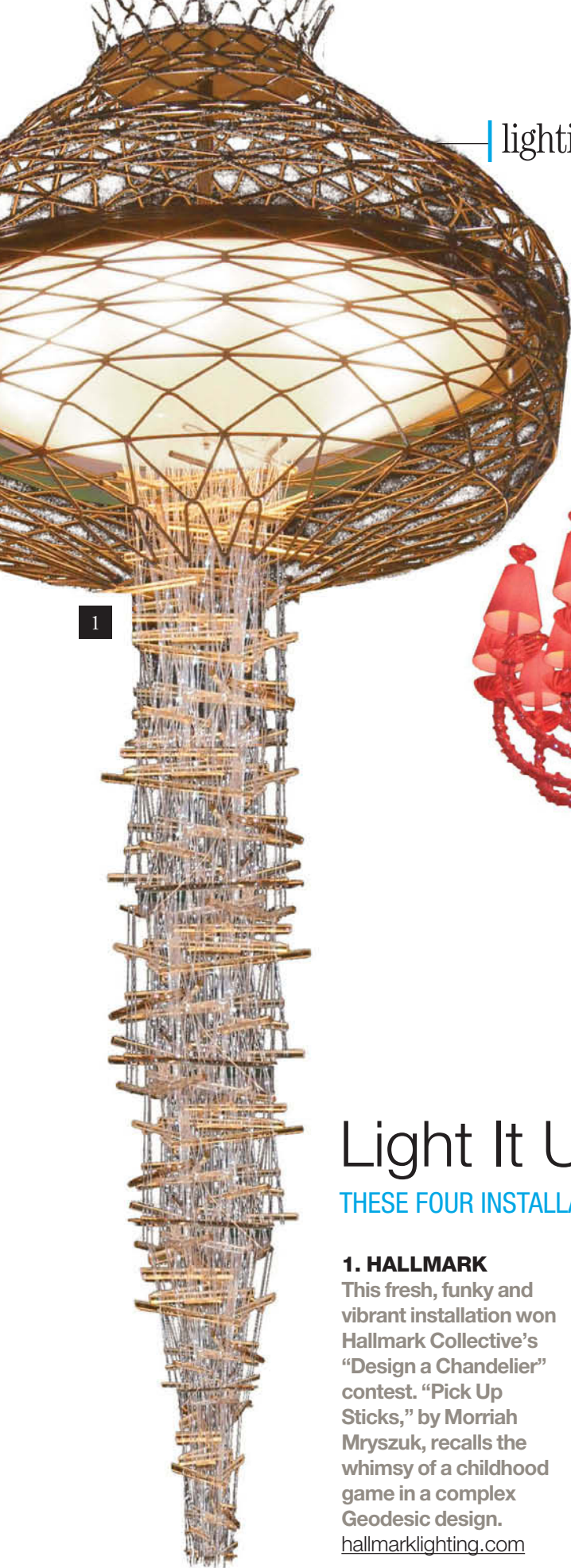
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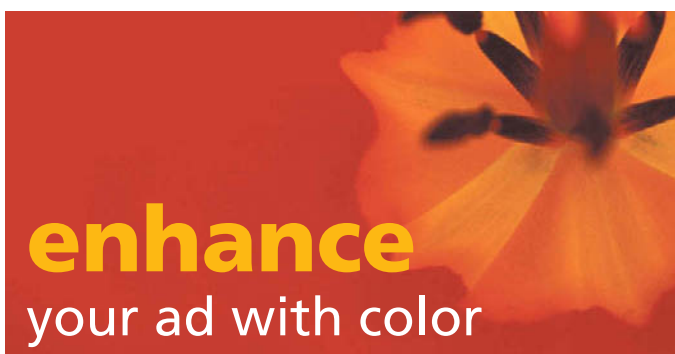


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Kathy Moran is an interior designer with Flick•Mars in Dallas and has been in the design industry for over two decades, working specifically in the hospitality sector for 16 years. Her portfolio is wide and diverse with projects including four- and five-star hotels with several different brands and restaurants and spas.

## Kathy Moran

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