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JAN/FEB 2010

Hotel Design

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High flier

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Branson brings
his innovations
to lodging

CityCenter design
process revealed

Andaz Wall Street
finds calm in urban chaos

Cozy up to fire elements





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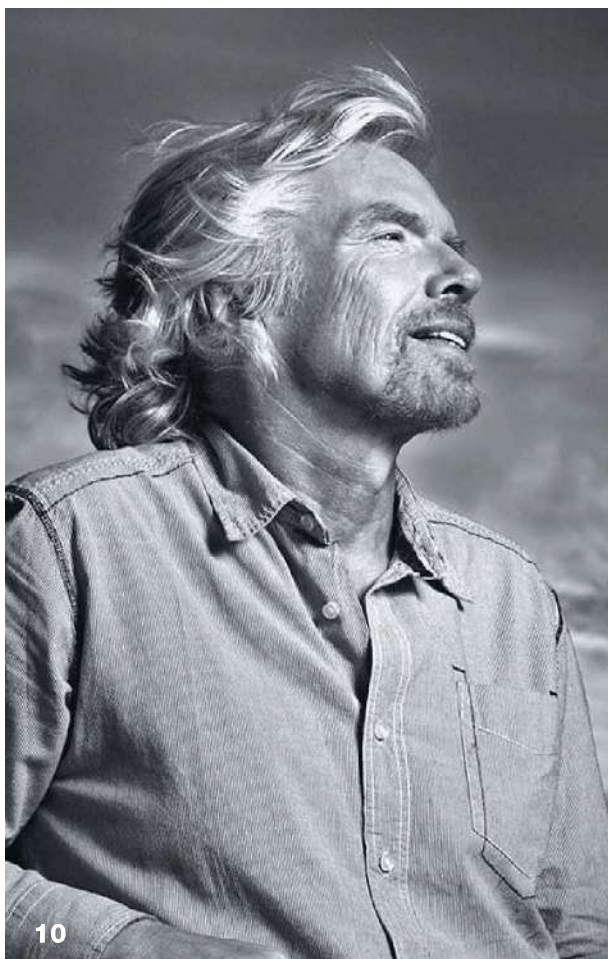
TRENDS, FASHION & INSPIRATION



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Learning from a tough year



Paul J. Heney

Editorial Director
pheney@questex.com

I'm going to stay positive in 2010 and say that our industry is on the upswing. But I think it's also instructive to look back a little and see how the financial difficulties have been transformative for the design industry.

Todd Lundgren, VP at RTKL Associates, says the economic downturn generally has led to a greater level of economy and efficiency—people want to get more and pay for less. As a result, the challenge for designers is providing that 'more' in creative, flexible and efficient ways.

"Increasingly, we're seeing 'design' become commodity-driven. Rather than being about design value, it's about how much, how many, and how I can cut costs," Lundgren says.

Brent Lynch, principal and EVP of HFS Concepts 4, says that due to the significant decrease in projects and the resulting staff reductions, the remaining staff members at a firm are required to do more than ever. And the crunch affects everything.

"Budget constraints are pushing us to develop new resources ... at lower costs," he says.

Don Harrier, business development/project manager and associate principal, HKS Hill Glazier Studio, says he's seen numerous top-flagged hotels and resorts taken back into receivership by lending institutions, due to unmet occupancies and lagging ADR.

"The lenders are not in the business of managing a portfolio of hotel assets and are often approaching any reasonable offer as a way out of

holding onto a distressed property. Developers are finding that the cost of purchasing existing properties is well below the cost of new, ground-up developments—and they often have established flags to support a new repositioning of the asset," he says.

Ilija Karlusic, design director and principal of HBA-Hong Kong, says hospitality design is always the part of construction that gets hit first—but he is staying positive.

Karlusic says: "It definitely has affected us in the sense that we don't have as many projects on hand ... we were experiencing a super boom, and we have now come down to more sane levels, where designers can take a little breather and totally immerse themselves in their designs and projects again. We are now in the early, early beginnings of a new upturn."

Looking ahead

2010 doesn't look to be a year of many new-builds or redesigns—in the U.S., at least. Some designers are shifting their focus overseas.

"Our focus will be on the demand generated from the renovation market," Lynch says. "In China, we continue to see new build projects and expect to experience continued success there."

Andrew Chiu, principal for DiLeonardo International, agrees that Asia definitely is going to be the hot market for designers, and China in particular.

"The Chinese government's stimulus plan took effect earlier this year and many projects have started back up again with new deals being signed every day," he says. "There will be more limited-service brands and economy brands opening throughout the country, while luxury brands continue to open up at prime sites in secondary and tertiary cities."

Budgets will continue to be strained as owners take a conservative approach to renovations. But better days are ahead. The multitude of distressed hotel properties on the market likely means that many hotels will change hands. New owners will plan repositionings. And that will mean more work for the firms that are the most innovative, flexible and efficient.

Enjoy the issue.

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editorial staff

Editorial Director / Paul J. Heney
(216) 706-3728 FAX (216) 706-3711 pheney@questex.com
Editor in Chief, H&MM magazine / Stephanie Ricca
(216) 706-3791 FAX (216) 706-3711 sricca@questex.com
Managing Editor / Victoria Burt
(216) 706-3743 FAX (216) 706-3711 vburt@questex.com
Senior Editor / Jason G. Freed
(216) 706-3727 FAX (216) 706-3711 jfreed@questex.com
Associate Editor / Chris Crowell
(216) 706-3783 FAX (216) 706-3711 corowell@questex.com
Art Director / Rob Ghosh
(216) 706-3788 FAX (216) 706-3711 rghosh@questex.com

advertising and sales staff

Publisher / Mary M. Malloy
(216) 706-3790 FAX (216) 706-3711 mmalloy@questex.com
Executive Director, Events / Stacy Silver
(954) 306-0747 FAX (954) 697-6265 ssilver@questex.com

digital media

Executive Director, Digital Media / Amy Coronato Osborn
(714) 338-6731 FAX (714) 338-6711 acoronato@questex.com

circulation, production

Senior Production Manager / Janelle Heller
(218) 279-8834 FAX (218) 279-8815 jheller@questex.com
Assistant Production Director / Jamie Kleist
(218) 279-8855 FAX (218) 279-8812 jkleist@questex.com
Director of Audience Development / Heidi Spangler
(216) 706-3705 FAX (216) 706-3714 hspangler@questex.com

lists, reprints, classifieds

Classifieds / Doug Kereschuri
(216) 706-3794 FAX (216) 706-3711 dkeresuri@questex.com
Classifieds Production Manager / Chris Anderson
(218) 279-8848 FAX (218) 279-8815 canderson@questex.com
Reprints / (800) 290-5460, ext. 100
holtdesign@theygsgroup.com
Permissions / (800) 494-9051 Ext 100
questexpermissions@theygsgroup.com
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(866) 344-1315 (847) 763-9594 FAX (847) 763-9594
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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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CIRCLE NO. 108

Swooshing into 2010



Mary Malloy

Publisher
mmalloy@questex.com

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We all enjoyed a reprieve from tradeshow and conferences to spend time with family and friends.

Over the holidays, I had a chance to visit the Swiss Alps. I spent time at the beautiful Verbier ski resort, where one of Sir Richard Branson's resorts resides—nestled in the picturesque mountains. All hotels in the Verbier area were brimming with activity and many had 100-percent occupancy over the holiday season.

Speaking of Sir Richard Branson, check out Editorial Director Paul Heney's exclusive interview with him on page 10. If you are not familiar with Virgin Limited Edition properties, please visit www.virginlimitededition.com.

Now that holiday relaxation is over, conference and tradeshow season has begun again. It was exciting to see the innovations coming out of this year's Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, where 2,500 exhibitors showcased more than 20,000 products.

Our Paul Heney saw many of you at the inaugural InspireDesign show in Las Vegas. Check out photos from that event and more on our new Meet & Greet photo page, on page 8 in this issue.

Over the holidays there were some big openings to speak of, primarily CityCenter in Las Vegas. Starting on page 36, we take you through the design process there from start to finish. Most recently, it's been exciting to see Marty Collins open the W Hollywood hotel. It is opening



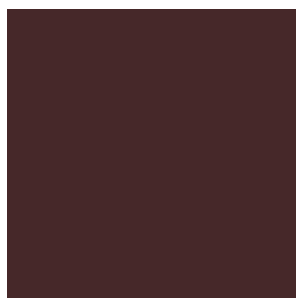
SNOW-COVERED MOUNTAINS are the centerpiece at Verbier ski resort, which was buzzing over the holidays, with most hotels boasting 100-percent occupancy.

just in time for awards season in Tinseltown!

So what's new at HOTEL DESIGN in 2010? We have exciting content to offer you in the coming

months, as well as more products and projects to inspire.

Keep in touch, and as always, stay tuned to www.HotelWorldNetwork.com/hotel-design.



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meet & greet



1



2



3



5



4

Seventeenth annual L.A. holiday party

1. Francie Kelly, Paragone Art Gallery; Andy Nelli, AND 2. Keith Stibler, Grupo Kettal; Mitch Zerg, Mitch Zerg & Associates; and Carlos Alfaro, Grupo Kettal 3. DeeDee Hogan, RJF; Sari Polinger, Sari Polinger Associates; Mitch Zerg, MZA; Kathy Stein, Mohawk Industries 4. Steve Higgins, Canoe Hospitality; Jen Mazziotta, Cheryl Rowley Design; Emily Zimmerman, Cheryl Rowley Design; Erin Kendrew, Cheryl Rowley Design 5. Steve Mittman, EF+LM; Kirk Nix, KNA; Ken Schindler, Walters Wicker; Mary Kay Spears, Arcform Design.

Inspire Design in Las Vegas

1. Gary Cawn, senior associate, Gensler of Nevada 2. Fred Melloy, national contract sale manager, east, Flexsteel 3. D.B. Kim, principal, D.B. Kim; Paul Heney 4. Ronnie Hodge, founder, Dimension Millworks.



1



2



3



4



1



2

Shady Lady showroom ribbon-cutting

1. Lee Hershburg, VP accessories leasing, IHFC; Megan Gardner, marketing assistant, Shady Lady; Michael Payne, president, Michael Payne, Inc.; Susie Morter, president, Shady Lady; Tom Loney, EVP leasing, IHFC; Randy Mullinax, International & US sales director, Shady Lady; 2. Susie Morter; Michael Payne.

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Sir Richard Branson has the same approach toward hospitality as he has toward the airline industry, where he has been a great innovator: Have fun doing it.

“There is no point in being in business if it is not fun—and both industries have brought me immense pleasure over the years; in return I hope to have brought fun to our customers,” Branson says. “In 1984, my dream was to set up an airline that was better than the competition, providing a better quality and value of service. This has not only been fun, but also it has been very satisfying. ... [In] purchasing retreats under the Virgin Limited Edition arm of Virgin ... my main objective is the same—providing an amazing experience for the customer.”

Highflier

Sir Richard Branson brings his innovations to lodging

By Paul J. Heney, Editorial Director



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FRAMING NATURE and bring the outside in are two overriding design themes at Virgin Limited Edition's stunning Necker Island resort, set in the British Virgin Islands, top and left. Above, Jon Brown serves as managing director for the chain's six ultra-luxe properties.

Branson's foray into ultra-luxe resorts, Virgin Limited Edition, now boasts six properties situated in fabulous locations ranging from the Caribbean to Morocco, from London to the Swiss Alps.

Branson, who says he endeavors to take 10- to 15-minute catnaps during the day to keep fresh, feels that challenges are nothing new to him.

"I've had a lot of challenges in my life—from boats and balloons—to starting an airline," he says. "I started in business at the age of 16, so I have never known any other kind of life—getting used to taking risks so early has meant I handle most challenges pretty well."

Ask others about the man Branson is, and you're likely to hear he's down to earth and that he thinks like a customer does.

Richard Millard, chairman and CEO of Desires Hotels, said Branson has a lot to bring to the hotel industry.

"Most people who have been in

the hotel business a long time will tell you all the reasons why they can't do something," Millard says. "He brings a 'why not?' and very much a customer's eye perspective."

Millard says when Branson comes into a new industry, he sees all the things that are wrong with it and isn't afraid to ask "Why does it have to be like this?"

"I think he brings a different perspective as to what customers in today's world are looking for because he's one of them," Millard says.

Point man

One commonality you'll find among world-class managers is that they know how to find the best talent and keep them on board. Branson is no different in this regard.

"I guess my best leadership quality is listening to others... listen to those around you, trust in them, believe in them and respect them," Branson says.

And the man at the top of Bran-

son's hotel brand is Jon Brown, the managing director of Virgin Limited Edition. Brown joined Virgin in 1998, leaving for a year to serve as managing director of La Residencia in Mallorca before returning to Virgin Hotels in late 2001. Brown has a wide range of hospitality experience, including management positions at Arcadian and Friendly Hotels.

Brown's design aesthetic is decidedly focused on the locale, steering away from any theme that could be easily categorized.

"It is totally dependent on the location of the property and the blending of local and indigenous style and culture with luxury and comfort," he says.

Brown feels the concept of boutique is overdone and that the design community is in danger of taking over the soul of a hotel room by trying too hard to be funky and cool.

"Achieving soul in a hotel room is probably the biggest challenge to any hotel designer," Brown says.

"However, I do feel that hotel design is becoming more adaptive to its location."

Given Virgin Limited Edition's position at the upper portion of the luxury segment, it would be simple to think they've been affected by the supposed luxury backlash that has been widely reported in the U.S. media. But Brown feels the idea is overblown.

"A backlash suggests that there is a resistance toward the luxury market, and I think although it is definitely tough, there is still huge demand for this segment. People still get married and have honeymoons, anniversaries, birthdays and they want to celebrate, and I don't feel this will ever go away," he says. "In the long term, the corporate segment will think a lot more carefully with how it uses high profile luxury offerings and will be cautious as to how they are seen to be spending shareholder/stakeholder's money."

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REFINED ELEGANCE is displayed at each of Virgin Limited Edition's properties. Clockwise from upper left, Kasbah architecture and Moroccan sensibilities dominate Kasbah Tamadot; Makwela Suite at the Rock Lodge, Ususala; and bird's eye view of the stunning complex at Rock Lodge, Ususala.

Socially responsible

Brown says Branson established the "Virgin Aware" program as the company's answer to corporate social responsibility. Its goal is to create a policy that becomes part of each Virgin company's day-to-day work and responsibilities. Virgin Aware is diverse in its reach and covers supply chains and fair trade, ethical dealings with employees and customers, the local community and the environment.

"Realizing the importance of the ever-growing need for sustainable tourism, like Virgin Atlantic, we are committed to sustainable development and our responsibility toward the environment, in addition to helping the local communities in which we operate," Brown says. "This is very much

a work in progress and we've had some great successes."

Brown notes there are solar power and renewable energy initiatives across the hotel group. The Kasbah Tamadot property in Morocco was awarded the 'Most Socially Responsible Hotel' in 2008.

"It's a long journey, but at least we have started," he says.

Moving forward

It's unclear whether Branson—who famously likes to make splashes into new industries and shake things up—will move further into the hotel business. Rumors have



surfaced occasionally that he may do so on a wider scale than with Virgin Limited Edition. But officially, his focus is on developing a super eco-friendly island resort in the British Virgin Islands, within sight of his Necker Island resort.

Branson says his inspirations come from humanity.

"I'm always struck by how many people, from so many countries across the world, are doing inspirational things for the good of mankind—so I guess my inspiration comes from people, not necessarily industries. I am inspired each time I travel to a new place, experience a

new product and meet new people."

And Brown offers a related piece of advice for others in the hotel industry.

"Hoteliers should remember where they came from and have humility because it is people who matter in this business," he says.

Millard thinks Virgin will only continue upward in the future.

"They have an unbelievably fabulous culture," he said. "They have a fantastic brand, and I think if they went [further] into the hotel business, they would be an incredible asset to the industry."

■ The design of each Virgin Limited Edition property varies, based on its surroundings.

Necker Island, located in the British Virgin Islands, is a resort that encompasses the entire island. In addition to a great house, multiple Balinese-style houses are scattered around the island. The public spaces are full of rich woods

and take advantage of the stunning views with open-air designs as well as open floor plans. Elegant white fabrics are offset with bold colors that complement the rich hues of the Caribbean Sea.

Kasbah Tamadot, set in the mountains

south of Marrakech, Morocco, encompasses a warm Berber style, with rich golds and intense blues and reds throughout. Sumptuous fabrics and patterned tiles enhance the traditional Kasbah architecture.

Ususala, in South Africa, may be the perfect game reserve, with stunning rough-hewn wood

ceilings, animal print fabrics and traditional African art on the walls. An enormous fire feature in the lodge dining room features a flame-shaped opening and coarse stone outlining a larger flame.

The Lodge at Verbier, Switzerland, is a skiing getaway that plays off its muted colors well. Modern

furniture with clean lines abounds, and an emphasis in the rooms is on a homey comfort.

The Roof Gardens in London, with an emphasis on events, has amazing landscaping and eye-popping colors and modern designs that might make a boutique lobby blush. The emphasis is on simple lines,

eye-catching patterns and textiles and elegance.

Sa Terra Rotja, Spain, has a light, clean look, with Mediterranean-inspired bedrooms and traditional stone architecture. Furnishings are traditional, yet comfortable. Many rooms have French doors that open to reveal the hills and sea beyond.



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Panasonic ideas for life

Simple ways to create a high-tech guestroom

In my experience, when you get down to it, guests are looking for a room that is comfortable, looks like a guestroom rather than a command station and provides a suitable environment for working and entertainment.

How high tech do you really need to be to meet the ever-evolving demands of the guest? It isn't necessary to go extremes in order to make guests happy and eager to return.

There are really three essential categories of technology to address in the guestroom: connectivity, entertainment and creature comforts.

Connectivity

Today, guests travel with smart phones, laptops, MP3 players, cameras, camcorders, razors, electric toothbrushes, etc. that all require charging overnight. Providing multiple, easily accessible electrical outlets has become a necessity and should be common practice.

While this is not particularly high-tech, it may be one of the more expensive propositions in a guestroom renovation.

Outlets should be placed above desks and above nightstands for easy access. Every project we do now has a connectivity panel built into the desk. We spend time on the design of these panels to ensure that plugs are spaced far enough apart to accommodate multiple chargers.

The second most important requirement for a guest is high-speed Internet access, both secure and



Cheryl Rowley
Cheryl Rowley Design
cherylrowleydesign.com

wireless. It's not enough to offer guests wireless connections in the lobby or in a specific hotspot in the

hotel. Travelers demand wireless in guestrooms today. And, dare I say it, *free* wireless connectivity is expected. Guests do not want to pay for this feature. They want flexibility in the guestroom to work in bed or on their terrace.

Entertainment

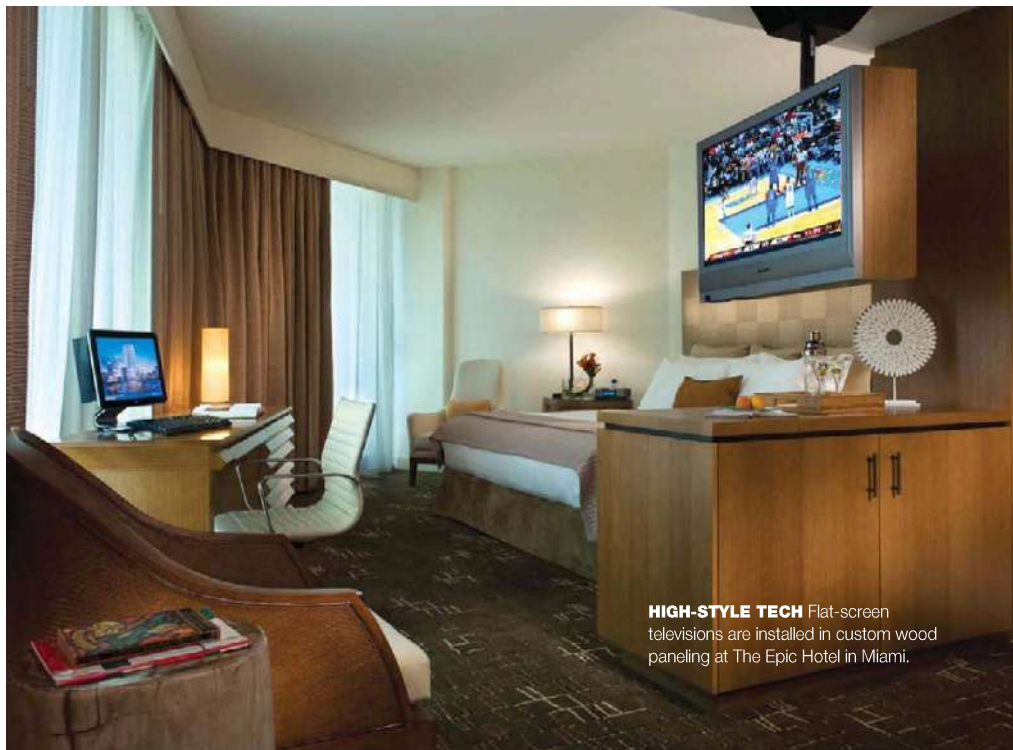
You cannot call your hotel high-tech without a flat-panel TV. The most common placement is on top of a cabinet. This has many advantages, including less sound transfer between rooms, no requirement for additional blocking in the walls to carry the weight of the bracket and

screen and no need to move electrical and TV and data connections up higher in the wall.

These cabinets have typically taken the place of the ubiquitous and bulky armoire that always seemed to dominate the room. The cabinets house dresser drawers, mini-bars, DVD players and sometimes provide the location for the connectivity panel.

A more custom installation would include mounting the flat screen on a wall.

At The Epic Hotel in Miami we used a wood paneling feature to achieve a more finished and



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technology trends

expensive look.

You could also consider concealing the flat screen behind artwork that retracts to reveal the screen or behind a decorative mirror that completely disguises the screen until the TV is actually turned on.

Guests want more than just the ability to watch network or cable TV, though. They want to watch programming they bring from home or from the hotel's lending library. This can be accomplished through the simple installation of a DVD player in the cabinet below the flat-screen TV or via a connectivity panel that allows guests to connect and run their laptops or media players directly through the TV.

Creature comforts

While high-tech concepts usually

bring electronics to mind, systems that address a guest's creature comforts also enhance the high-tech experience. Guestroom lighting can be as simple as providing enough of it—though this has become an issue with the imposition of fluorescent technology.

There is nothing worse than a guestroom that is under-lit with flat, cold, dull light from fluorescent bulbs. Another problem is not enough light in the bathroom.

During the renovation of the Hotel Sofitel in Los Angeles, we solved this problem by installing glass panels between the guestroom and bath that transform from opaque to translucent with a flip of the switch. They let daylight penetrate into the bathroom and allow views from the bath out into the



PLUG IN Outlets built in to the desk accommodate multiple chargers.

room and beyond.

We are introducing white LEDs in reading lights and in decorative lamps in an effort to balance the cool light of fluorescents. While LED lighting is more expensive, it is remarkably efficient and long-lasting and provides a more brilliant light source.

But, the ultimate high-tech introduction to address guest comfort is automated control technology. With a single remote, guests can control draperies, lighting, room temperature, in-room privacy, music and video systems. Because a small bedside device controls this system,

it is discreet and only requires a nightstand large enough to accommodate it.

No matter what the technology, no matter how cutting-edge, no matter how expensive, if your guest can't use it, it's worthless.

It's worse than worthless: it's damaging.

The important thing to remember about technology, like any other aspect of hospitality design, is that it's part of a larger picture. And that picture is creating a great guest experience. Give them a beautiful room with technology that works and they will return.



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Tune out, plug in and power up

We are nomads. Time poverty and a desire to remain near, while far away, has transformed us into beings that need mobile devices and the Internet to do most of the things we love.

We carry with us a newfound need for accessibility, be it while we are in the boardroom or in the bathtub.

Hospitality bathrooms are as important for rejuvenating guests as the beds that are chosen for the guestrooms.

A bathroom should meet the needs of the traveler but also include amenities the traveler



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doesn't experience even in the luxury of their own homes.

Size matters, and in my travels I see that hospitality spaces are

embracing the bathroom as an extension of the guestroom. Tubs float in the middle of guest suites, and glass walls separate sleeping and bathing areas.

The bathroom now, more than ever, is seen as an integral part of the hospitality experience, be it a business trip or a romantic weekend away.

Anyone can sing along to the radio in their shower at home, but when the day is through, slipping into a bathtub outfitted with a flat screen and amazing speakers can't be beat.

A concealed TV monitor hidden in a vanity mirror, or a waterproof iPod hub for the shower are

unexpected joys for wearied travelers and weekend warriors.

New innovations like chroma-therapeutic soaking tubs calm the mind and soul as guests choose the color of the light that's cast into the water of their rumbling whirlpools.

The inclusion of outlets into headboards and workspaces is standard practice in many hospitality guestroom designs and incorporating this into the bathroom vanity is just as important.

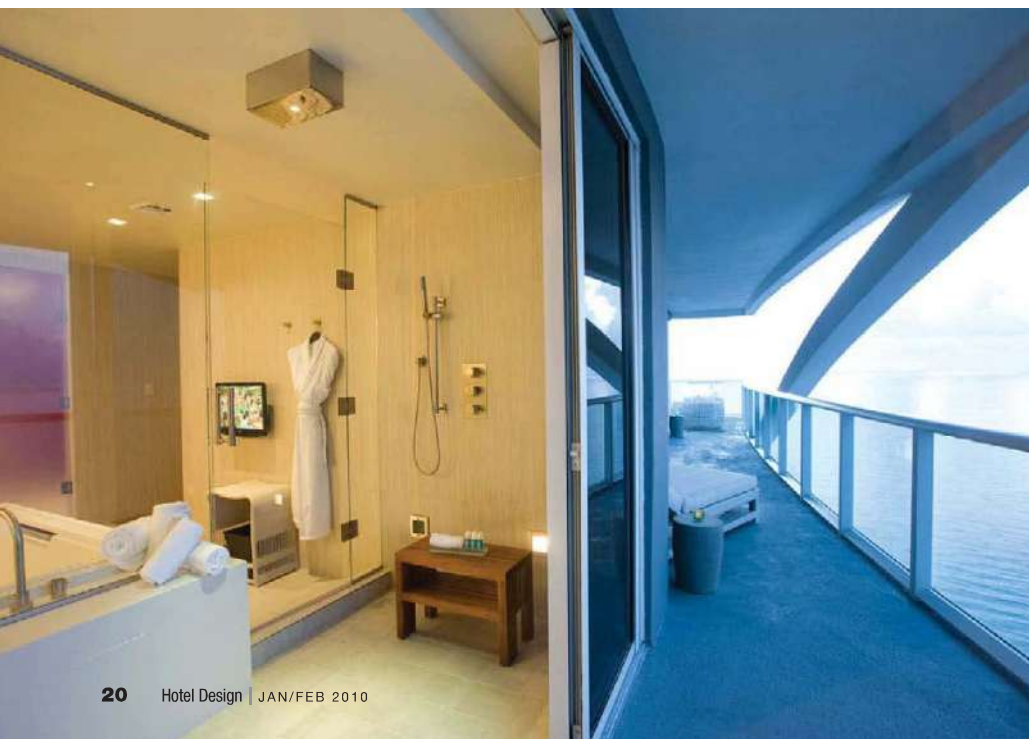
Guests crave the ability to plug in their mobile devices and laptops in order to play music, write home or listen to the news while they prepare for their day.

Open storage space is incredibly useful, and ample counter space to spread out makeup, shaving kits and other tools allows the bathroom to become a functional space.

Never underestimate lighting.

When you're in the bathroom you shouldn't see light but instead "feel" it. The ability to find the smallest hair or turn lights low as you slip into a bubble bath after a long day should always be considered. Systems are now available that let guests change television channels, lighting and volume within the space through one main device that can be carried from room to room.

HIDDEN TECH The baths in the presidential suites at the W Fort Lauderdale feature soaking tubs with lights that change color for therapeutic relaxation and television monitors for total entertainment.



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CIRCLE 211



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