

# FOCUS

# Hotels

## The latest on **hotel design**

Hotels are constantly evolving as demand fluctuates between guests' needs for to-the-point, business travel to intimate, eclectic spaces and ultra-luxury. Each type of hotel requires certain design features that fit the guests' requirements and budgets, evoke the desired mood and above all, provide comfort

“The industry has certainly changed and evolved and new trends have emerged based on the customer needs and expectations,” says Najee Syriani, associate vice-president – projects, Rotana. Rotana is a leading hotel management company in the Middle East and North Africa, and has recently announced its expansion plans, which involve growing its portfolio to 70 properties by 2014.

Najee tells Gulf Interiors about current trends: “New trends include sustainable developments. Sustainability is the future and is certainly a unique selling point for the hotel once operating. This matter has been adopted by management companies, who are enforcing green standards into their minimum brand specifications.”

“Also, there is an increase of ‘design hotels’ or ‘lifestyle hotels’ known as boutique hotels which are fast entering the Middle East market,” Najee adds.

Boutique hotels have definitely become de rigueur in recent years and with their growing popularity a generic version may have emerged, which defeats the original point of creating one-off spaces with individualised design concepts.

US-based interior design expert Elaine Williamson breaks it down: “Boutique is simply a concept of a personal, cosy, service-oriented hotel. Because these boutique hotels have been so successful, larger developments are now catching the wave.” Elaine explains that in the case of bigger hospitality developments, they will typically compartmentalise the property into several smaller spaces, adding that as luxury prevails in the marketplace, hotels



will need to be more and more creative in pleasing their clientele.

"I feel the current trend in boutique hotels stems from their guests' home. If it is attainable in the home, we should surely make certain their rooms are equipped with luxury, luxury, luxury," she enthuses.

"There is a new trend emerging in the form of leaving a gift for the guests in their room; sort of a parting favour and thank-you for staying, much like at a smaller bed and breakfast. At the end of the day, after all luxuries have been specified and

installed, the guest's experience falls squarely on service."

**“For traditionalists, there will be some new interpretations of time-honoured patterns – comfort food for the eyes.”**  
– Jeffrey Ornstein

### Business travel on a budget

"Finally, there is huge demand for business travel and accommodation for the budget-conscious executive, however, it remains grossly under-served, especially in the MENA region. This is why Rotana launched Centro Hotels by Rotana back in 2006, which is modern, stylish and affordable business hotel brand," says Najee.

Conceived by Rotana and designed by LWD, Centro Hotels by Rotana signals the start of a bold new genre of hospitality. It is young and fresh, like the new breed of executive travellers, and Centro provides a contemporary design concept that is original and dynamic, and far from the mechanical and staid designs we'd come to expect from business hotels.

Guest rooms in the Centro Hotels by Rotana have been designed to be expansive; great care has been taken to optimise the room configuration and style – special features include the functionality and the ergonomics of each item of furniture, innovatively styled bathrooms and the strategic placement of room lighting and controls.

**“Technological innovations in the hotel rooms themselves have some catching up to do. The lobbies, however, are full of high-end and high-tech materials, including lit floors, the latest in water innovation, a veritable feast for the eyes!”**

– Elaine Williamson

"We first pinpointed the essential requirements of today's young business and leisure travellers, who seek both style and finesses, yet at affordable rates – subsequently we improved upon the services and the physical product (the design) required catering to these requirements, against an international set of benchmarks," Najee explains.

### Stay in fashion

International design houses have taken their style from the catwalks to hotels, with names such as Armani and Missoni entering the hospitality arena in the Middle East.

"Fashion now drives hotel concepts and design and the memorable hotels of the 2010 decade will be regarded for sexy sophistication, daring interiors and mood-evoking colours," comments Jeffrey Ornstein, CEO J/Brice Design International, Inc.

The firm is establishing a unique brand identity for the luxury hotel sector in the Middle East with projects that include the Hotel Khalifa in Doha and the Al-Khobar Hotel and Towers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. J/Brice has also won commissions by top hotel groups including Marriott International, Hilton Hotel Corp., Starwood Hotels, Trump International, Intercontinental, Hyatt and TAJ Hotels, among others.

Speaking at the Concepts Middle East 2010 Congress in Doha, Qatar Jeffrey urged hotel industry leaders: "Ban the term hotel design and replace it with hotel fashion. Design is too much about buildings. Fashion places all the focus on the guests' and their social and cultural imperatives. Fashion creates guest experiences that resonate with today's traveller. The great hotels of our decade will be created by fashion savvy cultural spies who can read the waves of change."

Looking at specific design elements he explained that colour trends to watch are bold reds and pure yellows, moss greens and lavender – especially in upholstery. For contrast, expect to see more charcoal gray. "Textures will create excitement

### The take on technology

According to Jeffrey... "People are traveling lighter and for shorter durations. They demand the technology to keep in touch. That means reliable and free Wi-Fi and a panoply on satellite channels – if they cannot get World Cup soccer from Soweto starting June 11, your property will be remembered – badly.

Dramatic fixtures are still in, but not at the expense of light quality and variability. Smart owners and designers are turning to more energy-saving LED lamps. On all fronts, the latest green technology counts more than ever before in this decade. You cannot get by on stingy flow restrictors and low-flow toilets, when new eco-friendly plumbing technology exists to deliver guest comfort and conservation. Incorporate green technology into the environment and the guests will reward you by coming back.

Everywhere you go, ask yourself, 'how can I apply this technology or that technology to my property?' For example, flat screen TVs are so thin they can be incorporated into the vanity mirror. It adds 'wow' factor and encourages the guest to own the experience."

and fabrics as delicate as lingerie will be juxtaposed with metallics – including steel to excite the guests' senses."

The big no-nos are "pock marked ceilings" – treat the ceiling as you would any other design surface. There is no excuse for ugly utilitarian grab bars and other universal design elements either. Sophisticated alternatives abound as baby boomers grow older and the spa-as-sanctuary trend expands.



Najee Syriani, associate vice-president – projects, Rotana



Jeffrey Ornstein, CEO J/Brice Design International, Inc

# A FOCUS ON DESIGN

The Hotel Show 2010

While you're at The Hotel Show this month Gulf Interiors has some suggestions about the must-sees of the three-day exhibition.

## Interiors and design

"Design is one of the key aspects to The Hotel Show, as buyers and developers seek out the latest trends and innovations for their projects," says Ray Tinston, The Hotel Show sales director.

"With 35 percent of last year's exhibitors stating that interiors and design was their main area of interest, we expect it to be another popular sector this year," Tinston continues.

## Highlights

Oliver Kessler Design will have the world premier of its RAIN3 indoor fountain at the show. The water feature is set inside a cube, which can be colour customised and boasts illuminated plexiglass rods that form an image of falling rain.

Zubair Furnishing has fitted out properties for a number of international hotel chains, including Hilton, Ritz-Carlton and Marriott. The contract furnishing company specialises in custom-made casegoods, joinery and upholstery for hotels and serviced apartments.

## The Resort Experience

The Resort Experience is a fresh feature of the exhibition, and with the spa an essential feature of any hotel worth its (bath) salt designers can look forward to the latest developments in these indulgent spaces.

You can look forward to the Lemi Group launching its latest wellness and spa products that aim to turn spas into exclusive and profitable spaces through their new design and functionality.

Barr + Wray is a leading provider of spa and pool engineering solutions and ideas for



▲ Wonderful wood – Barr and Wray steam room

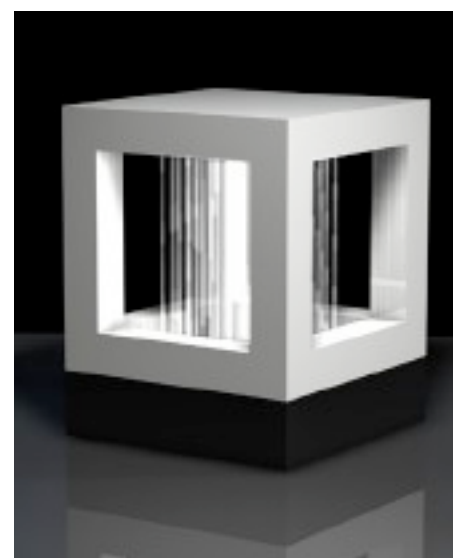
water and thermal experiences. The company provides cutting edge concepts, schematic and detailed designs for wet areas in hotels, day spas and fitness centres.

Barr + Wray's skills in spa engineering are complemented by a German partner; a leading manufacturer of saunas, ceramic steam rooms and a wide range of other spa thermal experiences and wet treatment equipment. B+W have worked on projects in the UK, Europe, Middle East, Africa, Asia and the US.

Also, check out Nakkash Gallery who has had a consistent presence at the exhibition, showcasing a comprehensive variety of furniture (indoor and outdoor) for clients and designers seeking high-quality items and diverse interior design pieces.

Nakkash Gallery stocks the best-of-the-best brands of outdoor furniture with unique design, quality materials and easy-maintenance benefits. In the UAE Nakkash Gallery distributes, among others; Royal Botania, Rausch Classics, Kenkoon, Tuuci, Gervasoni, De Castelli and Fendi outdoor.

The company has had a strong presence in the hospitality market for more than three decades, and is definitely a must-visit at every year's Hotel Show. Visit them at The Resort Experience, World Trade Centre Hall 7 Stand A301, B301, and A291.



▲ RAIN3 indoor fountain



▲ Lemi Group is all about design and functionality

# The super chic Hotel Missoni Kuwait

Hotels have become the natural brand extension for a number of the world's top fashion houses, and one of the most exciting fashion brands currently lending their name to hotel design is Missoni. The Italian studio, known for its vibrantly coloured patterned fabrics, is set to launch Hotel Missoni Kuwait, the second of the branded properties after Edinburgh.

Renowned Greek architects Dino Georgiou & Partners brought their expertise to the development, while the initial interior consultation was done by Matteo Thun and Studio Thun – the name behind numerous high-profile architecture, interior and product designs for Hugo Boss, Alessi, Movenpick, Porsche

Design and even KFC.

The development combines the distinctive style of the iconic Italian fashion and interiors house with the expertise of The Rezidor Hotel Group. Hotel Missoni is designed to give guests "a true taste of the Missoni way of life." The interior design is visually stimulating with colours bursting off walls, chairs and bed linens. It is super chic without taking itself too seriously.

## The décor

Designed by creative director, Rosita Missoni (one of the original founders of Missoni along with her husband) the interiors of Hotel Missoni are bold, richly patterned and alive with colour. Each Hotel Missoni is





reflective of its location and Rosita has found inspiration in the brilliant blues and sparkling beaches of the Arabian Gulf. The interiors of Hotel Missoni Kuwait have a palette of gold, turquoise and beige combined with those unmistakable Missoni prints.

Arranged over the 18 floors of the property, guests will discover iconic pieces of design, some of which Rosita has in her own home, such as Hans J Wegner's Wishbone Chair. The will also include large mosaic urns, which will become something of a Hotel Missoni trademark. Every Hotel Missoni will feature these over-sized urns decorated in the colour scheme of the individual property.

Hotel Missoni Kuwait offers 169 rooms and suites, all of which have stunning views of the Arabian Gulf. The 106 rooms continue the palette of gold, turquoise

and beige seen throughout the property and are accented with bold, emphatic patterning. Combining form and function, the accommodation has been carefully designed to meet the needs of today's modern travellers with linens chosen from the Missoni home range.

Each guest room has an ensuite bathroom that showcases Italian design. Bathrooms feature washbasin, toilets and either a generous bath or a shower with a bench seat, rain shower and handheld shower. Amenities have been specially created for Hotel Missoni and scented using a Missoni fragrance.

In addition to the guest rooms, there will be 63 suites ranging in size from 75 sq m to the 312-sq m Presidential Suite that also boasts a 90 sq m outside terrace.

Hotel Missoni represents a new standard of design hotel that combines the style of the iconic fashion and interiors label with the expertise of one of the world's leading hotel operators. Spearheaded by Hotel Missoni creative director, Rosita Missoni and Rezidor executive vice-president of brands, Gordon McKinnon, the partnership is creating a distinctive blend of fashion, function, form and service that adds up to a new genre of genuinely 'new luxury' lifestyle hotels.

Hotel Missoni Kuwait, located in Salmiya, is set to open in October this year, and Missoni aims to augment its portfolio with several hotels opened or in the pipeline over the next ten years. Through the worldwide licence agreement concluded with Missoni, Rezidor's strategy is to grow the Hotel Missoni brand globally, looking at both city-centre and resort opportunities. The initial focus will be towards Europe and the Middle East but will quickly expand to include other markets such as North and South America and Asia. We can't wait to see them.



# French flair attracts Middle Eastern visitors



The Dorchester Collection believes its hospitality offerings fit the bill when it comes to satisfying the desire for distinguished, fashionable spaces that make guests feel they've landed in the ultimate place to be. The current portfolio of iconic hotels reads like a star-studded cast, it includes The Dorchester in London, The Beverly Hills Hotel in Beverly Hills, Le Meurice and Hotel Plaza Athénée in Paris, the Hotel Principe di Savoia in Milan, The New York Palace in New York and the Hotel Bel-Air in Los Angeles.

And the collection keeps growing. The impressive portfolio will welcome the 70-room country house hotel – Coworth Park – near Ascot and bordering on Windsor Great Park, in summer this year. While the ninth addition: 45 Park Lane, a new 46-room hotel in the heart of London's Mayfair is set to open in January 2011.

Speaking on a recent tour of the region, Dorchester Collection CEO, Francois Delahaye said: "The Middle East is a very significant market for all our hotels, indeed for Le Meurice and Plaza Athénée in Paris and The Dorchester in London the Middle East represents almost 20 percent of our business."

The hotels' interiors are designed for intimacy and privacy, which Francois says

Hotel guests in the Middle East really have a pick of the best; the region boasts some of the most architecturally and aesthetically distinctive hospitality developments in the world and luxury is on top of the priority list. So when these indulgent travellers venture off the Arabian shores which locations met the exacting standards they have become accustomed to back home?

appeals to clients from the region: "We have a great offering for our Middle East clients who really want to be connected at the Meurice, or in all our hotels, we have a large number of rooms that can be connected and people don't have to go in to the corridors."

## Le Meurice meets Starck

The hotel restaurant – Le Dali – at Dorchester Collection's Le Meurice in Paris was renovated by the legendary Philippe Starck. Franka Holtman explains that the design concept incorporates a reproduction of the Salle de la Paix in Versailles. "So it's really authentic, but just renovated with Starck to make the ambience a little bit lighter." The marble and mosaic are lifted through the use of some very light fabrics and curtains.

Salvador Dali frequented the hotel for

over thirty years and Starck was tasked with adding surrealist winks in homage to the hotel's past. Starck designed over 600 pieces of furniture for the eatery. The masterpiece is a screen painted by Starck's daughter – Ara – in the style of the Chigall ceiling in the Paris Opera. The canvas warms the space and brings the past and present together in the interior.

"It's a mixture of humour and glamour," comments Franka. The interiors throughout the hotel maintain the classic French design elements, in a style reminiscent of

the Louis XVI, but coupled with modern nuances that keep it contemporary.

Although firmly focused on creating an elegant and refined space,

Franka and Francois

add that they didn't want the interior to seem like a museum, but rather to encourage conversation, good humour and enjoyment. **BT**

**“ It is essential that we keep the individuality of the location, and this is really the motto of our company – Francois Delahaye ”**



Le Meurice Restaurant Le Dali (credit Peter Hebeisen)