

BOUTIQUE design

HOSPITALITY REINVENTED

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SEASONED AND SENSATIONAL



THE 12TH ANNUAL BOUTIQUE 18 HONOREES INTERMIX
EXPERIENCE WITH CUTTING-EDGE CREATIVITY

■ IN THIS ISSUE



MARCEL WANDERS

PRODUCT AND INTERIOR DESIGNER, AND ART DIRECTOR | MARCEL WANDERS

WANDERS HAS MASTERED the art of illusion. The overtly escapist, slightly surreal world of his hotels gives no hint of the meticulous behind-the-scenes planning that Wanders puts his projects through. Since opening his studio in 1995, he's redefined the aesthetic of everything from hotels such as Andaz Prinsengracht Amsterdam and Kameha Grand Zurich to products such as the Knotted Chair. For more on how Wanders veiled functionality in beauty in the Mondrian Doha, flip to "Limitless Luxe" on page 74.



MARGOT KRASOJEVIĆ

FOUNDER | MARGOT KRASOJEVIĆ ARCHITECTURE

KRASOJEVIĆ IS OUT to create buildings that change the world and protect the planet. Turn to "Rogue Ones" on page 92 to see how she did that for a ready-for-anything hotel in an earthquake zone in Italy. The architect and psychoanalyst's conceptual work runs the gamut, from a series of levees for the Mississippi River to a Canadian hydroelectric dam to a study for an emergency shelter for Doctors Without Borders in Sudan. She has also authored two books, "Spatial Pathology" and "Dynamics & De-Materialisation."



CARL ROSS

PRESIDENT AND CEO | CLEAR ON BLACK

ROSS HAS DEVELOPED a diagnostic assessment to evaluate all facets of a project—from culture and geography to spatial and budget constraints. He details that method in the Exit Interview on page 144. A couple of years ago, he took an equally analytic approach to rebranding the firm that then bore his name. "We knew the past was irrelevant, and I can't stand complacency," says the California-based designer. His firm has worked on such projects as the Hyatt Regency Maui in Hawaii; The Westin Los Angeles Airport in California; the Hyatt Centric-Park City in Utah; and the Huntsman Lodge Resort in Driggs, Idaho.

EXIT interview



CLEAR THINKER

Having decades of design experience is no excuse to rest on your laurels. Just ask Carl Ross. Following a radical rebranding, his California firm is out to redefine luxury.

INTERVIEW BY CHRISTINA GREEN

CARL ROSS REFUSES to accept the status quo. After nearly 20 years as president/ceo of his eponymous interior architectural design firm, he and his long-time business partner and wife Dolly rebranded the El Segundo, California-based company as Clear on Black, a moniker that reflects the notion of bringing the unknown to light. “What we learned is that we really had evolved quite a lot and our image didn’t begin to convey who we’d become as designers—or as people,” says Ross. “Had we not undergone a rigorous introspection, we wouldn’t have had this level of clarity.”

That type of analysis is key to Ross’s empirical approach. Over the years, he’s developed a diagnostic assessment to explore the full range of constraints and variables that influence each hospitality project. “We look at all of this independently so we can openly and honestly identify what quandaries need to be solved,” he explains. “No offense to clients, but the presenting problem they give us isn’t always the true problem. It’s no different than me walking into my doctor’s office and telling him how to fix my illness or prescribe the treatment I think I need. That’s why our diagnostic method is so valuable. Some issues will be solved by our team and some will be solved by other consultants. But we’ve got to have a holistic understanding of the project if we’re going to do our best work.”

For more words of wisdom from Ross, read on.

WHAT’S THE HOTTEST SPOT ON YOUR DESIGN RADAR?

Luxury. Why is it expected that luxury equals the use of materials that are becoming extinct? Luxury encourages the consumption of marble from mountains mined and flattened until they are no more and the deforestation of old-growth forests, which causes the loss of entire ecosystems.

Our company’s focused market niches are upscale and luxury, and I would like us to redefine this class of design so that the expectation isn’t about precious stone columns and exotic veneers—resources that are finite and are in need of preservation. Can we foster design that doesn’t contribute to the relentless chase of opulent materials that can never be regenerated?

“AUTHENTICITY” IS A BUZZ WORD WE SEE TIME AND AGAIN. HOW CAN DESIGNERS CREATE A LOOK THAT FEELS GENUINE?

Everyone who interacts with built space strives to make sense of it, regardless of their station in life or their education level. Humans want to feel good. I believe that for a space to be successful, there needs to be an intuitive understanding of it. It shouldn’t need a written narrative or a soliloquy from a hotel staff member to give it meaning. I see how good design can transform lives—how a handmade mosaic telling the island’s folkloric story of creation can spark a sense of belonging. I also see how formulaic design can cause confusion and ruin a guest’s experience. Well-designed space speaks to our humanness.

This really hit home for me when I was standing in the lobby of a resort I’d designed and watched a family enter to check in. The little boy dropped his backpack and turned to his father to say, “It’s just like I pictured it, Dad!” For me, authenticity is considering all of the people who use a space—the guests, the child and his parents, the housekeeping staff, the valet, the director of engineering, the sales team, everyone. I believe that if it’s authentic, they’ll feel proud to be a part of it; they’ll take ownership. Then their care for the space will become self-generative. I don’t believe in creating a “story” because it’s not real. A deeper, truer meaning behind design creates a culture within a space or a property that’s far more significant to me than merely focusing on brand and story. I think culture is what brings a guest back again and again. ●