

# M

THE BUSINESS OF ACCOMMODATION IN ASIA

Vol 18. No.2  
Bi-monthly  
April 2014



**HM** Awards 2014 Presented by 

**Celebrating  
Australasia's best**  
Entries open in May  
for the 2014 HM Awards

# Mantra's CULTURE OF EQUALITY

How **MANTRA GROUP** is creating opportunities for its female workforce and establishing a culture of equality and diversity

**AHICE 2014**

What to expect at AHICE 2014  
in Melbourne on May 1

**The lifestyle rules**

Meet the brands and owners  
leading the lifestyle way

**Getting into beds**

HM uncovers the latest trends  
in beds and bedding



[LONDON]

**JACQUI KIRK**

Director, Dexter Moren Associates

As the world's most visited city in 2013 it's not hard to see why the London hotel scene is booming. And it's not only tourists flocking to the UK capital. Shangri-La and Gansevoort are just couple of international names making their first foray into the city and they're not sticking to convention.

Designers and Hoteliers are engaging guests in new and creative ways. Largely influenced by the individual designs set in motion by smaller independents, this model is now being adopted by the bigger hotel chains. Where once hotel groups focused on delivering sameness, predictable and consistent formats around the globe, in its place are hotels seeking to engage guests through creativity and originality, deploying the skills of designers and Hoteliers to become incubators for new ideas and ways of operating.

Delivering guests an individual and authentic experience starts by tapping into the neighbourhood story of a hotel, its locale and history. Our work for the new Hilton London Bankside exemplifies this approach. At Bankside, the design concept focuses on the site's ware-

house and industrial context. Exposed surfaces and layered textures are juxtaposed with contemporary artwork and furniture referencing both the site's heritage and as well newer establishments including the nearby Tate Modern gallery. Another project example is The Ampersand Hotel in South Kensington. Our design tells a story of connections between the Victorian history and museums of the local area using the key themes of botany, music, ornithology, geometry and astronomy.

The importance of connecting guests not only to the hotel itself but to one another and the locality in which they're staying is echoed in the thinking behind the hotel lobby. No longer a "waiting room" or "dead zone", hotel lobbies are fast becoming dynamic spaces acting as revenue generators in their own right. East London's Ace Hotel introduces a 16-seat communal work table in its lobby. Visible from street level it seeks to invite the local community in as well as hotel guests as a space to work or play. Citizen M has broken with tradition by abandoning the conventional reception desk in favour of using its lobby as a multi-event space and brand statement, much like that of a coffee house-style environment with informal meeting spaces and areas to relax and lounge.

Notably the growth in social media has made good design more acces-

sible than ever before. Guests today are informed, well-travelled and design savvy. The rise of social has had a huge effect on new creative brands stepping into the market with a focus on the tech generation. The likes of Generator Hostels, 25hours, Hoxton Hotels and Qbic are creating a new kind of design led hotel; not only are they offering somewhere to sleep but somewhere to connect.

Bringing in a signature chef is another way hotels are enhancing the guest experience. French brand Mama Shelter is a good example of how getting the food and design concept right can equate to financial wins for a hotel. Despite being positioned in a remote district in Paris, you'll still need to book ahead to get a mid-week dinner reservation.

Hotel interiors are also blurring design techniques typically found in other sectors such as retail and residential to become "neighbourhood assets". We're currently working with Hotel Indigo to create a "local deli" within the public areas. This food and beverage concept will be a multi-functional space giving residents of the area a place to meet and shop for locally sourced artisan produce whilst appealing to hotel guests allowing them to experience a part of the neighbourhood story.

Whether you're looking for lifestyle, boutique, budget, branded, tech savvy or high end luxury, you'll find it in London.



The Westport Inn by AJC Design



[NEW YORK]

**ALICIA CANNON**

Principal, AJC Design

One of the biggest design trends we've seen in the boutique and lifestyle hotel segment is the shift from a traditional lobby, meant solely for checking in, out, and waiting, to a comfortable and inviting communal space that is bringing guests out of their rooms. The new lobby designs capture the patron at 'hello' with communal seating, the perfect level of light, great music, complimentary wireless, and most importantly a space that feels like an extension of one's family room. What is more luring in these lobby experiences is how designers are defining space within the space. Designers are trending to provide cool portable work environments where the guest can work for the day on a long communal table, have an impromptu meeting in a cozy nook and even sip on a 'real' cup of coffee while lounging on a tufted sectional, all this without even having to step foot into an office environment.

One of the first, and still the best examples in my opinion, is the Ace Hotel in New York. The ability to pick and choose how you want to set up your shop for the day is endless. I've even rolled out drawings and started redlining. The music that is playing in the space is always hip, cool, yet chill and appropriately reflecting the time of day. As the day evolves to night, the energy of the space transforms from work environment to roll up your sleeves and have an adult beverage. The lobby is like the perfect outfit, it can transform from day to night and always looks fabulous.

At AJC Design, we designed the lobby experience at The Westport Inn. The Inn is a boutique property in a beach community in Connecticut. We incorporated side-by-side sectionals that promote conversation and interaction with other guests, a cozy stone fireplace flanked by bookshelves filled with books written by local writers; we created a space that feels like a casual yet chic family room. The guest feel comfortable enough to pull out their morning paper, sit Indian style on the sofa with their iPad in hand or even grab a book off the shelf with a cup of coffee.

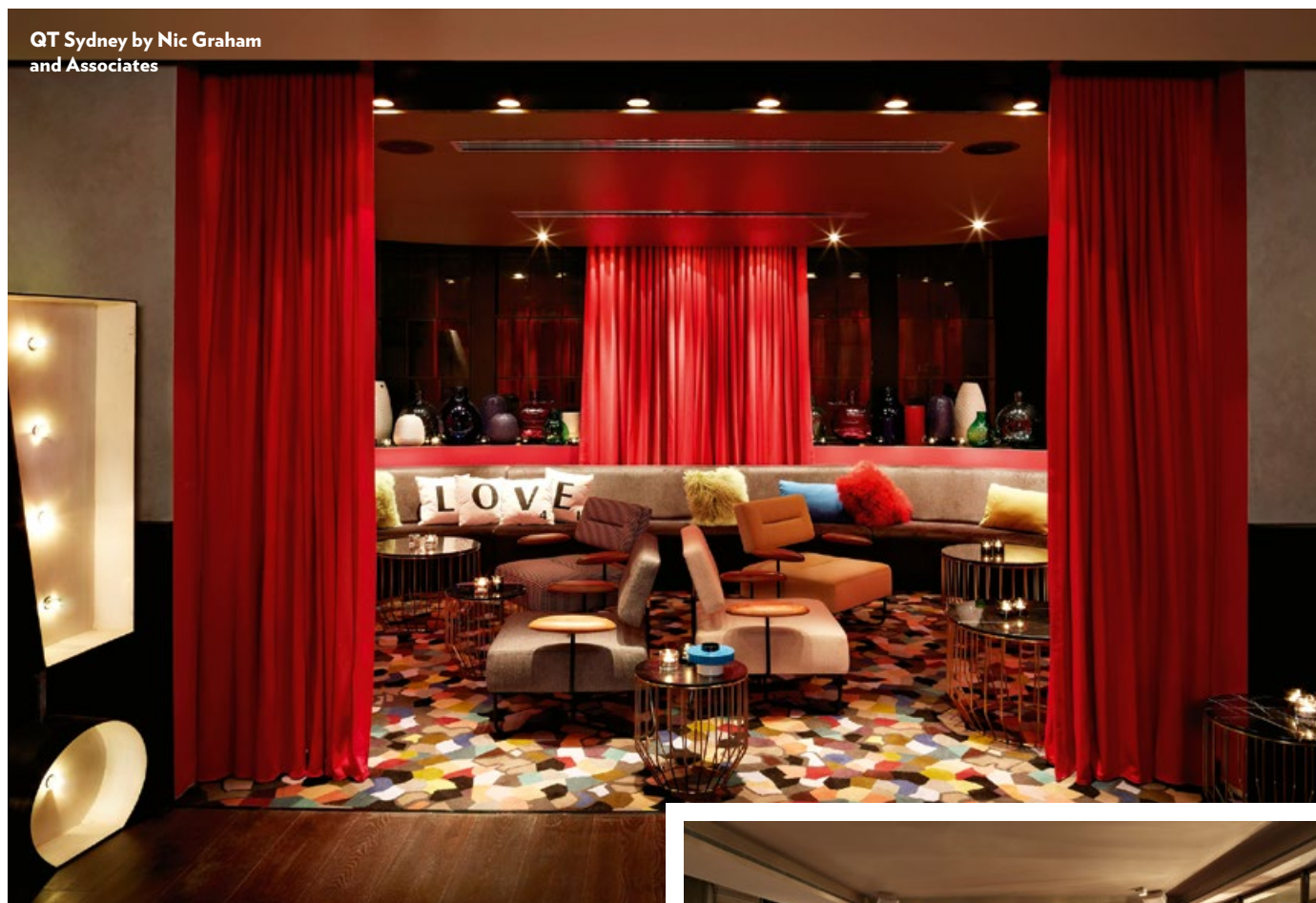
Hotel brands are making these shifts not only because the revenue increase on F&B but the grass roots experience the guest is being provided is totally unique. It's another way to provide a lifestyle and redefine what boutique hotel stands for. The brand sees the impact of having a more art, music and culinary experience engulfed in the lobby. The grass root experience is being implemented by revolving art galleries that concentrate on local artisans to employing local food establishments that provide your fantastic cup of coffee to engaging local and famous musicians to perform every day of the week. Guests are being lured in by all these benefits that a lobby is now sustaining and the guests certainly don't want to miss out on all the action.

# Lifestyle by design

HM asked three of the world's leading interior designers from different corners of the planet what the trends in boutique and lifestyle hotels are at present. So, you better pay attention to what **JACQUI KIRK** (London), **ALICIA CANNON** (New York) and **NIC GRAHAM** (Sydney) have to say because these three are also creating the trends.



The Ampersand Hotel by Dexter Moren Associates



QT Sydney by Nic Graham and Associates



[SYDNEY]

## NIC GRAHAM

Director, Nicholas Graham and Associates

We are currently designing for two distinct markets at present. One is the mix of the leisure, conference and business market with higher budgets and discerning palettes. The other is for a more savvy- and budget-aware traveller and business person that selects his or her stay by the

label, feel and brand awareness.

At both ends of the spectrum, we are designing with romance, history and narrative. The consumer is after experience, sense of location, and surprised by the history or narrative derived from the hotels' location and culture.

The trend started 10 years ago to have bars that feel like living rooms, where you check in meters away from where you can order a drink.

Restaurants that feel like large dine-in kitchens or a relaxed and detailed diner, and what's not uncommon is the coffee cart for the grab and go versus the expensive buffet.

Walls of marble are replaced with recycled objects or regenerated timbers, framed paintings replaced with mesmerising digital artworks that transport the guest into a fashionable world that they experience in movies and popular culture but may not possess at home.

The large format digital printer is a great tool for designers for all budgets in hotel design. When used correctly, full walls of graphics, a pattern or scenery take the place of expensive natural materials and are more than effective. The advent of carpet technology also allows for photorealistic weavings that take the place of the beige borders and regular patterns of years gone by.

Public spaces still need to transform the guest experience from a morning coffee to be fresh and invigorating.

Lower-branded hotels focussing on the budget conscious business traveller and sophisticated Generation Y are providing rivalry to high-end



and sophisticated brands. Located in urban locations, design is relaxed, services may be exposed, and concrete floors are dotted with inexpensive and fashionable vintage furniture. In the guestroom, it can lead to a modern and bare-bones approach, but it is always contrasted with a great and comfortable bed. The overall feel is homier, like the local urban café with everyone linked to earphones and the latest phone or device in the top pocket. Savvy suits mix with streetwise cool, the latest trainers, bottled beers, Wagyu burgers and sofas deep enough for lying around. Cool chilled tunes, graffiti art and staff dressed in designer looks meld well with modern interiors. They are relaxed, cool and savvy and chilled.

They may not have the retina scan keyless entry to your room yet, but they may have an espresso machine, iPod dock and 50-inch TV. There's no need for a bath and a double basin is a luxury in a room under 30m<sup>2</sup>. As designers we are training ourselves to find more cost effective solutions, greener ideas and manufacturing techniques that are fast but sustainable. Many of our hotels are freshened up every 12 months, with new works every five years to keep the brand fresh and up-to-date.

It's a competitive world in which the saturation of 'vintage' over the last five years means we are now hunting in our week-old trainers for the 'new modern' in everything we do. ■