

COMMERCIAL

Interior design

The essential guide for Middle East interior design professionals

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Designers discuss how hotel guestroom design concepts go way beyond the filling of empty space. By Selin Arkut

The basic tenet of hotel room design has always been to give the guest, a clean and comfortable place to sleep safely for the night. However, the concept of hotel guest room design has changed in recent years.

Though it is difficult to define a typical hotel guest room – there are a number of designers today willing to experiment with colours, themes and materials in order to come up with a relaxed, yet stylish space for guests.

Hotel design is a sophisticated discipline, involving specialist architects, environmental and structural

engineers, interior designers and skilled fit out contractors and suppliers – essentially a marriage between the practical considerations of the client brief and the designer vision.

HOME FROM HOME

In terms of trends, all guests want something more than they have at home. This goes for everything from fixtures to lighting settings, to furniture choice.

"A very relevant trend is for designers to infuse the hotel room with more

1. Radisson SAS Hotel by IMA Interiors.

2. Rotana Boulevard, Jordan designed by GM Architects.



personal touches, so guests sense a distinct design personality and feel more sensorially engaged and at home. No more the generic hotel room but a real destination," said Colin Seah design director at Ministry of Design.

According to Maya Freiji, interior architect, GM architects, designers of a Radisson resort in Fujairah and a Sheraton hotel in Istanbul, "a hotel guest room should be the ideal room as the business traveller or the vacationer would dream of having in his or her own house; it is not a home away from home, but a totally new and exciting experience with all the modern features one would expect."

3. The Junior Room, concept designed by GM Architects.

4. A concept hotel room, by Ministry of Design (MoD).

5. Radisson SAS
Hotel designed by
IMA Interiors.

6. Amber Valley Lux-
ury Resort and Spa
by GM Architects.



CULTURAL FURNISHINGS

While designers aim to bring a homely feel to guests, nowadays some hit on concepts that carry their own cultural traditions.

As the designer of the Radisson SAS Hotel in Dubai suggests, it is therefore, important that the inclusion of design elements are incorporated into the room whether, it be choice of colour or fabric, that each represent the culture of the area where the hotel is built.

"The furniture selected again depends on the overall design concept; modern styles are definitely the trend, infused with the local culture where applicable. However, this varies with the type of consumer. The interior designer's role is to be able to interpret and provide the proper design for the product," said Isabella Miaja, IMA Interiors.

"By exploring the local architecture and culture to extract the essence of the place, the discovery of new trends in the design and art world will follow.

Françoise Design Company also agrees with the concept of designing hotel guest rooms according to its historic or cultural back-drop. "Although contemporary designs seem to be sought after, there is a gradual trend back towards traditional interior designs, depending on where the hotel is situated. For example, you can see that in Dubai there is an Arabic touch, whereas in France, there is a French touch," said Ludovic Loffreda, of Françoise Design.

A FOCAL POINT

Perhaps one of the most important features of a guestroom design is the

combination of colours and fabrics.

"More attention given to richness of materials and colours; more transparency, creating a dynamic spatial experience; more attention to details in amenities and artwork, these are all integral elements in the designing of a hotel guest room," said Miaja.

However, it is the opinion and imagination of each designer that determines the crucial factors in a room design.

"The most important is the sensory experience, or impact of design followed by scale and efficiency of furnishings. The focal point of the interior design differs depending on the design concept of the room, but in most cases, the treatment of the bed is always the main feature of the interior.

"There has to be an impact, particularly in the first impressions of the space. The right combination of colour, lighting, and comfort are all integral to achieving this impact," added Miaja.



7. Rotana Hotel,
Bahrain by GM
Architects.

8. Rotan Boulevard
Hotel, designed by
GM Architects.



According to Seah however, the bathroom design, layout and amenities act as the focus. "A well-designed toilet is so integral to the enjoyment and function of a room but alas, many hotel toilets fall short and disappoint."

"We approach the design of our hotel rooms holistically, even when we design key feature highlights. Take for instance, in the New Majestic Hotel, we introduced full wall installation art pieces into some rooms that were at least 3m by 4m in some cases, and although these were intentionally very signature, they were designed to tie in harmoniously with

the overall spatial design through either colour or proportions," continued Seah.

"We tend to design a blend of both bespoke furniture pieces and bought pieces. The bespoke pieces are typically more architecturally integrated into the space while the bought pieces are selected for the quality of their crafting and design," he added.

SPACES

Although the consideration of the finer details in hotel guest room design, such as soft furnishings and lighting, is fundamental, the concept of space, as GM

9. Amber Valley Resort and Spa, Jordan by GM Architects.

10. A concept hotel guestroom designed by GM Architects.

11. The New Majestic Hotel, by the MoD.



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Architects and the Ministry of Design explain, also needs to be addressed.

"We analyse the space provided by the architect, the size of the windows with the amount of light coming into the room, the context of the hotel and then start introducing our analytical response to provide the room with a combination of all the necessary design features that will reproduce the desired guest experience in that particular space, said Freiji, of GM Architects.

"We focus purely on spatial design, and on providing a sublime experience for the guest. As such we like to work with highly professional contractors who share the same passion to push design

boundaries and are able to execute fine details in a timely fashion, e.g. Depa in Middle East, Grandwork Interior in Singapore etc," added Seah.

In conclusion, set against a residential backdrop designed to elicit a homey appeal, tomorrow's hotel room promises a mix of today's commercial interior design innovations in versatility, meaning that designs are increasingly having to be aesthetically pleasing, yet highly practical.

The main challenges facing today's interior designer, is achieving designs that are economically viable; designs that can be sustained by the operations of the hotel, and designs that can withstand fast changing trends. ☐



Senses Restaurant: Saudi Arabia

Located in Jeddah, the commercial centre of Saudi Arabia, Senses is a high-profile Japanese restaurant. Here, design and architecture firm GM Architects created a vibrant atmosphere through the application of modern furnishings and colourful lighting.

Red textured walls, and the incorporation of white leather seating complements the rounded environment of the restaurant. This, together with GM's use of ambient lighting to illuminate the stairwell and seating areas, makes Senses a stylish yet decidedly upscale restaurant. 