

## LOBBYDRAW



Cool glass and metal highlights touched by the glow of strategically placed floor lamps create a fairyscape

FOR a hotel to be 'effective' the lobby is absolutely vital. The first impression is strong enough to make or mar the visit for many guests. There are several stories in hospitality journals that speak of how guests who booked in advance turned back from the reception after having one look at the lobby—they never made it to their fabulously turned out rooms!

In Miami's Shore Club, an Ian Schrager hotel, the near-transparent floors offset by unusual design highlights of quaint, old-fashioned 'floor lamps', complemented by sheer, flowing white

**Stepping into a hotel must create a feeling of entering a zone totally divorced from your everyday design experience**

The minimalistic chic at The Park, Chennai, arrests the eye

drapes, make for an immediately arresting frame. Artwork is monochromatic and used sparingly in order not to take away from the feeling of minimal chic.

At Sanderson, London, another Ian Schrager hotel, the lobby is dramatically different—as Oriental in first look as the Shore Club is Western. Gilded, Arabian Nights chairs and divans carry the theme forward. Heavy rugs, a feature of most places with Oriental design nuances, are however, missing. The very unusual designs of both hotels bear the stamp of master designer Philippe Starck.

Nearer home, a clever use of light, glass and steel highlight makes for a stunning lobby presentation at The Park, Chennai. Most design happens on the floor here with the criss-crossing lines

## STYLEPLATTER



Often a busy, lived-in look with plenty of knickknacks strewn around creates a warm, inviting public space

NO longer is eating out merely a gastronomic journey intended to please the palate. Today, across the globe, style dining is all about aesthetics—in the restaurant design; the crockery and cutlery detailing; the perfect linen and serviette rings to the layout and presentation of the gourmet dishes that are served with a flourish to discerning guests, all add up to a complete design picture.

At Shatranj in Mumbai, the first-time visitor is likely to be bedazzled by the sheer design outpourings evident in the comfortably quaint chairs, the use of glass, the lit up individual tables;

**Restaurant design also extends to food presentation—top restaurants now match their platter design with the overall decor**

The clean, simple lines of the interiors of The Leather Bar

Henry-Moore like sculptural décor pieces and the perfectly harmonised floor and ceiling design. Attention to detailing in the finest but understated linen, white lilies for florals and quiet elegance in the cutlery adds up to the feeling of enchantment. The clever louvered walls that extend up to the ceiling in one side add drama echoed in the sleek, post-modern stretch of steel that acts as handy counter. For a mood of evening celebration, a splintered mauve-magenta light palette works perfectly.

The Park, Kolkata, on the other hand, is defined to a large extent by colour usage. Otherwise the design palette is fairly spartan with a sudden appearance of an intricate bronze adding that much-required touch of relief. Sin in Mumbai, for example, would



## DESIGNVIEWPOINT

*Hotelier Priya Paul says good hotel design should delight the customer visually, but it must also endure and last for long. At the core it should look at functionality, useability and accessibility*

Design is relevant but the question is what type of design is relevant? It could be anything—a 17<sup>th</sup> century take off or a minimalist version from the street or bazaar or from the fashion capitals. Each incorporates various elements but in the end, it has to work. Design should achieve a balance between form and function. It is a tricky balance to achieve and at times means taking hard decisions. Overly gimmicky designs have a limited shelf life.

Design cannot always be warm and comfortable. It is at times meant to evoke shock and awe. It should delight and excite the customer visually. It is not always about slick interiors. It has to be interesting and at the same time accessible. I personally feel that yes, you should take a design risk if your instincts says that a certain look will work. And then one should have the confidence to stand by it. It is only with taking risks that designing as a whole will grow and designers will get an opportunity to experiment. For example, at the Leather Bar at our Chennai property, I wanted leather floors. It took us a while to decide, weighing all aspects including maintenance since people would be walking all over it. Today, it is one of the strong points of the place.

**Design is critical—small rooms, low ceilings, dark heavy curtains, lamps and switches in the wrong place can wreck one's peace**

Design is part of achieving an overall ambience. For the space to work, the design sensibilities and aesthetics combine with a clear direction of what the space has to achieve. It need not always be ebony or another expensive material. In any design, the customer has to always be kept in mind. And service is the key without which no customer would ever want to come back.

We have a collection of contemporary boutique hotels and in each, the ultimate design that emerges is an amalgamation of our philosophy and focus with the designer's creativity. For a hotel property, good design is something that is long lasting—since one doesn't change the look often, at the time of designing one needs to anticipate trends for the next three to five years when taking a decision on the design. At the core it should look at function, useability and accessibility from the customer's point of view. For instance, in the case of lighting or the bath, it should be easy to use. Design should go hand in hand with the object's functionality.

The needs of people are changing, they are more individualistic. However, today in India designers are replicating international trends. There is currently nothing like 'Indian design'. It is either ethnic or western. Indian design is only just finding its feet.

*Designer Mike Knowles, FRSA, explains that design can either be good or bad. The true greats in the industry do not boringly sit in one mould. They innovate and invigorate, not just decorate. Putting your 'stamp' on each and every project is bad design practice*

Quite frankly there is no such thing as over-design. There is either good design or bad design and that which is labelled over-



**Design in a hotel is important, but it is only valued for what it is if it is backed by service, comfort and facilities**