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## HOSPITALITY



MAJOR TRENDS IN  
HOSPITALITY DESIGN



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# MAJOR TRENDS IN HOSPITALITY DESIGN

ARCHITECTS AND DESIGNERS WEIGH IN ON WHAT IS SHAPING THE LOOK AND FEEL OF WHERE WE LIVE WHEN WE TRAVEL.



The heart of hospitality lies in providing an unforgettable experience. And achieving that involves more than just the immediate hospitality staff.

Architects designing for hospitality need to do their part in providing that too.

"A hotel is all-encompassing and largely experience-based," says Leonard Lee, Regional Creative Officer & Regional Managing Director for Asia Pacific at Wilson Associates.

Part of that experience means offering something different.

"The expression of a differentiated point of view within any hospitality experience – be it a high-end hotel or a contemporary urban property – is fundamental to its success. The success of a great hospitality product relies heavily on its ability to offer a unique point of view," says Andre Fu, founder of AFSO.

The architects that *d+a* spoke to all had different views and experiences on providing that. But by and large, there were several themes that are becoming the trends to consider in designing for hospitality.

## LET THE PLACE SPEAK FOR ITSELF

Things may be increasingly global, but the appetite for the local has also gone up.

"The focus for us designers is to now connect guests with the environment, culture and local experiences that are unique and different from where they come from," says Rahul Shankhwalker, Partner at Studio HBA.

"The designs need to authentically reflect the local cultural nuances in a way that a guest can be immersed into the neighbourhood and have a sense of connection and the possibility of their own stories both visual and verbal to carry back with them."

(from left)  
SCOTT LEE, President of  
SB Architects

LEONARD LEE,  
Regional Creative Officer &  
Regional Managing Director  
for Asia Pacific at Wilson  
Associates

RAHUL SHANKHWALKER,  
Partner at Studio HBA

KIAN LIEW, Head of Global  
ID & Technical Services,  
The Ascott Limited

ANDRE FU,  
Founder of AFSO

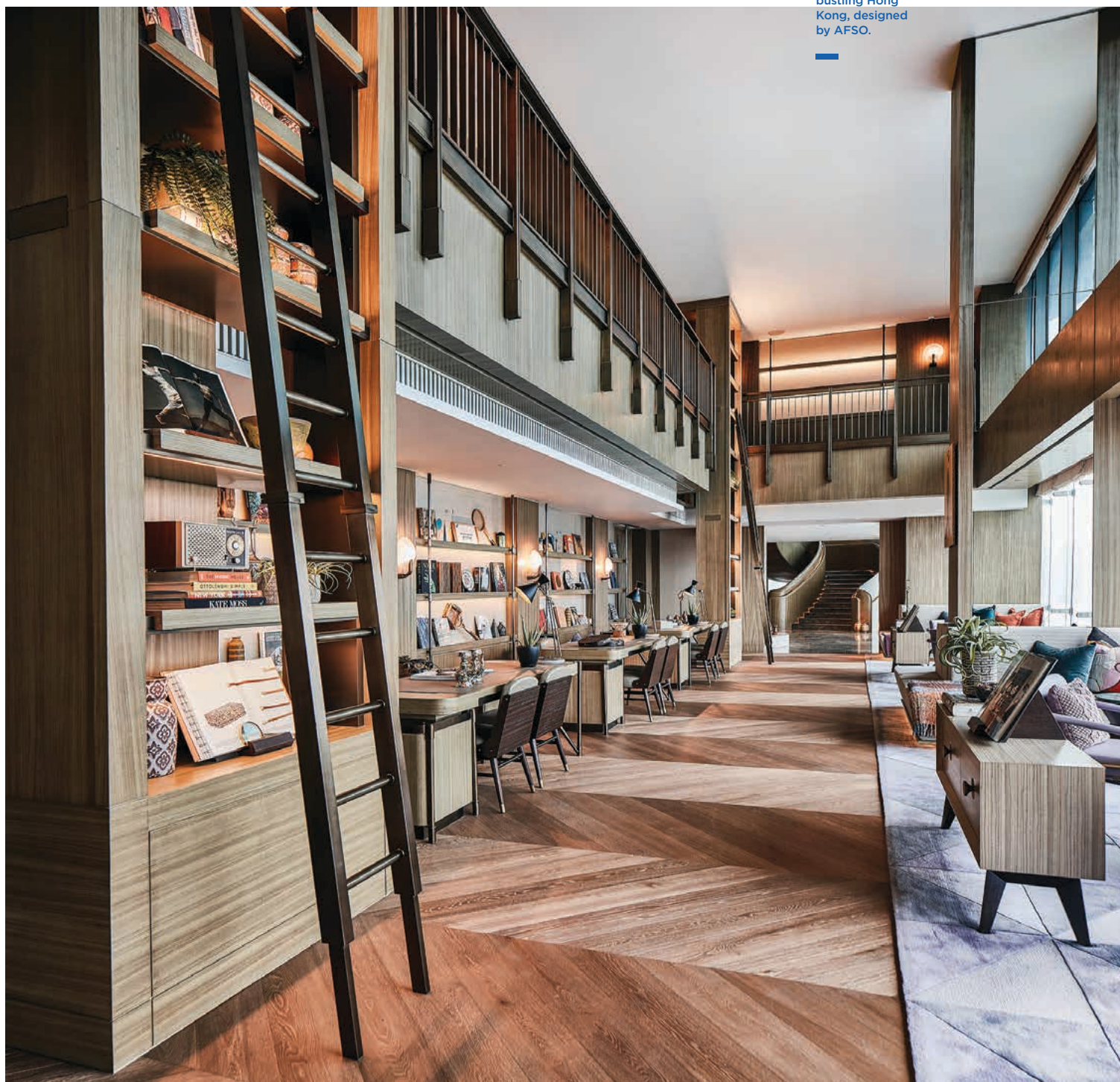


—  
The St. Regis  
Bangkok offers  
a “differentiated  
point of view”,  
thanks to the  
design of AFSO.  
—





A quiet library  
in a hotel in  
bustling Hong  
Kong, designed  
by AFISO.



Over a year back, Studio HBA completed the Grand Park Private Island Resort in the Maldives.

"With nothing more than clear blue seas to look at, the design of the resort is a response to this one and only context. The spaces have carefully-curated objects, locally-sourced and ones that find place in Maldivian everyday life," says Shankwalker.

To that end, they placed straw and jute baskets that find various functions in the public and

guest room spaces.

It also features furniture made from recycled drift and coconut wood using local craftsmanship, with every material honest to its inherent colour and textural quality.

Around the same time, Studio HBA opened the first Hyatt Centric in Asia in Bangalore, India. This one immerses its guests in the historic neighbourhood that it is located in.





SB Architects believes that hospitality providers need to prepare for guests that have expectations beyond predictable hospitality models.

"Art inspired from everyday street events find prime positions in the design. This is a full made-in-India hotel. Nothing was imported or acquired from regions too far from the hotel site," notes Shankhwalker.

In fact, Scott Lee, the President of SB Architects, has a term for this trend.

"Hyper-localisation is a growing movement. Today's traveler wants to immerse themselves in the

location and leave there knowing more about the place – history, culture, traditions, people – then what they came with. They want to feel like they're part of the destination, not just an outsider," says Lee.

"The design of a new hospitality development should immediately connect the guest with the place. More than ever, designers are drawing creative inspiration from the local building vernacular and unique history of a destination to deliver an authentic, hyper-localised hospitality experience."

And restaurants are also essential in offering the local experience, not just by way of the taste buds.

"The food and beverage outlets need to capture the nuanced food culture and eating habits of the place. Not limited to the recipes themselves, but the people in different locations consume the food. Our restaurant designs celebrate this unique experience through design," says Shankhwalker.

"What we are trying to do presently for our clients is to elevate the dining experience from the concept of all-day dining (multi-cuisine, live cooking stations in full view of diners, a concept that we are by now well-familiar with)," says Lee.

Instead, he wants to now bring the focus back to highlight specific cuisines by way of specialty restaurants in which it becomes a destination where people would travel specifically to experience, attracting both hotel guests and local residents to the venue.

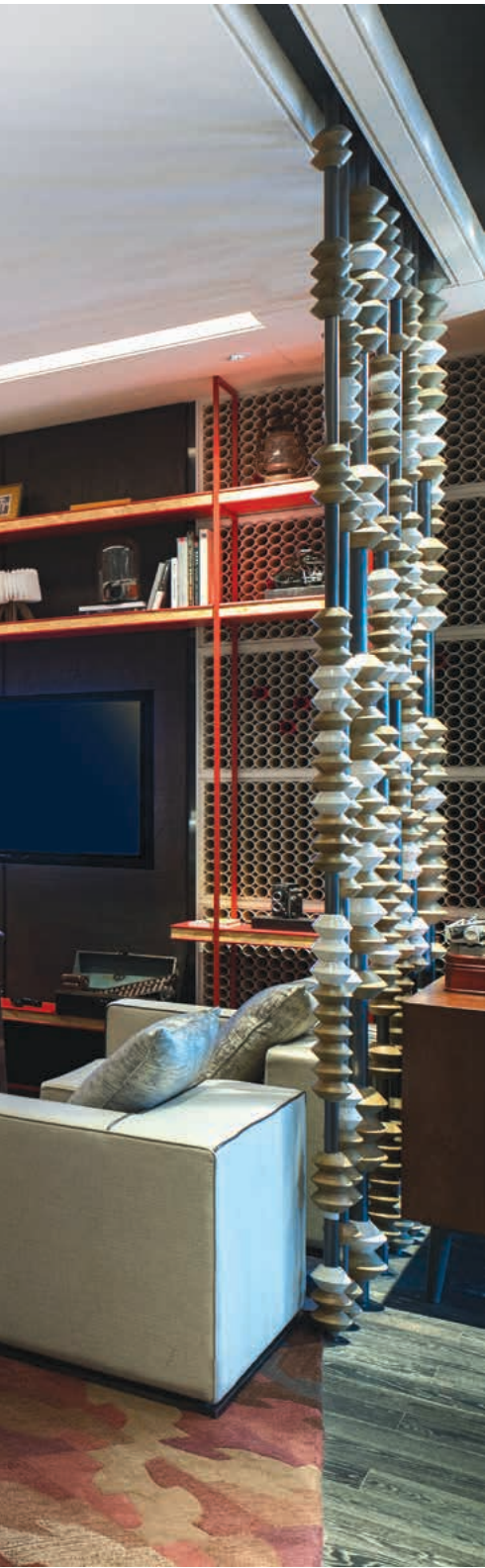
SB Architects draws on hyper-localisation in their design to help travellers immerse themselves in the culture and surroundings, like this former plantation turned resort in Puerto Rico.



Wilson Associates thinks that co-working facilities in lobby lounges are the way forward.







A bar/lounge experience as designed by Wilson Associates.



FLEXIBILITY IS KEY

Fu anticipates a rise in the creation of the co-living environment to provoke a sense of community within the public areas.

"This is a general trend in the way people work and live these days and the world of hospitality ought to address it to be relevant to our time," says Fu.

And that means creating spaces that are flexible and open for different usage.

"We foresee spaces with blurred boundaries; more flexible spaces which can accommodate the different needs of each guest. For instance, no longer are the reception desk and lobby lounge kept separate in hotels; these spaces are now often combined," says Wilson Associates' Lee.

Lee also anticipates the integration of co-working facilities in lobby lounges to maximise revenue for the hotel operator – small little spaces that can convert from breakfast meetings in the morning, to high tea in the afternoon, and drinks in the evening.

The communal area in hotels will also be cohesively designed so that it can be used differently to create a space for the needs of a business traveller, couples and families. The first project that comes to mind for him is their work on the Renaissance Xi'an.

"The hotel's lobby space is a prime example of what we try to do with addressing these trends – making the

entire lobby flexible, introducing a cohesive setup in the lobby lounge that activates the space and engages guests who arrive," says Lee.

The place features communal tables that extend out into the lobby lounge, where guests (especially solo or business travellers) can socialise or sit and do their work.

Various geometric shapes influenced by Tangram set pieces or other traditional games define the communal areas; oversized abacus beads encase a suspended staircase; and lounge seating come together in various Tangram shapes for a playful note.

There are also several semi-private spaces in the lobby lounge that a guest can book for breakfast meetings, and these spaces become sit-down spaces for teatime and drinks.

In instances where guestrooms have to be downsized due to increasing land prices, being creative is necessary to ensure that the experience is not compromised.

"It is important that the design of the rooms remain efficient and identifying touchpoints essential for short and long-term stays, such as providing flexible storage and continue to remain inclusive and innovative so that guests are able to maintain a sense of location in the design," says Kian Liew, Head of Global ID & Technical Services, The Ascott Limited.



HBA uses design to provide a visual treat that gives travellers an experience they can bring back with them, like this hotel bar in the Maldives.

Case in point: lyf Funan Singapore, which he has just completed.

At only 18sm², its One of a Kind apartment incorporates movable wardrobe solutions allowing the personalisation of the space to meet the guest's needs.

Additionally, luggage can be stored under the bed to maximise the circulation space around the room.

PLENTY OF EMERGING THEMES

Green is in this season. And that extends to both usage and nature itself.

"Another key trend is the focus on sustainability – this is one of the most fundamental issues. This goes down to the use of materials and even how water is to be provided in the guestrooms. It is an evolution in mindset for the hoteliers and also for the designers," says Fu.

Part of being green also means restoring, rather than building new structures.

"Adaptive re-use is becoming a key trend, evolving out of the traveller's appetite for experience-driven travel. Restoring and repurposing an older, historic property offers designers a chance to breathe life into a previously abandoned site, and an authentic story to draw inspiration from," says Wilson Associates' Lee.

By respecting the original design, and seamlessly blending the old with the new, architects can provide a unique vantage point into the history of the area.

"We, as designers, always look to the destination to create an authentic experience, but we will start seeing this run throughout the entire hotel, including the activity offering and amenity program.

"Designing transformational spaces will be a prerequisite, allowing operators to constantly reinvent and refresh to enable them to provide a unique experience each time a guest returns," says Lee.

Wellness is both a large driver of hospitality work and a dictator of trends going forth. And with wellness, nature is always a key theme.

"Biophilia, the design philosophy focusing on connecting people to nature, is integral with wellness design. Although nature can be mimicked within







A warm welcome to the Hyatt Centric Bangalore, courtesy of HBA.



Café at the Hyatt Centric Bangalore.



A simple yet attractive guestroom at the Hyatt Centric Bangalore.

internal spaces, resorts must also develop seamless transitions between indoors and outdoors,” says Lee.

While all these are being factored into hospitality design, don't forget the fun factor too.

Ascott's Liew points to lyf Funan Singapore's aspiration to appeal to the millennial and millennial-minded travellers in a social media-centric generation.

It translates into unconventional elements introduced into the project such as a pit pool, a giant-sized Connect Four set, and even a human-sized hamster wheel at 'Burn', the social gym.

“With fun and Instagrammable spots, the property will wow their friends and their social media audience through the feeds when they stay and experience lyf,” he explains.

Going forward, Fu expects a “return to the essence of comfort and intimacy”.

And this doesn't mean more complex work for architects, rather a focus on the primary goal.

“Hospitality has a bright future and one that will focus less on the complexities of designs, but more on experiential offerings,” sums up Shankwalker.