

SPACE



INTERNATIONAL HOTEL DESIGN

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TO LOOK OUT FOR IN 2023

It takes an army of design talent to create some of the world's best-loved luxury hotels, restaurants, and resorts. In each issue, SPACE shines the spotlight on some of the industry's hottest up-and-coming designers and architects making waves in their field of expertise



CECILIA SELLA

Designer
HBA MIAMI
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Cecilia joined HBA Miami after earning a Master of Fine Arts in Interior Design at Savannah College of Art and Design, Georgia, and prior, a Bachelor of Architecture Degree at a university in the Dominican Republic. Growing up in the latter, weekend activities in the early 2000s consisted of visiting the island's new and booming resort business. Every time a new hotel opened, her family "had to go check it out, as if we were hired to do so," she says. "I always knew I wanted to be a designer, but I have to thank my early exposure to the world of hospitality for the career path that I have taken."

Selected project (pictured): One of Cecilia's major projects she is currently working on, The St. Regis Longboat Key, Florida, is set to complete in 2024.

What is the most enjoyable aspect of your work?

The ability to create an experience is the most rewarding. To me, the exciting part about hospitality design is that you're creating a space not meant for a single user, but an ever-changing plethora of guests—each with different needs, personalities, taste, and preferences. Anticipating the needs of the guest, regardless of where they come from, and at the same time creating a unique, curated experience that will enhance their stay is what really matters.

What do you consider the biggest challenge when working on a hotel project?

The coordination between all disciplines involved in a project is what I find most challenging. As designers, we always need to find the balance between function and form, but when more technical specialties come into play, it becomes a challenge to try to maintain the design intent while making the space functional for optimal hotel operations.

What's your favourite city in the world and why?

Barcelona. It is a vibrant city that breathes design. The influence of Gaudi in every corner is enough to captivate any architect or designer, but it's also the urban planning of this city that gives it life. It was designed for people to walk and have more social interaction, instead of sprawled out with the need for transportation by car like most major cities in the world.

In your opinion, which area in a hotel has the biggest design impact and why?

The first and most important impression you have of a hotel is the lobby. Everything you need to know about a hotel, you can see it when you enter this area; it works like a presentation

card. In luxury hotels, you tend to see a grand bar and lounge areas. If you're in a hotel geared toward business travellers, you'll find co-working areas. You can spot a lifestyle hotel by their playful lobbies with sculptural elements and unexpected mix of colours and textures. Hotel brands even have specific elements that characterize their lobbies, such as the magnificent bar murals in St. Regis hotels around the globe.

Tell us about your dream design project

I would love to work with Aman Resorts. Every Aman manages to offer a unique luxury experience not by a dense materialistic space, but rather a privacy-oriented and very refined minimal design. Every Aman is either in an exotic location or a building with historic background, forming a bond between the guest and its surroundings. It all feels like a very holistic experience, and it would be amazing to have the opportunity to participate in the creation of this.

Something trending that you can't get onboard with

Logomania. As soon as I see a logo on an item, I run the opposite direction. There's something so elegant about a design that doesn't need to overuse their logo to be recognized.

