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HOTEL DESIGN

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PEOPLE

|

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|

PROJECTS

|

PRODUCTS



LILY XUAN

Junior Designer
HBA LOS ANGELES

hba.com

While studying business in New York, Lily spent weekends working at galleries in Chelsea, where witnessing visitors connect with installations sparked a passion for creating memorable experiences. During the pandemic, Lily embraced the opportunity to pivot careers, enrolling at Pratt Institute, where she explored a range of disciplines, including spatial design, architecture, fashion, material innovation, and furniture design. This multidisciplinary journey fuelled a love for crafting spaces that enhance guest experiences, ultimately leading to a role at HBA Los Angeles after graduating in 2023. For Lily, this new chapter is about blending creativity and hospitality to leave a lasting impression through thoughtful design.

Spotted emerging talent in hotel design?

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What's your favourite part of the design process and why?

Design begins with narrative and concept. To me, an ideal hotel is a utopia or small community – a space that promotes a lifestyle and invites exploration. I enjoy delving into a site's cultural history, understanding how people live there, and gathering local materials for inspiration. The joy comes from transforming these elements into a modern design language, bridging tradition with contemporary expression to create a unique, immersive experience for guests.

Tell us about your dream design project

My dream design project is inspired by one of my favourite films, "Night at the Museum." I often fantasise about sneaking into an art gallery after hours to privately enjoy all the artworks. Inspired by this, I want to design a speakeasy hotel within a museum. The entrance might be hidden behind one of the exhibits. The hotel could feature bold, modern art-themed rooms and more subtle, classical oil painting-inspired rooms. Public spaces might host artists creating and interacting with each other.

One overused trend that you think it's time to retire

Treating spatial design as mere decoration. Beautiful things don't ask for attention but flow naturally. Every element must prioritize function and user needs, evolving into an aesthetic expression that tells a meaningful story. The most luxurious spaces embody tranquillity, where interiors seamlessly blend with architecture. Each piece

Selected project (pictured):

Set to open in 2027, Hyatt Centric Changsha was Lily's first major hotel project

contributes subtly to the narrative, guiding guests through the experience. Quiet yet intentional, this approach creates spaces that resonate deeply, fostering a sense of connection without overwhelming the senses.

If budget weren't an issue, what's the most extravagant feature you'd add to a hotel design?

For me, incorporating authentic natural elements and water features into a hotel's interior design is the ultimate luxury. It's about blending the serenity of nature with the energy of urban life, creating a space that feels both sophisticated and grounded in nature. The coexistence of modern cities and natural forests is a concept I deeply value.

Tell us about your selected project

Hyatt Centric Changsha was my first major hotel project where I was involved from the concept design phase. We envisioned the hotel as an artist couple's home, where the ballroom and pre-function spaces showcase their embroidery and weaving skills. The wooden wall structure intertwines like stitching, while the artwork and carpets continue the weaving theme. The narrative feels incredibly romantic. To study the rhythm of it all, I began with sketches, models, and material vignettes. The entire process has been exciting.