

With hotels, you design for business that might last 100 years: Andrew Linwood

by SORCHA O'HIGGINS | 03 May 2020 | Experts



Andrew Linwood was a delegate at TOPHOTELWORLDTOUR London 2020.

Head of Design at Areen Hospitality Andrew Linwood tells us about the key to successful hotel design.

In the digital age, it can be all too common to capitalise on global trends at the expense of good quality, timeless design.

Areen Hospitality's Head of Design **Andrew Linwood** spoke exclusively to TOPHOTELNEWS on the sidelines of TOPHOTELWORLDTOUR London 2020, which took place on February 6 at the Conrad St James, to explain how he translates client visions into long lasting hospitality spaces.

What drives your design philosophy for hotels?

Personally, I know a lot about hotels. I used to work in hotels when I was in my twenties. I know what hotels look like, how they function. What I don't like is when I see a property that's a triumph of style over function. So things can look fabulous, but they have to work and that's what we bring to the table. We can design in any flavor you like. We have talented designers who can put those concepts together, but for a hotel, you're designing for a business that might last 50 years or 100 years. You've got to make sure that the skeleton of it, the structure of it, is efficient and that it works. If you can get that right, the rest is window dressing.

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What are the most exciting projects you've worked on recently?

It's always the most recent one, and that is a boutique hotel called The Social House in Nairobi which we opened recently. It's like a little bit of Shoreditch in Kenya. That was great fun to work with, with a very perceptive individual owner, a husband and wife team, local to Nairobi, who had a specific vision, and that made it easier for us because it's a really interesting piece of design, and it should be successful. It's a unique product in that market. It reflects global trends in terms of "experiences" quite well. It's a little bit informal, and it's more about the experiences rather than a box, getting you out and experiencing the community that you're in, so that you're part of that community.

What advice would you give to a young designer starting off in hospitality?

The advice I would give is that you have to work hard. You've got to own the project, you've really got to feel it, and you have to be prepared to wait to see the outcome. If you want to see your design tomorrow, then go and work in retail. Hotels can take longer to deliver but you'll learn so much. It's a very good grounding for any other part of the design industry that you want to go and work in. So to crystallize that, it's hard work and it's ownership. Pride in what you do.

What appeals to you about hotel design?

Well, it's a fabulous part of the industry to be in because a hotel has so many different parts. There's the arrival experience. There are bars. There are restaurants. There are the spas. There are rooms. There's the presidential suite. There are so many different parts. I once hired someone specifically because they'd done really beautiful toilets. Everyone loves a good toilet!

Andrew Linwood was a delegate at TOPHOTELWORLDTOUR London 2020. To attend, address or sponsor our boutique hospitality networking events around the world, contact the [TOPHOTELPROJECTS team](#).