

SPACE

INTERNATIONAL HOTEL DESIGN

1|17

PEOPLE

|

PLACES

|

PROJECTS

|

PRODUCTS

AREEN DESIGN

ANDREW LINWOOD, HEAD OF HOSPITALITY DESIGN DIVISION

Andrew Linwood's role as front man for Areen Design means a packed portfolio. Can Faik finds out how he thrives on a variety of responsibilities and learns about his plans for Areen's future...

Areen Design was founded in 1985 as an interior design and procurement business, catering for high end residential clientele. Their first projects were royal palaces; these exacting standards and challenging deadlines shaped their basic approach to a project and continue to underpin their definition of client service. They now have thirty years' experience of delivering innovative and cost-effective design solutions to multi-sector clients across the world.

Tell me about your role at Areen Design?

I am Head of the Hospitality Division and my job is to oversee all design that comes out of our studio as well as develop new business. I speak at several hotel-industry conferences every year, in the UK (AHC Manchester, IHS Olympia, SLEEP) and overseas (Berlin, Dubai, Africa, India). In 2015 we designed one of the rooms at the SLEEP event in London. In 2016 I was a judge at the same event.

What five words would you use to describe Areen Design?

Nimble. Realistic. Innovative. Talented. Responsive.

How long have you been involved with hotel design?

At the risk of sounding ancient, I designed my first hospitality interiors around 30 years ago; beginning with themed restaurants in Amsterdam and London. I began designing hotels in Vietnam and Nepal, when those places were only just appearing on business and tourist itineraries, this was during the decade I spent in Hong Kong and Singapore. I later went on to

work for HBA in Singapore, travelling throughout Asia and then again in London. Richmond International, part of the Areen group, offered me an interesting position in 2005 and then in 2008, we set up Areen Hospitality Design, under the wing of parent company Areen Design Services. So although I have been designing hotels for many years, I am always learning, as indeed does Michael Berner, my mentor in this industry whom I saw most recently in Miami, promoting his latest project at the age of 84; so I have a few years left yet!

Have you noticed any particular trends in hotel design?

The design of hotels has changed considerably over the last 25 years. Although, of course the core offer of any hotel is a good night's sleep, shower and breakfast, the way those elements are packaged and used by guests is now quite different from even 10 years ago. We hear a lot about millennials and the various generations - X, Y and Me - but younger business people and travellers have had a major influence on design

What are your thoughts on new innovations in hotel design?

Of course it depends on what market you are talking about, but as public areas become more spatially fluid and therefore more sociable, guests spend more time there and less in the rooms. So rooms are becoming smaller. Stylistically, I see a retro 70s look has emerged in conjunction with a trend towards more a more residential and less commercial look. Shabby, Shoreditch chic can be seen in urban centres all over the world. Indeed, so much so these days that a backlash against this apparently unique, yet strangely ubiquitous look is >

Andrew Linwood,
Head of Hospitality
Design Division



idiosyncratic boutique/lifestyle hotels to capitalise on this growing market. It's important to remember though that the term Millennial these days, refers also to a state-of-mind, rather than just an age-group.

How important are public spaces in hotels?

They have always been the main shop window for a hotel and are becoming ever more important with the trend towards more social, multi-functional, flexible spaces. Look at public areas of the new Zoku hotel in Amsterdam as a good example.

With so many hospitality designers in the industry, how does Areen Design stand out from the rest?

Our hospitality team distinguishes itself from the pack by providing thoughtful, original, site-specific designs, not fashionable but stylish and timeless. After all, when a client spends millions on her property, she doesn't want to have to renovate a couple of years later when fashions have changed.

How is the current economic climate affecting the hotel design market? And has Areen Design felt the effects?

The UK hotel market is currently healthy and growing; our range of London and regional projects reflects that. Brexit does not seem to have affected our work pipeline yet. Overseas work is always subject to the vagaries of the markets in different regions. For example, India was a growing market for us for a few years then it suffered an economic downturn, as has Russia of course for different reasons. The Middle East has also been hit by falling oil

growing market for us is sub-Saharan Africa, where we now have a string of projects on-site and more in the design studio.

Being based in London, which hotels are you currently working on?

Given the efficiency of modern communications, where we are based is not relevant in terms of dealing with clients and other consultants based elsewhere. That said, we have a couple of interesting projects in London and the UK which we can't divulge details of just yet; watch this space!

What is the biggest thing the company has learnt over its years in the industry?

Always be willing to learn and adapt!

How would you define your 'Hotel Style'?

I don't have a particular, personal design style. I would prefer to think that all my work answers the client's brief and delivers a successful hotel.

What does design mean to you?

Problem-solving.

Have you seen exceptional growth in any part of the world in hotel design?

We are just starting to consider the South American market, which has a lot of growth potential. I have never been to Latin America so it is on my list; I would love to visit Cuba before the big international brands converge on that lovely island. >



One Park Library, Shanghai, China - Lower Level



Cape Sierra Hilton, Freetown, Sierra Leone - Lobby



One Park Villa, Shanghai, China - Daughter's Bathroom



Raffles Makkah Palace, Makkah, Saudi Arabia - Spa



Raffles Makkah Palace, Makkah, Saudi Arabia - Library

What has been your favourite project to date?

Rebranding an existing hotel in Bucharest to an international brand on an extremely tight deadline and budget.

What's next for you?

Continuing the expansion of Areen Design's Hospitality Division by bringing international design standards and criteria to emerging markets around the globe; Latin America here we come!

What would be your dream hotel project?

The next one...

Where currently ranks highest on your travel wish list?

Cuba.

Where do you see hotel design in the future?

The basic offer of any hotel: rest, refresh, refuel, will remain no matter how styles change and which market is being addressed. I recently judged the Sleep Set rooms at the Sleep Event in London and although each of the rooms were stylistically very different, pushing the boundaries of room design in tailored and innovative ways, they all offered the same basic elements mentioned above. I think that's what's really interesting about

hotel design: the many, many different ways you can respond to the specific needs and challenges of your market and situation, whilst celebrating these functional basics.

What would you say are the three best places you've ever stayed?

The Manor Hotel, New Delhi – a converted villa which, due to its small size, means the service is always personal and quick.

The House Hotel Bosphorus Istanbul, Turkey - a stylish independently operated boutique hotel with views across the strait.

Ku de Ta – the original, cool beach front hangout in Bali.

Let's finish with the issue of personal and work life balance. How do you aim to achieve a good balance and what do those closest to you think of your attempts?

I have a very understanding wife! When I'm in London, I try to make sure I get home on time in the evenings and make myself available for family outings at weekends. Although often my kids can't remember which place I have just returned from, when I mentioned recently that perhaps we should use my air-miles to take a Safari in Tanzania, they suddenly became interested!

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