

the**last**word



THE JOY OF TRAVEL

NATHAN HUTCHINS, PARTNER, THE GALLERY HBA, DISCUSSES ESTABLISHING LOCAL CONNECTIONS AND BLENDING BRAND IDENTITY FOR THE ULTIMATE HOTEL EXPERIENCE

STAYING IN A WONDERFUL HOTEL MAKES THE BEAUTY AND JOY OF TRAVEL EVEN MORE MEMORABLE.

All travellers want to feel like they've been somewhere and have enjoyed something different from their usual surroundings, so it's essential that the local landscape is expressed in a hotel's interior design, so long as global standards of luxury and comfort are maintained. Local connections are more important than a hotel's global identity, as these individual touches are what form unique and meaningful experiences. As designers, it's fun to weave the local culture and design vernacular into our projects in modern ways. Through a considered mix of textures, materials and palettes, we can create designs which resonate with guests once their stays are over. At The Alpina Gstaad, the rustic, weathered timber that gives traditional alpine

chalets their character has been interpreted in a contemporary manner yet still really expresses the essence of being in the Alps. The hotel's fireplace hearths are formed from stones that were each hand-selected for their particular beauty, charcoal hues, and appealing shape worn smooth by rushing mountain streams over thousands of years. It's also really important to think about how guests will use a space, for example, what surfaces their skin will touch and how that will make them feel. So at The Alpina we brought in lots of soft textures to envelop them in cosiness.

A location's lighting is also a key aspect in designing places that feel special. If an area is blessed with natural light, making the most of this will really open it up. Or if a room has no windows and will be dark, this can be an advantage too, as it can enhance a sense of comfort and tranquillity.

We look to international benchmarks to see what these destinations have done well and how these techniques can be adapted to the particular circumstances of a project potentially on the opposite side of the globe. Right now, we are re-designing a collection of villas on an atoll in the Indian Ocean to create a remote playground for international "gypsetters" - those bohemian globe-trotters who seek authenticity and glamour in their free-wheeling lifestyles. We are also working on a hotel in one of the tallest buildings in the world where the spaces are physically removed from the landscape. In this case, we need to be particularly imaginative about how we can create an authentic local feel whilst in the sky. When balancing the local with the global, designers need to find the right mix of elements that offer the truest expression of a place and form experiential connections with its spirit.

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