



Inge Moore
Hirsch Bedner Associates/HBA

Profile



HBA has offices around the world. Since 2008 Inge Moore directs the London branch of Hirsch Bedner Associates (HBA).

Her sphere is where others are on the move: as principal and chief designer of the London interior design firm Hirsch Bedner Associates (HBA), Inge Moore designs hotels, spas and restaurants around the world. They are not ordinary addresses, but places that create lasting memories for the guests. Her recipe for success consists of custom-tailored spaces that mix local influences with comfort and timelessness into an atmospheric cocktail. Clear the stage for an office that gives a face to the world of travel.



Inge Moore has an earnest mission: she has declared war on giant, anonymous hotels. For her, a hotel is much more than just a humble box where you stop for the night while traveling. In her eyes, the hotel is a temporary home, a comfortable and sensual place that is anything but interchangeable. Since 2008 the native-born South African directs the London branch of Hirsch Bedner Associates (HBA), an international interior design firm that was founded in Los Angeles in 1964 and specializes in the hospitality industry.

“A well-designed and integrated package of fantasy, drama and creature comfort” is what HBA promise their clients and, in the same breath, they pledge to always keep to the agreed upon schedule and budget. More than 800 designers currently work in 15 locations, including Atlanta, San Francisco, Shanghai, Singapore, Tokyo and Melbourne. Their clients include chains such as Hyatt, Ritz-Carlton, Hilton and St. Regis, as well as independent hotels like the “Alpina Gstaad,” which will open in December 2012. The hotel is the first five-star hotel to be built in the Swiss ski resort for more than one hundred years.

„ALPINA GSTAAD“

Opening in December 2012

Gstaad Switzerland



The interior, with 57 guest rooms and suites, a private movie theater and several restaurants was designed by Inge Moore and her 30-person team in London. Established in 1987, it is the smallest office in the HBA group; in 2008 they moved into a former dance hall in Notting Hill. Besides a branch office in Moscow, which primarily serves the Russian market, it is the only one in Europe – and its compact size is just right. That’s because the hotel industry is undergoing a radical change. Not only the number of buildings has shot up in the past ten years. The demands of the guests have also become more complex.

“We do not want to simply make beautiful interiors, but to give them relevance,” says Inge Moore. Especially in Europe, where a different language is spoken only one hour’s flight away, no one wants to wake up in the same room, in the same bed and next to the same curtains anymore. Getting a sense of the place is a key expectation of today’s guests. To keep them as customers, a hotel must provide far more than a certain number of stars.

The reason for this change of mind comes, of all places, from the motherland of the anonymous hotel chains. In New York, Ian Schrager – co-founder of the legendary nightclub “Studio 54” – opened the world’s first “boutique hotel” in 1984. The interior of the “Morgans” was conceived by the French designer Andrée Putman, who prescribed a strict black and white color scheme for the 113 rooms and suites. Philippe Starck went a step further in 1988 with his “Royalton Hotel,” also done for Schrager and also in Manhattan – which, in contrast to the purist “Morgans,” presented a loud,





HOTEL ALFONSO XIII
Starwood Luxury Collection
Seville, 2012

virtually theatrical interior. As different as the two hotels were: with their creative theme worlds, they turned the world of the hotel industry on its head. Because they showed that a luxury hotel does not need to be a rigid box; it can also entertain with the qualities of a nightclub.

Although boutique hotels were still considered exotic in the 1990s, today they are even an integral part of the portfolios of the big chains. "For decades, the idea of a grand hotel has hardly changed. Today the sector celebrates the new-found freedom and the customers also want this diversity," explains Inge Moore. The center of attraction for travelers is consequently no longer just the place where there is a hotel. The hotel itself must now also be worth a trip. For this to succeed, the chains must – at least in terms of design – be unchained again and their hotels must each be given an individual expression.

How a grand hotel can be awakened from its slumber is demonstrated by the "Alfonso XIII" in Seville, which reopened in July 2012. The building, erected 1929 in the style of the Art Deco style, was considered old-fashioned in the years before its renovation. Inge Moore and her team took on the interior and deliberately did not steer clear of clichés. Flamenco culture, bullfighting and influences from the 500 years that Andalusia stood under Moroccan rule were woven into a total narrative experience. A combination of tradition and the present is also offered by the spa at the hotel "The Istanbul Edition," which opened in 2011. Walls of backlit onyx create a warm contrast to the water, while the dark color palette of the rooms takes its cue from spices and traditional Turkish robes.



ESPA IN "THE ISTANBUL EDITION"
Istanbul, 2011



Both projects were carried out by “The Gallery” – an office that was established in 2011 under the umbrella of HBA’s London studios and is geared toward projects with a high degree of individualization. And that means especially one thing: finding a precisely fitting solution. Like a good tailor from Savile Row, Inge Moore maintains a healthy distance from the trends of the moment. Whereas Philippe Starck’s two London hotels – “St. Martin’s Lane” from 1999 and the “Sanderson” from 2000 – seem like time capsules from the nineties when viewed from today’s perspective, their interiors are intended to last much longer.

Their language is not fixed upon a single style. It is multifaceted, timeless and highly influenced by the very place where the hotel is located. “I love the glamour of the thirties and forties. Shapes that hug and squeeze with soft lines instead of seeming hard and cold,” admits Inge Moore. Yet she knows when it’s right to break out in a different direction. For example, the “Alpina Gstaad,” with its wood-paneled walls and ceilings, is modeled after the traditional Swiss chalet style, and makes you forget that it’s a new building. The reciprocal mixture of historical and contemporary elements makes it difficult to estimate the age of the spaces. Instead of seeming newly minted, they appear to have grown over decades. Just like a home, in which people from different cultural backgrounds and age groups are at ease and feel comfortable.



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To avoid interchangeability, almost nothing is off the shelf. Inge Moore has 80 percent of the furnishings for every hotel project custom made, giving equal treatment to everything from the light fixtures and wallcoverings to the embroidery patterns for the pillows. A clever strategy: after all, simply due to the size of many hotels, custom-tailored designs can often be realized at a similar price to purchasing standard furnishings. Consequently, the guests can discover details in their rooms that they encounter again somewhere else. The upshot: a common thread is spun, lending aesthetic coherence to a hotel.

Three to four employees are assigned to work on a project for its duration, but the team can grow to twelve or more people during various phases. Whether a design will be realized is often decided in five minutes. Often there is only so much time available to present a design to the client. What has changed are the means that are selected. Whereas ten years ago visualizations were drawn by hand, today nothing but computer renderings are demanded. “Maybe five percent of the clients can still



The studio is located in a charming, former dance hall in the district of Notting Hill.

imagine something based on hand drawings,” says Inge Moore. To depict spaces and materials in a manner that is as photorealistic as possible, the renderings are contracted out to external service providers, which always operate with state-of-the-art technology.

“The nice thing about hotels is that people celebrate events there that they want to remember, like weddings, birthdays or graduation parties. Hotels are stages for the important events in life,” explains Inge Moore. She gained her first professional experiences by designing exhibitions and casino interiors, and this is palpable in her work. Admittedly, her spaces have virtually nothing in common with the charm of neon-lit gaming tables. But they, too, are places of refuge that shield the guests from the stress of everyday life. They constitute a holistic experience. And that goes far beyond just the guest rooms, suites and restaurants to also include the passages reaching them. “Most hotels forget the corridors and don’t spend any money on them. But they are also crucial to creating a sense of a place,” as Inge Moore knows.

What would she still like to do? She pauses briefly. “Of course it’s easy to continue creating beautiful luxury hotels. But I would like to create a mid-range hotel that is young, energetic, not too expensive, and nevertheless clever,” says Inge Moore. Because not only in times of recession are travel budgets called into question, but maybe also in the long run. Thus far, such a project has not been brought to her attention. But you can be sure: the guests will surely not be presented with an anonymous hotel for mass tourism.



Interview



Inge Moore is the principal and chief designer in the London office of Hirsch Bedner Associates (HBA).

Inge Moore's world is one of atmosphere. Since 2001, this native-born South African has been creating spaces where people feel safe and secure – even at the other end of the world. As principal and chief designer in the London office of Hirsch Bedner Associates (HBA), she creates the interiors of hotels, restaurants and spas in Europe, Asia and North Africa. That her studio is not located in an ordinary office building but in a charming, former dance hall in the district of Notting Hill is hardly surprising. In the middle of the space that is awash with light and surrounded by a gallery, a huge white table holds a prominent position. Countless material samples and fabric swatches are spread out upon it like valuable treasures. They are used to capture the character, the feel or the color palette of future projects. An interview about annoying water faucets, boxes for people and the significance of a simple cheese sandwich.

Ms. Moore, you are entrusted with hotel projects around the world, which have already been hosts to millions of overnight guests. Your current projects include the Hotel Alpina in Gstaad, the St. Regis in Rome, the Hotel Alfonso XIII in Seville and the Ritz Carlton on Mauritius. What does home mean for you?

Inge Moore:

My home is where I come from. I was born in South Africa. My parents have a huge farm there. So I'm a real country girl (laughs). You don't encounter anyone, just serene and beautiful nature. When I'm there, I spend lots of time with my parents and aunts, who live not far away. For me, London is more like homework. I'm quite a homebody and I rarely go out, even though everyone always wants to drag me along to parties (laughs).



I think a home is basically nothing other than a box. It's the things that you fill it with that really create the place.

Are there things you've taken with you from South Africa?

Inge Moore:

I'm a tremendous collector and always find new things. I have a collection of African headrests, which I love more than anything. I always also bring a few things to London from our house in Africa, and vice versa. I think a home is basically nothing other than a box. It's the things that you fill it with that really create the place. Hotels are also just boxes. The question is: how can people feel comfortable in these boxes?

The feeling of home must also be transported across cultural boundaries. How do you accomplish this?

Inge Moore:

A hotel must be a place where you can relax and feel safe. Only then can you feel comfortable. What's wonderful about this work is that we can learn a lot about other cultures, and the things that we encounter locally be incorporated into our projects. It very much depends on whether we're dealing with a resort hotel or a business hotel in the city. In that kind of hotel, people seldom stay longer than 24 hours. But if they are spending one or two weeks of precious vacation time at one particular location, that opens up a whole grab bag of options we can play with. What we then design is a comprehensive experience. After all, those guests have time during their stay to discover all the stories we want to tell with our spaces. That way they not only have memories of the country to take home, but also ones of their hotel room.

What does luxury mean to you?

Inge Moore:

Luxury gives one the feeling of being special. When you arrive somewhere and feel loved and cared for. You can enjoy the time you spend there, and you want to take a piece of it with you when you head home. That's why the things around you must exude something extraordinary. Even a cocktail tray can be a fond discovery. Things that are so special you don't know where they come from or how to get them. That's my idea of luxury.



Is that why you have 80 percent of the furnishings and fittings custom made for each hotel?

Inge Moore:

Yes, the great thing about hotels is that they need the quantities required for custom solutions. Many interior designers take the easy way out and use the same catalogs again and again. It's disappointing to see how often the same mirrors or light fixtures are used. That's why we don't use catalogs with things that anyone can buy. Many of our clients are amazed at how much detail goes into a room. A typical sketchbook that we submit for a new hotel project has far more than a thousand pages of designs. In addition, there's a whole library of specifications, colors, materials and surface finishes. We even specify the embroidery pattern of the pillows.

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When you approach the design of new interiors, what is your first step?

Inge Moore:

First and foremost is always the building. When you enter it for the first time, it automatically begins to speak with you. Every building has special qualities that must be discovered. The surroundings must also be explored and integrated. We have designed a restaurant in a very contemporary building in St. Petersburg. There are beautiful woods outside the city. Russia has this folklore, after all, with wizards, fairies and other creatures in the woods. We wanted to include these themes in the restaurant and tell stories about them.

The firm Hirsch Bedner Associates (HBA) has offices around the world, including in Beijing, Dubai, Melbourne, Singapore and Tokyo. The London office, where you began working in 2001 and became principal in 2008, is the only one in Europe. What is the difference between your work and that of your colleagues?

Inge Moore:

The offices are very different and each has its own culture. We are a total of thirteen partners who each runs an office and also shapes it by virtue of their own personality. In London we are naturally closely bound to the European culture, even though I



myself have African roots. Most notably, crafted details play a much greater role with us than in the offices in Singapore and Hong Kong, where hundreds of people work. The projects there are considerably larger and the clients want something completely different than here. I think this diversity is also where HBA's quality lies. We are not fixated on a particular market or style. We receive most of our commissions directly through word of mouth from people who have seen our hotels or stayed in them. We sometimes also take part in competitions. When we have a close working relationship with clients, we also work with them on other projects outside of Europe. That explains why we designed the spa in the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Hong Kong from London instead of the local office there. Sometimes that creates some friction. But that's normal in any large family. (laughs)

ST. REGIS GRAND HOTEL
Starwood Hotels & Resorts
Rome, 1999



SARAYA GALERIE IM
CAIRO MARRIOTT HOTEL
Cairo, 2010



You were just speaking about clients' expectations. Is the concept of anonymous hotel chains obsolete?

Inge Moore:

Clients definitely expect more now than ten years ago. That becomes apparent if you think about how often our parents stayed in hotels as compared to us today. No generation uses hotels as frequently and commonly as we do. The Hilton hotels were known for looking the same everywhere in the world. You knew what you were getting. Today people want the opposite. You can also see that on travel portals like *TripAdvisor*. There are now a huge number of comments about interior design. People always used to think that no one would be interested in that.

The interior has become a real sales factor...

Inge Moore:

Definitely. Why do you select a certain hotel where you are staying? The competition is high. The choice has increased enormously in recent years. Every building needs its own spirit. The hotel chains do provide the same basics. But they also need to give you a reason to book a room there.

HOTEL ALFONSO XIII
Starwood Luxury Collection
Seville, 2012



For hotels, the bars and restaurants are primarily what serve as their interface to the city at large. They are also visited by people who are not staying at the hotel. To what extent does this play a role in your design?

Inge Moore:

Restaurants and bars are like stages. In this regard, the bar at the Alfonso XIII hotel in Seville was interesting. It was a wonderful old hotel. But no one used the restaurants and the bar. The question was how to make them relevant to the locals. So we put tapas and local dishes to the menu instead of just typical hotel food. I think most hotels still serve dreadful food, although the situation has improved dramatically in recent years. It's important that you can also get regular food in a hotel, like a simple cheese sandwich and not just extravagant things.

Inge Moore started with the design of exhibitions in Johannesburg, designed the interiors of casinos.



When did you become interested in interior design?

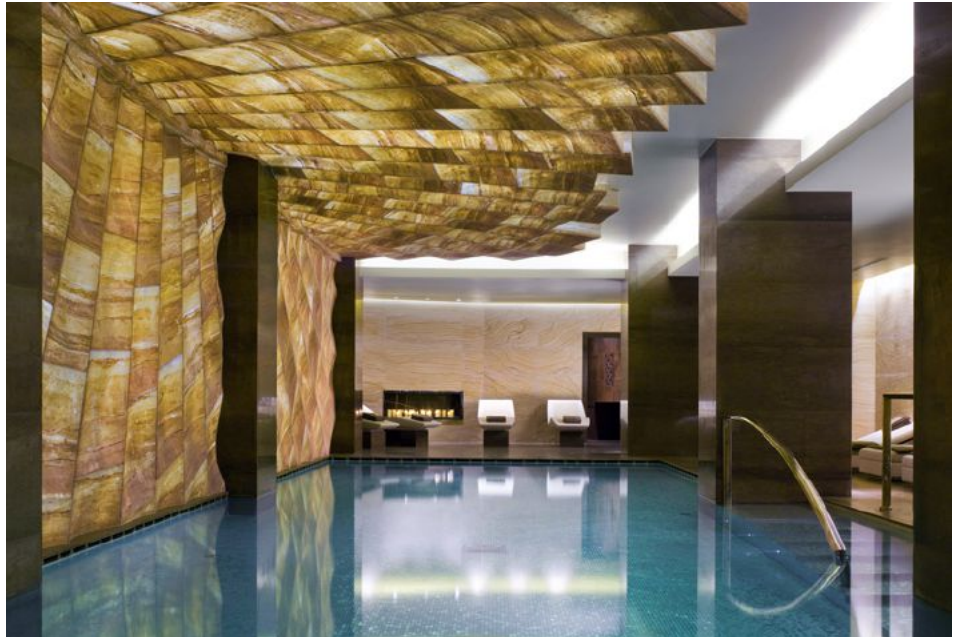
Inge Moore:

When I was young, I built homes for my dolls on the shelves in my bedroom. At the age of 13, I redecorated my mother's house and put new wallpaper on the walls. Before that, I had told my mother that she didn't have any taste (laughs). Then I also redesigned the bathroom. I was lucky that I was allowed to create things when I was young. Later I then studied interior design.

How did you get into the hotel business?

Inge Moore:

I started with the design of exhibitions at Museum Africa in Johannesburg. That was my first job. It was wonderful, because I learned a lot about presenting things properly. Then I moved on to an architectural firm, where I designed the interiors of six large casinos. That was also exciting, because they are an entirely different world of fantasy and escapism. But I soon had enough of those busloads of people who sit behind slot machines, inserting coins. I wanted to do something else. From there I moved to London and started working at HBA.



I think that we need to restore the balance between comfort and functionality. Both aspects have to come together to ensure that the human touch is not lost.

You are also constantly traveling on business. What outrages you when you check into a new hotel?

Inge Moore:

When I can't use the water faucets! Although I am a designer, I always have to fight with them. In a way, it's an insult to the guests. At home we have the time and patience to find out how something works. But why do we have to learn how to use everything in hotels, where we often spend just one night? Even with reading lights, I often can't find the switch and then simply pull the plug. It doesn't have to be that way. It's important that things are easy to use.

Hotels are the static part of traveling. What about the mobile things: Would you also design the interior of a train, a boat or a plane?

Inge Moore:

I would love to design a train. Airplanes, too, because they are so boring. I would try to make them more human and give them more of a tactile sensation. You must be able to touch interiors. They must feel good. Trains, above all, were much nicer before, because people spent more time in them. Today they are becoming increasingly more functional. I think that we need to restore the balance between comfort and functionality. Both aspects have to come together to ensure that the human touch is not lost. We're all just human. That's why things should be simple. Just not too clever!

Thank you very much for the interview.

Interview: Norman Kietzmann

Norman Kietzmann studied industrial design in Berlin and Paris, and writes as a freelance journalist about architecture and design for Baunetz, Designlines, Pure, Deutsch, amongst others. He lives and works in Milan.

project management: Andrea Nakath

Projects

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ESPA AT THE ISTANBUL EDITION
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ESPA
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Killarney, 2008



ST. REGIS GRAND HOTEL
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Rome, 1999



WORLI CENTRE MUMBAI CGIS

