

TREND REPORT

INDEPENDENT HOTEL SHOW 2023

Written by Alys Bryan, Managing Editor
designinsiderlive.com

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INDEPENDENT HOTEL SHOW 2023

WELCOME TO INDEPENDENT HOTEL SHOW, LONDON 2023 THROUGH THE DISCERNING LENS OF DESIGN INSIDER MANAGING EDITOR, Alys BRYAN.

We are thrilled to present the most compelling and influential aspects we've encountered, poised to drive progress in the commercial interior sector.

In the upcoming pages, we will showcase standout moments from the event, unveiling opportunities for automation, intriguing conversations, and strategies to enhance the guest experience, all of which left an indelible mark on our visit.

Additionally, we will offer our insights into the event's achievements and challenges, inviting you to engage in the conversation by commenting on our Design Insider LinkedIn posts or reaching out via email at alys@designinsiderlive.com

This trend report is supported by Hypnos Contract Beds, sustainable sleep solutions with style for interior designers, hotels, serviced apartments & residential developments.

Cover image: Hypnos Contract Beds

This page, clockwise from top left: Fredericks of London, Alys Bryan, Malée Natural Science



“THE 2023 EDITION OF THE INDEPENDENT HOTEL SHOW WAS AN AMAZING SUCCESS, WITH THOUSANDS OF HOTELIERS PASSING THROUGH THE DOORS TO DISCOVER THE LATEST TRENDS, SERVICES AND PRODUCTS IN THE WORLD OF HOSPITALITY.”

“THE SHOW IS INTEGRAL TO THE GROWTH OF THE UK & IRELAND'S INDEPENDENT HOTEL SECTOR, GIVING HOTELIERS AN OPPORTUNITY TO CONNECT WITH PEERS EXPERIENCING SIMILAR CHALLENGES AND SUPPLIERS DEDICATED TO MEETING THEIR UNIQUE NEEDS. IN JUST TWO DAYS, HOTELIERS CAN MEET WITH MORE THAN 200 QUALITY SUPPLIERS, GET THE INSIDE TRACK ON KEY DESIGN TRENDS, EXPLORE THE LATEST ESG INNOVATIONS AND ELEVATE THEIR GUEST EXPERIENCE WITH ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS FROM INSPIRING HOTELIERS, DESIGNERS AND HOSPITALITY PROFESSIONALS.”

Glenn Wallace, Event Manager, Independent Hotel Show



OBSERVATIONS

EVERY FACET OF A GUEST'S JOURNEY, COMMENCING WITH THE DECISION TO STAY AWAY FROM HOME, IS SUBJECTED TO METICULOUS SCRUTINY. FROM THE MOMENT TRAVELLERS CONTEMPLATE THEIR STAY, THROUGH THE BOOKING PROCESS, TO CHECKING OUT OF THE HOTEL, EVERY INTERACTION AND DECISION CARRIES WEIGHT.

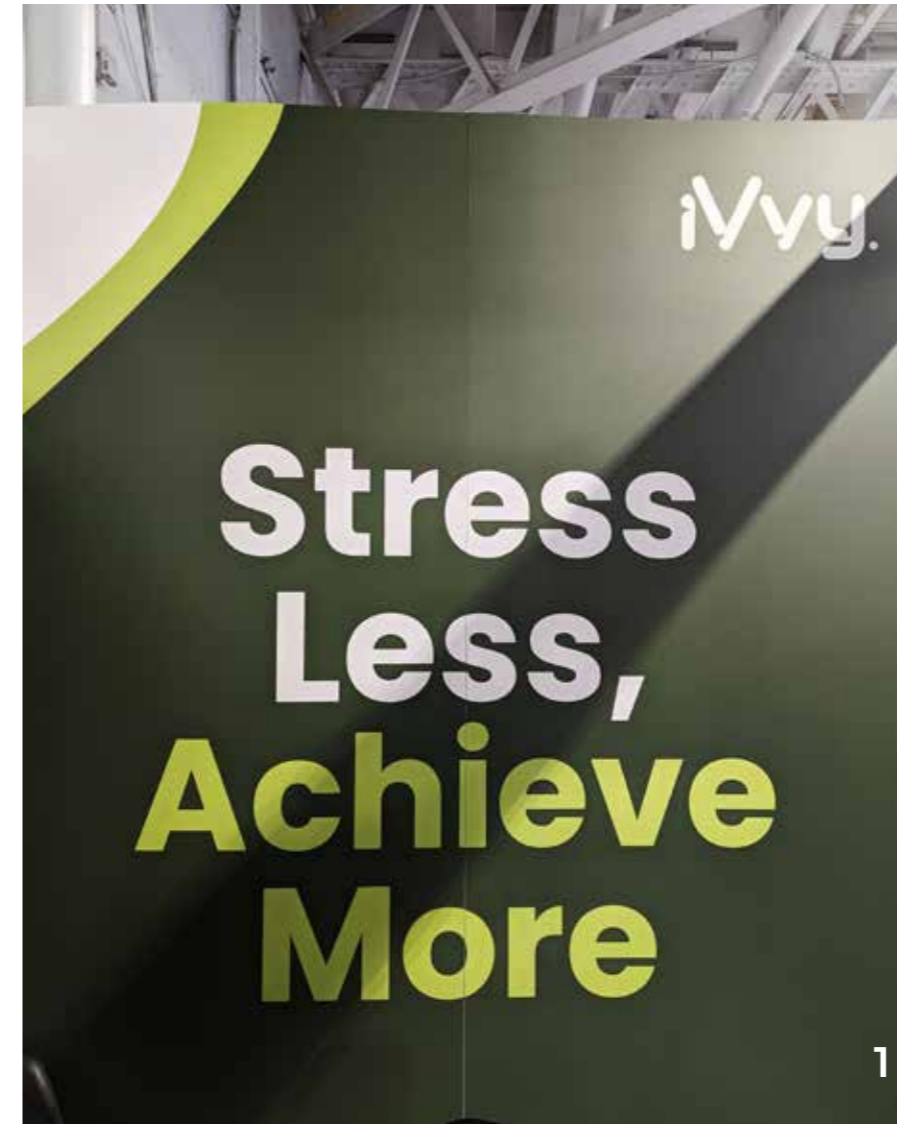
AS HOTELIERS, COMMERCIAL DESIGNERS, AND SUPPLIERS, WE HOLD THE POWER TO ORCHESTRATE THE GUESTS' JOURNEY, GUIDING THEM THROUGH A SEAMLESS AND MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE. SKILFULLY EXECUTED, THIS NOT ONLY AMPLIFIES THE OVERALL GUEST EXPERIENCE BUT ALSO FOSTERS VISITOR LOYALTY.

In this Trend Report, we shine a spotlight on exhibitors offering services designed to elevate and automate the guest experience. These innovative solutions span a wide spectrum, encompassing advanced property management software, booking services, and room customization options. By incorporating these services, hotels can streamline operations while enhancing guest convenience and personalization.

Additionally, we feature exhibitors who provide products that significantly influence a guest's stay. From mattresses that deliver a great night's sleep to high-quality coffee and branded toiletries, these products are meticulously crafted to boost comfort and functionality. When seamlessly integrated into the guest experience, these products become pivotal factors in shaping the overall quality of a guest's stay.

Our Trend Report also comprises enlightening conversations with commercial interior designers who excel in understanding the psychology behind designing immersive spaces. This encompasses the role sensory design plays in the rhythm and flow of a guest's stay. It explores how guests may be unaware of the subtle ways in which sound, light, touch, taste, and sight can be harnessed to modulate the pace of their day.

This report can inform the way in which you are able to rigorously write a guests' journey, ensuring they have the best possible experience and, in turn, fostering their loyalty as returning guests.



1. iVvy
2. Shackle
3. Pact Coffee
4. Independent Hotel Show





get.ivvy.com

THE 2023 EVENT SAW A SIGNIFICANT PRESENCE OF TECH BRANDS, OCCUPYING PRIME POSITIONS ON BOTH THE MAIN FLOOR AND THE MEZZANINE. WHAT CAUGHT OUR ATTENTION WAS THAT THE TECHNOLOGY ON DISPLAY PROMISED TO AUTOMATE THE GUEST JOURNEY AND SHIFT ADMINISTRATIVE TASKS, ENABLING HOTELIERS TO REFOCUS ON DELIVERING FANTASTIC HOSPITALITY.

Among the tech innovations showcased were software providers offering holistic solutions, encompassing property management software, event space booking, booking engines, and marketing services. Some of these services were also cloud based.

AUTOMATION

Another business model showcased service providers constructing tech stacks through strategic partnerships, demonstrating adaptability in meeting hoteliers' evolving needs.

Integrated technology services not only introduced cutting-edge audio and visual technology but also unveiled digital room access solutions.

So, what insights can we glean from these tech services?

For suppliers, automation promises to deliver a seamless guest journey. This raises the question: How might similar levels of automation enhance the customer journey in product selection and ordering? Furthermore, could automating administrative tasks liberate more time for the delivery of a personalized service?



siemlus.com

Designers could consider the benefits of early collaboration with tech brands, aiming to create an integrated and seamless experience for guests. We were also prompted to question how technology could be further developed to elevate the guest experience from a design perspective, and what steps, if any, are necessary to ensure technology remains an unobtrusive yet indispensable aid to the guest experience?

While we have discussed automation extensively, the realm of AI opportunities has yet to be explored. Evivo, for instance, has embraced AI with their ChatGPT-based chat functions, accessible to both hoteliers and guests. This prompts us to ponder the uncharted potential AI offers. As automation reduces our workload, how do we leverage the newfound time and focus to create a more human-centered, service-oriented experience?

innroad.com



IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE DESIGN

WITHIN IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCES, EVERY DETAIL, REGARDLESS OF ITS APPARENT INSIGNIFICANCE, WIELDS THE POWER TO INFLUENCE A GUEST'S JOURNEY IN WAYS WE MAY NEVER HAVE IMAGINED. THE CREATION OF A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, OUTLINING EVERY STEP FROM THE INITIAL DECISION TO STAY AWAY FROM HOME, IS ESSENTIAL TO SCULPTING A MEMORABLE GUEST EXPERIENCE.

Automated services offer invaluable assistance in shaping a positive guest experience, even before their arrival. It's at this juncture that their interaction with the building, interior, and the hotel team begins, setting the tone for the rest of their stay. While sensory design is undeniably important, we'll delve into this intricate subject in a separate section of this report.

At the Independent Hotel Show, exhibitors presented a diverse array of products designed to address every facet of a guest's stay. These offerings encompassed customizability, ensuring an uninterrupted brand experience, sustainable products that met both guest and environmental needs, and a variety of F&B solutions from coffee and tea to water, soft drinks, and delectable chocolates.

The scope of immersive experiences necessitates the meticulous consideration of every touch point along the guest journey. Amid the wealth of considerations and products that could enhance a guest's experience, a fundamental question arises: Are all these elements truly essential?

For designers, the imperative is to select only those products that genuinely amplify the guest journey and align shamelessly with the hotel brand. The temptation to incorporate an abundance of features must be weighed against the cost both financially and sustainably.



KUISHI

Sustainable dispensing solutions, glass bottles with stainless steel caps, and organic ceramic inks. Refillable and customisable.



BROMPTON

Customisable folding bikes available for purchase or lease, packages include services and insurance.



BIC

Customisable pens. Newly launched Super Clip Origin is made with castor oil, sawdust and talc. All pens are 100% recyclable.



WHO GIVES A CRAP?

Now available in UK supermarkets as well as wholesale through a dedicated wholesale website supported by a new UK sales team. Sustainable toilet role delivered by palette.



LOVE CCOA

Ethically crafted (and delicious), luxury handcrafted, sustainable chocolates.



CART ON WATER

Carton Water is a low carbon footprint alternative to cans and bottles. British Spring Water packaged in plant-based cartons.



BREW TEA CO.

Loose leaf tea and whole leaf tea bags blended in the UK. Elevating the tea offer in hotel bedrooms.



ZOLB

EV charging stations, payable by app or contactless. A new business launched in 2023 offering 30 min and 5 hour charging options.



HYPNOS CONTRACT BEDS

Luxurious and sustainable Woolsleepers mattresses from the Hospitality Origins Collection. *The Hospitality Origins Collection presents a new era in delivering sustainable sleep solutions for the hospitality sector. Our handcrafted and hand finished pocket sprung Woolsleepers range of mattresses have been designed for an ultimate sleep experience and with the utmost care for our environment.*



TWIG

Seasonal collections of colourful throws and cushions. Made using 100% natural yarns, woven exclusively for Twig in the UK.



TAYLOR'S CLASSICS

Showcased a variety of ranges of traditional and modern furniture.



LAND & WATER

Natural products using pure essential oils and actives which are sustainably sourced and produced in small batches from natural and ethical recipes.



NIO COCKTAILS

Nio (Needs Ice Only) have the aim of changing the public's attitude to cocktail consumption. To enjoy a cocktail simply shake, tear, pour! The brand boasts the seal of approval of Patrick Pistoletti, Italian master mixologist.



SAVYLL BEVERAGE CO.

Savyll produce a premium range of award-winning non-alcoholic cocktails with the belief that drinks have the power to bring people together, but they don't need to have alcohol to do so!



SWYFT

Swyft believe is a short delivery time for furniture which is designed for ease of delivery and installation, furniture which is *'thoughtful, comfortable and that will last a lifetime.'*



FREDERICKS OF LONDON

One of the event's most instagramable moments! Showcasing *'a variety of live and artificial planting schemes for hotels, bars, and restaurants nationwide and beyond.'*

PRODUCT DISCOVERY

BURGESS SCEPTRE

The Sceptre chair has an encapsulating back and sides which surround the user for comfortable and chic sit. The seat can be upholstered in a fabric of your choice and there are 6 base variations, each with its own distinct style, to maximise even more customisation to precisely meet your expectations.



SILENTNIGHT GROUP LUNE

The Silentnight brands, expertise and scientifically proven products, including newly launched Lune, help provide the right sleep solution for every hospitality experience. Silentnight create flexible solutions for their customers so that guests can get a restful night's sleep.



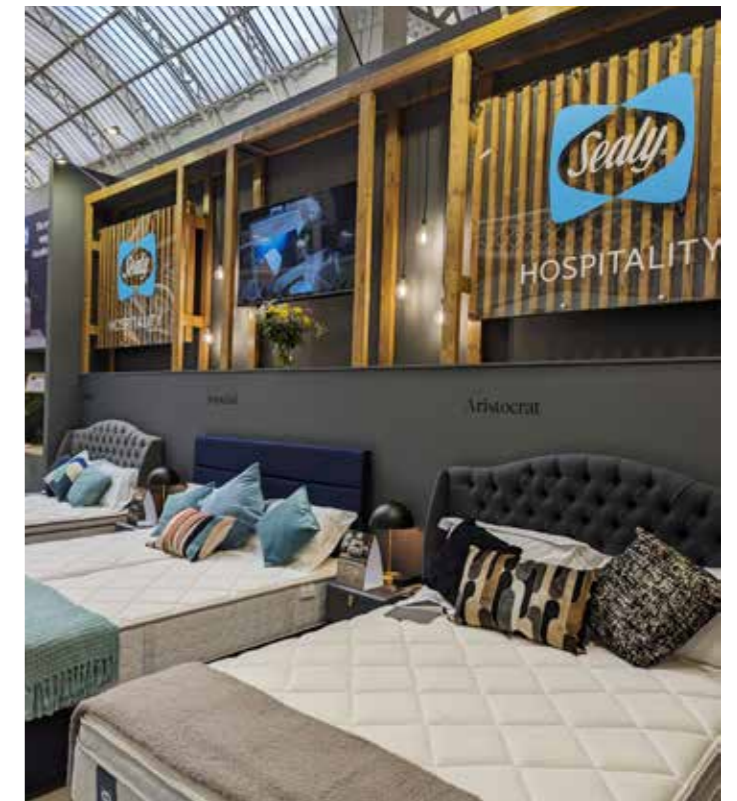
WILDMORE BY LAUREN VEASEY

Wildmore is a British interior décor brand and maker of unique furnishings and homeware. They are known for their imaginative wallpapers, creative use of colour and eclectic pieces. Founded in 2020 by Lauren Veasey, their collections are designed in house at the Wildmore Studio in New York, Lincolnshire and all sourced in the UK



SEALY REGAL

Sealy's Regal mattress showcases their Posturepedic technology. Each and every Sealy Posturepedic mattress embodies the unique, patented technologies that set Sealy apart. Cleverly designed and carefully developed through generations of knowhow - married with ongoing scientific research and testing.



SENSORY DESIGN PANEL DISCUSSION

DESIGN INSIDER'S MANAGING EDITOR, ALYS BRYAN, WAS INVITED TO RETURN THIS YEAR TO HOST A CONVERSATION WITHIN THE EVENT'S EXTREMELY POPULAR SEMINAR PROGRAMME.

Sensory-centric creation: Designing beyond the visual

In the panel session, hospitality and design experts delved into the profound impact that sensory elements had on the guest experience. They engaged in insightful conversations about creating environments that supported the guest's well-being, delivered high-quality sleep, orchestrated memorable experiences, and established deep connections with guests. The panellists shared their expertise on striking the perfect balance between functionality and aesthetics while embracing the diverse preferences of today's travellers.

Speakers:

Moritz Waldemeyer, Owner - Waldemeyer
Ryan Thompson, General Manager - FortySeven
Rob Wood, Creative Director - Music Concierge

The key note that we took away from the panel was that within a hotel setting there is the opportunity to orchestrate the cadence of guest's the day through sensory design. A 24/7 sensory programme needs to be expertly designed to provide a framework for this to be implemented.

Lighting design can evoke powerful emotions, and along with sound, should not only be at the heart of this programme but viewed as part of the material palette of the space.

When sensory design is successful guests are oblivious to how their experiences have been written.

We asked Ryan Thompson and Rob Wood to summarize their thoughts on why sensory design is important to the guest experience and walk us through their approach to sensory design.



Rob Wood

Guests are experiencing the hotel environment through their senses. Through the design & artwork; to the mouthwatering menu & wine list; to the flowers and scent styling – each guest's sense are tantalized & provoked in many ways.

Architecture, interior design, lighting are of course crucial to the feel of a property. Sight is the primary sense after all. But hearing is the second most important way we experience the world around us.

Sound's impact on guests and the way it is controlled needs to be carefully considered. Just like good lighting design, the sound and music experience affects how comfortable guests are, how they feel, and even how they behave. If you get music curation right it can help reinforce the brand personality, and help your property stand out. Get it wrong and you are probably missing a trick, or worst still annoying people.

At Music Concierge we work with hotel designers and operators to make sure their music experience elevates the guest experience and is in synch with the concept and desired guest experience of each area. From consulting on audio system design, through to curating music for each space - we create captivating experiences through sound and music. This helps give our clients a competitive edge.

Great sensory experiences don't just happen. They are carefully conceived, designed and executed with the upmost attention to detail. From interior design, to branding, menu design, staff uniforms, and lighting. Every aspect needs to be considered and got right in order to create a compelling and brilliantly immersive experience.

Music deserves the same detailed approach so that its style, emotion, and energy all flow perfectly to create an appealing ambience that works hard to support your concept and drive trade. We achieve this through a consultative design process working with stakeholders to understand the interiors and the F&B or wellness concepts. We hand-pick music in line with the brand personality, the design ethos, and the concept of each area, but also according to the time of day so we can schedule the perfect ambience at all times. Ultimately this attention to detail to sensory design creates places people love to spend time and money in..

Ryan Thompson

In a competitive market of selling a hotel experience ensuring the sensory design is fit for the guest journey is essential. Creating an ambience to suit the commercial function of hotel spaces is crucial. At times, we need our guests to relax, be calm and have a great night's sleep whilst at other times we need them to be awake, energised and willing to purchase.

Hospitality today extends so much further than the interesting wine list or the stand-out main course. Careful considerations of using colour, texture, lighting, sound and temperature as part of the sensory design treats the guests senses and can manipulate them into a pattern of behaviour to stimulate sales. More so now, the extra glass of wine or a guest choosing to dine in-house rather than outside is critical. Excellent hospitality service can go so far, the sensory design of our hotels can help us succeed.

Through sensory design at Forty-Seven we have curated our spaces to stimulate behaviour and influence our guests. By playing to the senses the experience is elevated subconsciously. The furthest consideration executed is through the design and setting of our bedrooms and suites. We see this as one of the biggest commercial opportunities by making a space to offer a quality night's sleep that we can become known for, this suits the modern day corporate travellers along with the leisure guest alike. Through design, shapes, colours, patterns along with physical features of the toiletries, suggested podcasts, bedding and linen quality, tea selection, autistics and black out blinds as well as curtains. A multi-sensory experience to create a both quality and waking experience is offered at Forty-Seven – setting the story that Forty-Seven winks is better than 40 winks,

MORITZ WALDEMEYER

DURING THE EVENT I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO SIT DOWN WITH LIGHTING DESIGNER MORITZ WALDEMEYER TO HAVE A BRIEF CONVERSATION ABOUT HIS CANDLE DESIGN AND HIS INSTALLATION FOR MYTHOS MOZART. MORITZ WALDEMEYER'S DESIGN APPROACH IS FASCINATING, REALISED THROUGH PROJECTS OF DRAMATICALLY VARYING SCALES, EACH ONE COMMUNICATING A CLEAR CONCEPT WITH UNIQUE CREATIVITY.

At its core, his work centres around the marriage of technology and aesthetics, due to so often working with light his work is a sensory experience. I asked Moritz more about the variety of scales he works in, and he explained that it is often down to his designs' modular nature:

"We start out at a very small scale, which could be a single candle on the table. Then, because of our modular approach, the candles can be used in multiples. This allows people to customize how they group the candles – they could create a small chandelier of three candles, seven, or even increase the size of the groups until they arrive at a very large installation. On the largest end, we did 1500 candles for our Mozart experience."

I asked Moritz about the inspiration behind his digital candle, he shared:

"The idea came from looking at very small LED matrices and wondering what we can reproduce on a simple, in our case, eight by 16 pixel matrix. It's similar to when you work on a computer, and you have a small icon or emoji, it's interesting to see how much information you can pull out of such a very small amount of pixels."

Moritz's sensory design creates an emotional resonance, as he explained:

"Our candle captures the essence of the candle. If you move

backwards a little bit, then you can't tell our candle apart from the real thing. But when you move closer, you see that it's digital. This kind of contrast between the real and the digital makes it particularly interesting and people find it intriguing, so they love it even more as a product."

The Mozart project offers a profound sensory journey. In 2022 Mozart designed an installation of 1500 candles as part of his installation for Mythos Mozart, Requiem – Mozart's Death. The installation was installed at the "Kleines Kayserhaus" at Rauhensteingasse 8, where Mozart lived for the final years of his until his death on December 5, 1791.

"It is quite a large space, and once it is filled with a sea of candles, it is an experience which takes your breath away just by itself. There is music which aids in telling the story, accompanied by projections with actors. The emotion is really there. After all, we're talking about the death of Mozart, and you are in the location where he died. At one point in time, the music becomes increasingly dramatic, in the projections he's on his deathbed, at the moment where he passes away the candles are blown out by this gust of wind, and the music stops. It really sends a shiver down your spine. It takes your breath away."

Sensory design and lighting being is an integral part of Moritz's material palette, I asked him whether he saw opportunities for lighting designers like himself in the hospitality sector. He told me that:

"There is the opportunity for the design of objects that light up such as in lamps, building up to chandeliers and installations. But you can go even further and talk about interactive installations which can be very subtle or stronger. We've done both. We worked on a project very recently in a new hotel in Sardinia where there's a long corridor cut into the rock, it's a cave like experience. We installed candles that each have a sensor so the walkway is candle lit but as you walk past every candle flickers as if you drew a gust of wind behind you. This is a subtle way of providing animation and interaction. It's playful."



Interactive installations in hotel spaces would require a level of collaboration with the hotelier or interior designer, I asked Moritz about his process of collaborating with others:

"Sometimes they [the hotelier or designer] have an idea of the type of field that they want to create or a story that is linked to the location, this is often something that we enjoy playing with because it gives us like a new point of departure and prevents us from repeating what we may have done before. Sometimes we pick up on a local material or a local way of working which gives us starting points and triggers ideas for new and unique approaches to the location or space. That might be something particular about the architecture, because it might be a historic building, and then we will play with a feature that architecture gives us that you don't find anywhere else."

I was keen to know if the process moved back and forth between Moritz and the commissioner, he explained:

"It depends a little bit on the relationship that you develop, sometimes they're keen to give us a brief and let us run with it, and sometimes the relationship is very close, like conversation, going into the fine detail, we enjoy either way. We engage as much as the counterparty would like to be engaged, we're quite playful and flexible."

I'm always keen to know what's on a designer's desk, but so often it's a secret, it was no different with Moritz:

"We can't really talk about them too much, sadly. Although I can say that we're working on a project for a spa environment, which is very interesting, because it's in a historic space."

SLEEP WELL!

THE RISE OF WELLNESS RETREATS

THE TREND FOR WELLNESS AND SLEEP RETREATS IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY HAS GAINED SIGNIFICANT TRACTION IN RECENT YEARS, AS PEOPLE INCREASINGLY PRIORITISE THEIR HEALTH AND WELL-BEING WHILE TRAVELLING. HYPNOS CONTRACT BEDS, A LEADING PROVIDER OF HIGH-QUALITY LUXURY BEDS AND MATTRESSES FOR THE HOSPITALITY SECTOR, HAS BEEN AT THE FOREFRONT OF THIS TREND.

Wellness and Sleep Retreat Trend in Hospitality

In today's fast-paced world, where stress and sleep deprivation are common concerns, travellers are seeking more than just a place to rest their heads when they stay at hotels. They are looking for experiences that rejuvenate their bodies and minds. This has given rise to the trend of wellness and sleep retreats in the hospitality industry.

Key Elements of Wellness and Sleep Retreats:

Comfortable Beds: Central to the success of any wellness and sleep retreat is the quality of sleep provided to guests. Hypnos Contract Beds has been a game-changer in this aspect. Their bespoke mattresses and beds are designed to offer unmatched comfort, ensuring guests enjoy restorative sleep during their stay.

Holistic Well-Being: Beyond comfortable beds, these retreats often incorporate a holistic approach to well-being. This may include spa treatments, meditation sessions, yoga classes, and healthy dining options, all geared toward improving guests' overall health.

Natural Surroundings: Many wellness and sleep retreats are situated in tranquil, natural settings, providing a serene escape from the noise and stress of urban life. This connection with nature enhances the restorative experience.

Personalised Experiences: Customisation is a key feature of these retreats. Guests can often tailor their experience, choosing activities and treatments that align with their wellness goals.



Carolyn Mitchell, sales and marketing director at Hypnos Contract Beds explains,

“IN THE HOTEL HYPNOS SERIES OF DISCUSSIONS AND INSIGHTS, WE EMBARK ON A JOURNEY TO DISCOVER THE PROFOUND IMPACT THAT THOUGHTFUL DESIGN, SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS, AND A GENUINE COMMITMENT TO WELL-BEING CAN HAVE ON OUR SLEEP EXPERIENCES. WE DELVE INTO THE ARTISTRY OF SLEEP, WHERE AESTHETICS MERGE WITH FUNCTIONALITY, AND WHERE THE PURSUIT OF COMFORT ALIGNS SEAMLESSLY WITH OUR ETHICAL VALUES. WE BELIEVE IT IS ESSENTIAL WE LEAVE A LASTING LEGACY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS - OUR PURPOSE IS TO INSPIRE PEOPLE TO SLEEP SUSTAINABLY, CREATING COMFORT WITH INTEGRITY”.

HYPNOS CONTRACT BEDS:

The wellness and sleep retreat trend in hospitality is here to stay, as travellers increasingly prioritise their health and well-being. Hypnos Contract Beds continues to be a trusted partner, helping hotels create the foundation for a good night's sleep. Their commitment to quality, innovation, and nature-based solutions ensures that guests enjoy the ultimate in sleep comfort, making their stay a truly rejuvenating experience, whilst also being good for the planet. Every material used in making Hypnos Contract Beds is carefully selected, with an emphasis on using traceable ethically sourced natural materials, meaning that their beds never need to go to landfill. They are the first bed manufacturer to be carbon neutral, an accolade they achieved over a decade ago.

Hypnos Contract Beds, Hotel Hypnos series delves into the intricate art of designing for sleep, exploring nature-based solutions to bed design, uncover the true cost of sleep, and champion comfort with integrity.



LEVENVERSE

AT DESIGN INSIDER WE ARE FASCINATED BY INDUSTRY LEADING LEVENVERSE. THE LEVENVERSE IS A FUN VIRTUAL IMMERSIVE HOTEL ENVIRONMENT WHICH EXPANDS UPON LEVEN'S PHYSICAL SOCIAL SPACES TO BRING THEM TO A GLOBAL VIRTUAL COMMUNITY.

YOU CAN VISIT LEVENVERSE IN DECENTRALAND, THEY HAVE A STRIKING 3 STORY HOTEL, AN ARCHITECT-DESIGNED BUILDING, IN THE FASHION DISTRICT.

WE SAT DOWN WITH COFOUNDER OF WELLBROOK HOSPITALITY TIMOTHY GRIFFEN FOR A SHORT CONVERSATION, BUT IN ALL HONESTY WE COULD HAVE CHATTED FOR HOURS. FASCINATING!

Our conversation with Timothy started with him sharing insights into his work:

"We create hotel brands and operate hotels under management agreements. One of our hotel brands is Levin; we opened the first site in Manchester two years ago. And, we opened our second site, a virtual hotel, in the metaverse. We're one of the first independent hotel brands to create a hotel site in the metaverse."

As we were intrigued by this innovative move, we asked Timothy what drove that decision:

"We felt it was an opportunity to bring our brands to new audiences, and obviously, the metaverse has huge potential. There are 500 million people already using the metaverse; that's a huge amount of interest. The metaverse is also still evolving, and it will become much more integrated with our real-life experiences, so from a business perspective, it makes sense for us to bring our brands to the metaverse, not only to engage with new audiences but also to leverage the commercial power of the metaverse today and in the future."

Eager to learn more about the monetization of the metaverse, we asked Timothy to explain further:

"At the moment, there are no fees. All you need is a phone or WhatsApp or a desktop, and you can just go to Decentraland, which is the specific metaverse that we built the hotel in. You can create your avatar and explore for free. Our hotel is located in the fashion district of Decentraland. You buy plots of land in Decentraland, just like in the real world but using cryptocurrency, and we bought our plot a year ago. We then engaged an architect to design the three-story building, which we have the air rights for; it includes a lobby, bedroom, spa, and event space for the guests. You can meet your fellow guests while you're exploring the world."

AI was a topic we wanted to delve into due to Timothy's progressive approach. We asked if,



as AI became increasingly mainstream, he thought there would be a link between AI and the metaverse, and he believed there would be:

"I think they'll all become related, the metaverse, AI, and reality will all come together under web three. Virtual touring is an increasingly huge business for hotels, and as AI evolves, how we search will change the way that people book hotels. I think AI will very much change the way that hoteliers do business, and that service may sit under the metaverse umbrella."

We inquired if Levenverse might begin to learn about their regular guests and build a tailored service for them:

"Absolutely! We will be able to automate experiences that the specific guest is looking for. One of our pillars for building the metaverse was to address wellness, and so we've partnered with a fitness brand to do fitness classes or meditation classes in the metaverse. We'll be able to know the full profile of our guests and have a wellness event in the metaverse ready for their arrival, providing experiences that are bespoke for guests."

Excited about the prospect of real-world guests learning about Timothy's metaverse endeavors, we asked if his guests in the physical hotel in Manchester were aware of his metaverse work:

"Yes, we have information about Levenverse on our website; there's a tab that talks about the metaverse. As one of our values for being in the metaverse is to make sure that there's a link between the real world and the virtual world, we're very careful to offer the same opportunities in both spaces. Whether that's an event, a fitness class, or a meditation class. Even down to the fact that we've worked with artist Lily Bernie on artwork for our Manchester hotel, and she is now creating virtual pieces of artwork for the metaverse. We consistently make sure there's a link between the two spaces because that's the future of the metaverse, having augmented reality layered onto real-world experiences."

Inspired by our seminar on sensory design, we proposed the idea that if a real-world guest selected a specific soundscape or lightscape for their space, the metaverse hotel would recognize this when they stayed in the virtual world. Timothy expanded on this idea of virtual sensory design:

"There are a couple of businesses that are hugely successful with virtual tours. You can experience the city without leaving your office or your lounge, and one way to add richness to that experience is to layer in sounds and even smells, to create increasingly tangible experiences."

Continuing our conversation, we considered the impact of virtual tours on the inclusivity of experiences:

"Not everyone can afford to travel globally, so this technology gives more people the opportunity to experience these wonderful places. And, of course, there's an element of conscientious travel; should we all be jetting around as much as we do on airplanes? Perhaps there are locations that we can experience virtually, getting the richness of that experience without having to burn the carbon."

Concluding our conversation, we briefly touched on the immersive headsets imminently reaching the market. We asked if the Apple headset might make virtual experiences more immersive:

"Definitely. Mark Zuckerberg has previously spoken about the future of these headsets, and big tech companies are very focused on creating an experience that is comparable to wearing a regular pair of glasses; it will be much less intrusive than the large headsets that we have currently."

COCOON & BAUER INTERIORS

THE SHOW FEATURED A STANDOUT SPACE KNOWN AS THE MEMBERS SUITE, WHICH PROMISED TO BE A “STYLISH, COMFORTABLE HAVEN OF CALM AWAY FROM THE BUSY SHOW FLOOR, PROVIDING AN EXCELLENT ENVIRONMENT FOR HOSTING MEETINGS, CHECKING EMAILS, OR SIMPLY TAKING A MOMENT TO REFLECT ON THE DAY.” AND IT TRULY DELIVERED, ALL THANKS TO THE EFFORTS OF PETER TURNER, THE MANAGING DIRECTOR AND OWNER OF COCOON AND BAUER INTERIORS.

We had the privilege of having a brief conversation with Peter about his work in the hotel sector, and our discussion naturally gravitated toward the ever-relevant topic of AI and its potential opportunities.

The Members Suite’s popularity was evident as we struggled to find an available seat; it had become the go-to place for respite from the hustle and bustle of the event. We asked Peter to provide us with an overview of his design concept.

“Our goal was to create an enticing space, one that exudes the ambiance of a rooftop terrace, a lobby, a bar, and a restaurant—all seamlessly blended. We opted for a design that imparts openness, sophistication, and a laid-back atmosphere. The true testament to our success was witnessing a consistently bustling space throughout the show.”

The space crafted by Peter and his team featured a pagoda adorned with lush green foliage, and the ceiling height was intentionally lowered to create a more inviting ambiance. Peter elucidated:

“Our aim was to make the space feel intimate and inviting to everyone. By designing different scenarios with various types of furniture, we empowered users to rearrange pieces to suit their needs. It has been truly gratifying to see people gathering

furniture and creating impromptu seating areas for casual conversations.”

The numerous small poufs played a pivotal role in creating a flexible environment, as Peter further explained:

“The poufs were certainly well-received, but the small tables also proved to be quite popular. People found them handy as they could be moved to wherever needed. These tables served not only for holding drinks but also for personal belongings. Just yesterday, someone was using a small side table as a makeshift desk for their laptop. The furniture has been put to extensive use.”

We were curious to know if the design philosophy exhibited in the Members Suite was indicative of Cocoon & Bauer Interiors’ broader approach. Peter began by clarifying that they don’t adhere to a specific studio aesthetic and went on to elucidate their core ethos:

“While it might sound somewhat clichéd, we genuinely believe that the customer is always right! They are the ones either financing the space, residing in it, spending time within it, or marketing it. They possess a deeper understanding of their target demographic than anyone else, and we invest time in thoroughly comprehending their brief, irrespective of whether it’s a commercial, residential, or hospitality project. We aim to grasp the essence of what they seek to accomplish and translate it into a tangible aesthetic.”

As we sat at the close of the second day of the show, it seemed fitting to ask Peter for his perspective on the current state of the hotel sector, during which he shared insights into the potential contributions of AI.

“Responding to your question can be quite complex because we’re already witnessing shifts in society and evolving social trends, and they’re influencing how people use hotels, especially in terms of how hotels integrate with their



surrounding communities. From a design perspective, factors like sustainability, neurodiversity, technological advancements, AI, automation, personalization, exclusivity, and inclusivity are all propelling the sector forward. It’s certain that all rooms will soon be designed with accessibility and inclusivity in mind.

AI is poised to elevate the guest experience to new heights by delivering the ultimate in optimization. Recently, we’ve been discussing how biometric data collected by smartwatches could communicate with your hotel room. Imagine this scenario: after returning from a run, your hotel room senses your elevated heart rate and adjusts the lighting, sound, and even turns on the shower. We anticipate these tools becoming commonplace in the next five to ten years, and the rapid pace of technology adoption might even enable us to realize these opportunities within the next two to three years. It’s an exciting prospect!”

