

Claus Sendlinger, CEO of design hotels AG.

One of the best trendspotters in the business predicts the future of hotels in Asia and beyond. *By* JENNIFER CHEN



Sophisticated Tastes
Clockwise from top left: The Metropolitan London's lobby; Claus Sendlinger, the CEO of design hotels AG; the spa at Vigilius Mountain Resort, in Italy; inside The Opposite House, in Beijing.

■ How would you define a design hotel and is it a term that's been abused a lot lately?

"These days, the term 'design hotel' is often offhandedly batted around to describe just about any property that has an Eames chair in the lobby, but there's more to a true design hotel than cookie-cutter minimalism or fly-by-night visual trends.

Our member hotels are independently owned but united by a commitment to individuality, progressive architecture and design, concepts of sustainability and an authentic connection to location or legacy. They embody the most advanced ideas in the hospitality industry and offer cosmopolitan travelers new options for travel that include not only relaxation but inspiration, even education. It all translates into unique experiences in highly varied surroundings with impeccable yet personal service."

■ What are your criteria when you're looking for members?

"We do not have a set list of criteria. Generally we look at the people behind the project and whether or not their ideas and visions fit with ours. It's not just the design that makes a property suitable for the design hotels™ brand; the hotel also needs to show it has the right personality. The staff and the guests obviously play a large part in that, because they give a hotel its soul. The architecture and interior need to provide the right element for these people to interact in, and when the right people come together in the right environment, the result is a fascinating place to be."

■ What hotel trends do you see in the future?

"Our society is undergoing a value shift at the moment. The importance of 'soft factors' such as quality of life and well-being is growing along with a rediscovery of simple, human, even humble values. ... **The Life Medicine Resort** [Brunnerstraße 3, Bad Gleichenberg; 43/3159-22940; lifemedicineresort.com; doubles from 121 euros] in Austria is a great example for this movement. This hotel melds five-star luxury with high-tech medical treatment, old-school spa culture and modern diagnostic and therapeutic technologies."

■ What new properties opening this year in Southeast Asia are you excited about?

"Alila Hotels & Resorts are opening their first villa properties this year. I am really looking forward to **Alila Villas Uluwatu** [Jln Belimbing Sari, Banjar Tambiyak, Desa Pecatu; 62-361/848-21-66; alilahotels.com; villas from US\$725] in Bali."

■ Which Asian destination is primed to see a boom in design-oriented hotels?

"China. ... With **The Opposite House** [11 Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang district; 86-10/6417-6688; theoppositehouse.com; doubles from RMB2,200], for example, [architect] Kengo Kuma created something sustainable in Beijing. ... It is a unique hotel with a vivid design mix and beautiful materials."

■ All-time, top five hotels?

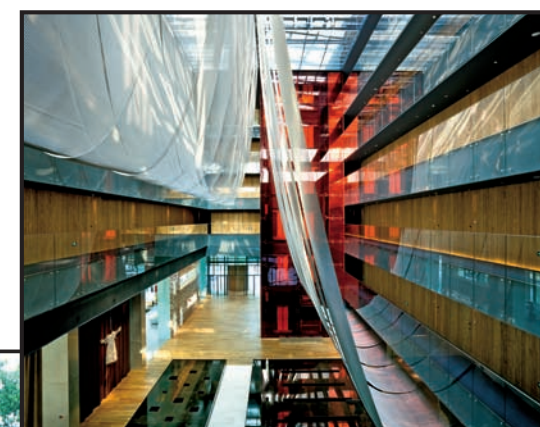
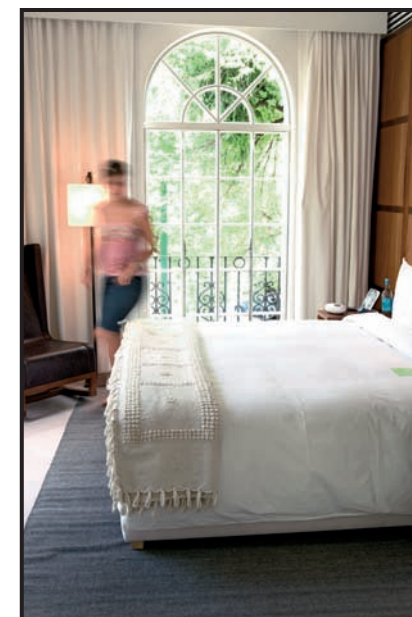
"These are some of my all-time favorites, in no hierarchical order: **Park Hyatt Tokyo** [3-7-1-2 Nishi-Shinjuku; 81-3/5322-1234; tokyo.park.hyatt.com; doubles from ¥48,000]. "I experienced my own *Lost in Translation* story here." **Amanjiwo, Indonesia** (Borobudur, Magelang; 62-293/788-333; amanresorts.

com; suites from US\$700). "I loved watching the sun rise over Borobudur."

Metropolitan London (19 Old Park Lane; 44-20/7447-1000; metropolitan.com.bz; doubles from £325). "When we opened our office in London I lived there for almost a year. 1997 was a very exciting year for me in the British capital."

Vigilius Mountain Resort, Italy (Vigiljoch Mountain, I-39011, Lana; 39-473/556-600; vigilius.it; doubles from 340 euros). "This resort is my first choice when I am looking for a kind of 'Bali experience'—where I can completely disconnect—but it's still reachable by a short flight."

Condesa DF (102 Avda. Veracruz, Mexico City; 52-55/5241-2600; condesadf.com; doubles from US\$175). "It's a great starting point to explore the highlights of Mexico." +



Stylish Haunts
Clockwise from top: A guest room at Condesa DF, in Mexico City; The Opposite House's atrium; a villa at the Alila Villas Uluwatu; a vintage ride at Condesa DF.

