

Heart of the City

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City center hotels used to come in two aesthetic flavors: grande dame and international style. Either way, you knew what to expect before you stepped foot under the canopy. Not any more. The continuing success of boutique hotels has proven by the numbers just what the bottom line potential of good design can be. And “good,” in today’s idiom, is synonymous with different.

Being “different” is the common denominator in the diverse hotels showcased in this special supplement. Guests have told the hotel industry with their credit cards and expense accounts that they like being surprised by a hotel’s design; owners and operators have expanded their visual horizons accordingly. More and more, the “bandwagon” is empty. True, trends exist—minimalism is in and overly patterned and “decorated” space is out. But the execution of these trends is as individual as the properties themselves. A

pale pink velvet chair can look just as “minimal” in the setting of palace hotel as a white-on-white room in a skyscraper.

What makes these radically different styles work and work well enough to capture healthy market share? They answer the needs of the guests, the operator, the architecture and the location. These intensive concepts, driven by a sense of place, cannot be transplanted and grafted to locations around the world. They embody the heart and soul of the cities of which they have become a part.



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Cover: *The Dharmawangsa in Jakarta.* Photography: *Tim Street-Porter.* Top to bottom: *Listel Vancouver; International House in New Orleans; Loews Miami.*