



HOTEL REVIEW



The Beaumont

LONDON

Renowned restaurateurs Corbin & King achieve their long-held ambition of opening a hotel, which also features the first inhabitable work of art by leading British sculptor Sir Antony Gormley.

Words: Catherine Martin and Guy Dittrich | Photography: Courtesy of Corbin & King



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Perched on a plinth to the south side of The Beaumont is a series of rectangular blocks harmonious with the geometry of Wimperis & Simpson’s original Art Deco façade. They reflect the shape of a man sitting on his haunches with his arms folded on his knees. A primordial position of vulnerability, but also basic comfort.

Yet this is no ordinary man. It is both a public work of art and a hotel suite. Created by British sculptor Sir Antony Gormley, the cuboid creation was commissioned by Chris Corbin and Jeremy King for their first hotel project, located London’s swanky Mayfair. The architectural addition was welcomed by the local planning authority, the City of Westminster, which stipulates every new construction include a piece of public art. King worked closely with Gormley to develop the idea that it be truly intrinsic to the building, cleverly combining the sculpture with habitable accommodation. And so ROOM was born.

It’s fair to say ROOM is amongst the more extraordinary suites you will ever come across. The sculpture’s proportions are based on those of its creator, and like much of Gormley’s work, reflects the

relationship of the human body to space. Behind a standard hotel door is a modest sitting room furnished in the hotel’s Art Deco style. At Gormley’s request, all the artwork is abstract, which speaks to what lies ahead. Adjacent is a bathroom, similar to those of the rest of hotel but finished in a pure white marble. From here, a short flight of steps lead to a black curtain.

Behind is a dark space within the sculpture, where the human eyes take a moment to adjust. Gormley elaborates on the dark, contemplative interior, describing it as “both the cave and the man who withdraws into the cave”.

The only visible light source – part of a scheme by IlluminationWorks – is reflected off the white linen of the bed. Above, is a vertiginous 10m-high void lined in fumed oak. The inside of the crouching man is an extraordinary volume. Slowly a few details appear. An alcove with the mandatory telephone. Four wooden coat hooks. And a shuttered window high above the bed that only allows for a sky view beneath the sculpture’s crossed arms.

Gormley took the deliberate step of revealing a cross-section of



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Above: Taking its lead from the classic grill rooms of New York, The Colony features blood-red leather banquettes, period furniture and studded chairs

the structure, showing the insulation foam sandwiched between the exterior 8mm plate steel and the 35mm plywood and oak interior. Gormley personally selected the wood from the Black Forest in Germany before joiners EE Smith Contracts assembled the lining using dovetail joints, a process that took several months and is a work of art in itself.

Thanks to Gormley's sculpture, The Beaumont experienced a wave of publicity before its doors even opened. But ROOM is just one element of the hotel. Behind the original façade is a newly constructed, yet seamlessly integrated building that houses 73 guestrooms and suites, a bar, restaurant and private residents' lounge.

The hotel's opening marks the realisation of a long-held ambition for Corbin & King, who have sought to enter the luxury hotel sector for over a decade. The right opportunity finally came with Grosvenor as part of its ongoing investment in North Mayfair, a project that also includes the redeveloped Brown Hart Gardens on which the hotel sits.

Of course, this isn't Corbin & King's first venture in the wider realm of hospitality. Far from it. Having worked together for over thirty years, Corbin – who started his career at Langan's Brasserie in the mid-seventies – and King – a former merchant banker – have developed, owned and managed some of London's most successful

restaurants. They acquired Le Caprice in 1981, later followed by The Ivy and J. Sheekey, establishing a reputation for turning tired restaurants into award-winning concepts. Corbin and King sold their company, Caprice Holdings Limited, in 1998, but returned to the market five years later with The Wolseley, fulfilling an ambition to open a European-style brasserie. The Delauney followed in 2011 to critical acclaim. A £21m cash injection from Graphite Capital funded expansion of the portfolio to include Brasserie Zédel, Colbert and Fischer's, the latter of which opened as recently as 2014.

Despite their success, Corbin and King aren't ones to rest on their laurels. King thinks of himself as restaurateur rather than restaurant owner, a hotelier rather than a hotel owner. As such he is regularly seen walking the tables or hanging around the lobby, having been seduced by the industry. A long-held belief that decisions made from the boardroom compromise the ethos of an establishment has also served King well. Speaking at Sleep last November, he explained: "I'm often asked by my staff, what are the essential ingredients of a successful restaurant, and they expect me to say location or the chef or whatever. But I always tell them two things: heart and soul. And of course the way it looks."

Indeed, design has played an important role in the success of



© Nick Ingram

Above: The America Bar is lined with monochrome photographs of 1930s personalities. Each one could have been a friend of Jimmy Beaumont

Corbin and King. The pair worked with David Collins from the early days up until his passing in 2013, and credit him for being “a guiding light” in a lot of what they’ve done.

Guidance for their first hotel project came from ReardonSmith Architects and Richmond International, both well versed on the ins and outs of completing a successful hotel. “We wanted to work with people who knew the real detail of how a hotel should work,” explains King. “It is an extraordinary world of design and there are things that would never have occurred to me,” he continues. “I’m a debutante, I’m new to it. What do I know?”

As lead architect on the project, ReardonSmith’s role involved the conversion of a Grade II-listed Art Deco-style building, originally designed as a garage to service Selfridges shoppers and more recently occupied by Avis Rent-A-Car. Works included the demolition of the structure behind the retained façade, resulting in what is effectively a new building, as well as a sensitive extension to the existing north wing, two additional floors on the roof, and two new basement levels.

ReardonSmith was commissioned alongside Richmond International, enlisted to undertake the interior design of the 73 guestrooms and suites, The Colony Grill Room, The American Bar and The Cub Room. The project was completed in close collaboration with King, responsible for the initial design concept. “Although Grosvenor are the client, Jeremy very much was the lead on the

project and had the vision of what the hotel should be,” explains Fiona Thompson, Principal of Richmond International, adding that King’s clear ideas and exacting standards were key to the level of detail seen throughout the property. “He wanted it to feel like it has always been there, and that we’ve refreshed it and renewed it,” she continues. That this was Corbin & King’s first hotel, also meant that the brief was less prescriptive, allowing for an exploration of ideas.

King’s vision is based on Jimmy Beaumont, the New York hotelier who fled to London in the 1920s during the US Prohibition. If you’re wondering why you haven’t heard of Jimmy before, it’s probably because he doesn’t exist. “James Beaumont is a figment of my imagination, a fictional character,” explains King. “I was bemoaning the fact that it’s so much easier if you have an existing building and an existing history. So I thought, well in that case, let’s invent a history.”

As the project progressed, Jimmy Beaumont’s story unfolded and his character was embellished, so much so that every design decision hung off what Jimmy would have done. If there were differences of opinion over materials or finishes, the all-important question was asked: what would Jimmy do? “Jimmy Beaumont became our guide,” continues King. “He bought the paintings; the photographs are people he knew; and the caricatures are people he knew.”

King’s narrative was instilled in each and every consultant, contractor and collaborator working on the project, resulting



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Above: In the guestrooms and suites, polished rosewood wardrobes and sliding room partitions feature alongside timber headboards, bronze mirroring and geometric wool carpets

in a truly authentic scheme. Chris Garrod Global undertook the procurement of all FF&E and OS&E; S&T UK London produced the casegoods, which included over 300 bespoke items of furniture for the guestrooms and suites; and IlluminationWorks was tasked with creating a lighting scheme that appeared to have been designed for the original building in the 1920s, yet was befitting of a 21st century hotel. As such, cove lighting, a feature of many period properties, was used to limit the visibility of modern light sources. Those that are visible, include Art Deco-style pieces by Dernier & Hamlyn, Chelsom and Heathfield. Dernier & Hamlyn also produced a statement chandelier for the lobby. Cast in brass and finished in antique bonze, it sets the tone for the rest of the property.

Soft Art Deco details continue in the guestrooms. Polished rosewood wardrobes and sliding room partitions feature alongside timber headboards, bronze mirroring and geometric wool carpets, while marble, chrome and glass are present in the bathrooms.

Naturally, The Colony Grill Room and The American Bar form the central hub of the hotel. The check-in desk is intentionally tucked

away to the right of the lobby so that the first thing a guest sees as they enter is the F&B. Double doors lead to the bar, lined with monochrome photographs of 1930s film stars, actors, politicians and writers. Each one could have been a friend of Jimmy Beaumont.

As with all of Corbin & King establishments, art plays an important role in The Beaumont. King, himself an avid art collector, worked with Artefact Hotel Art Consultants to amass more than 1,600 pieces of artwork including paintings, photographs, and lithographs, not one the same. Sculptures, antiques and vintage pieces can also be found throughout.

Beyond another set of double doors, The Colony transports diners to another era. Taking its lead from the classic grill rooms of New York, the restaurant features blood-red leather banquettes, period furniture and studded chairs. Specially-commissioned murals by San Francisco-based artist John Mattos illustrate the various sports that were popular in America in the 1930s, while an eclectic collection of caricatures “people the place.” As King concludes: “Our hotels, our restaurants, they’re about people ultimately.”

EXPRESS CHECKOUT: 73 guestrooms | 1 restaurant | 2 bars | Spa | 1 meeting room | www.thebeaumont.com

Owner / Developer: Grosvenor | **Operator:** Corbin & King | **Architecture:** ReardonSmith Architects | **Interior Design:** Richmond International

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ For full photography of this project and details of the companies involved visit www.innspec.com

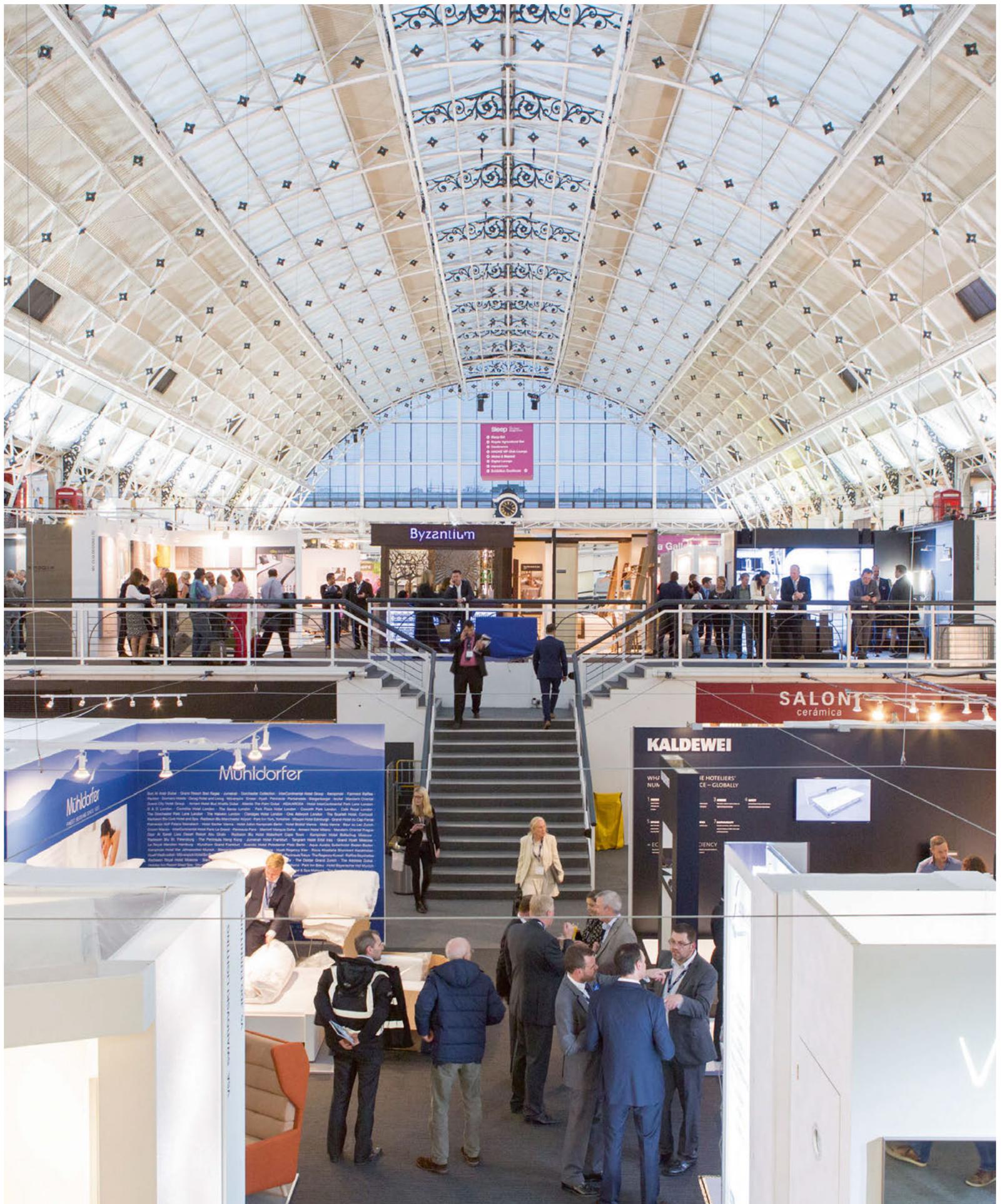
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Sleep

26 - 27 NOVEMBER 2014

Once again, Sleep has excelled itself with a show-stopping culmination of hotel designers, architects and senior industry executives. Experiential, thought-provoking and eye-catching, Sleep 2014 spanned two jam-packed days at London's Business Design Centre.

Words: Molly Dolan | Photography: Courtesy of Sleep

Hosting more than 150 industry-leading exhibitors ranging from well-established names to up-and-coming new brands, Sleep attracted some 4,000 visitors from around the world in yet another record. Visitors from Germany, Italy, Spain and France, the Russian Federation, the USA, South East Asia and the Middle East, travelled to The Business Design Centre for Europe's only dedicated hotel design exhibition, signifying the global reach of the London-based event.

Hotel design excellence was on display at every corner, combined with a host of intriguing features. As well as exhibitors, visitors were treated to three forward-thinking installations in the form of Snoozebox, Above & Beyond and Polcom Modular. Set up on the forecourt, the much-anticipated portable hotel accommodation Snoozebox was first unveiled at the British Grand Prix 2011, where it provided guests and organisers with compact, intricately designed en-suite hotel rooms in a non-conventional manner. The new generation, showcased at Sleep, offered an insight into the increased flexibility and efficiency of the innovative accommodation. Designed by Tangerine and manufactured by A. Smith Great Bentley and John Dennis, the portable hotel room is set to be brought to the hotel market in the near future, says Lorcán Ó Murchú, Chief Executive at Snoozebox.

Adjacent to this was Polcom Modular, a full-size model hotel guestroom concept designed by London interior design consultancy JSJ Design, transported from Poland exclusively for the event. A collaboration between Polcom, Peter Dann and studioãnyo, the model demonstrated how BIM technology can create a streamlined solution from concept to manufacture and construction, a hot-topic at this year's Sleep Conference. Visitors were invited to explore how

a digital design process combined with modular manufacturing production can reduce development costs, as well as enhance quality.

Exploring outdoor design, an increasingly popular focus in hospitality, was Above & Beyond. Located indoor on the Gallery Level, the space blurred lines between indoor and outdoor spaces, another trend that has seen a rise in popularity over the past few years.

"Increasingly, exterior spaces are becoming as high-spec as those indoors," commented the set's designer, Phil Jaffa of Scape Design Associates. "I hope that Above & Beyond will offer an opportunity to show how an outdoor area can be used for an array of entertainment possibilities. By having a dedicated area, we hope to stimulate debate and inspire more developers and designers to become excited about the issues and opportunities on offer." Kettal's Outdoor Collections graced the Above & Beyond set, with a varied range of outdoor furniture designs on display.

Sitting just below the Gallery Level was the Royale Agricultural Bar, the go-to destination designed by Swedish-based practice Stylt Trampoli in association with Sleeper. Inspired by The Business Design Centre's former life as The Royal Agricultural Hall, the concept displayed lush green walls comprised of artificial greenery supplied by Vistagreen, alongside playful wooden swings and crates. Juxtaposing the agricultural theme and indoor garden haven was a zap of technology from Aircharge, whose wireless charging solution proved invaluable to visitors.

Speaking of the concept, Erik Nissen Johansen, Creative Director at Stylt Trampoli explained: "The Royale Agricultural Bar is an example of how storytelling can combine with customer insight to create an experience that engages and inspires. We wanted to revive

"Sleep is like a precious watch in which all the hand-crafted elements rotate around one another to create a unique piece"

Kali Nicholson, Brand Director for Sleep





Above: SKM Design scooped the coveted Sleep Set prize **Opposite (clockwise from top):** Yabu Pushelberg joined Catherine Martin to discuss upcoming projects, including Edition Times Square; Jouin Manku spoke of their 'anything is possible' philosophy; Restaurateur turned hotelier, Jeremy King, opened the first day of talks, discussing his first hotel project The Beaumont; the Hot Hostels panel discussed the increasing success of hostels in the industry

the simplicity and grand spectra of nature and invited visitors to step into our imaginary garden.”

Not only acting as a place of escape, the bar was also host to late night networking, complete with complimentary drinks and the announcement of 2014's Sleep Set winner. Four teams of designers participated in this year's Sleep Set competition, which had a theme of Hotel Simplexity. Nigel Coates Studio, Dreimeta, NoChintz and SKM Design all took up the creative challenge to create a guestroom for a new hotel brand which takes “simplicity” as its core value. The emerging theory of a relationship between simplicity and complexity asks, why have simple things become so complex? Designers aimed to explore how this trend can be reversed, with SKM Design scooping the coveted prize. Judged by Conrad Smith, Managing Director at ReardonSmith Architects, Katherine Blaisdell, Vice President at Belmond, and Marco Nijhof, Founder of Yoo Hotels, the winning concept referenced inspirations from Isaac Newton and Pink Floyd, as well as iconic 1980's sci-fi film Tron. A cantilevered, floating bed acted as a focal point, adding to the rooms simplicity.

Headline sponsor Grohe hosted the Sleep 2014 VIP Lounge, situated near the Sleep Conference which featured a programme bursting with top industry names and insightful topics. Opening the two-day programme moderated by Guy Dittrich, was a talk with

restaurateur-turned-hotelier Jeremy King, CEO at Corbin & King. Discussing his inaugural hotel, The Beaumont, King advised that “good design should not shout for attention, but withstand scrutiny”.

At the other end of the spectrum, a panel of expert speakers took to the stage to discuss Hot Hostels, the emergence and increasing success of hostels in the industry. Josh Wyatt, Director of Hospitality and Leisure at Patron Capital, commented: “Nothing happened with hostels for 30 or 40 years, now it's all taking off. The youth and budget consumer who wants a fun space with design will continue to increase.” Anwar Mekhayech, Creative Director at Generator and Principal at DesignAgency, echoed this prediction, stating: “There is a special mindset in hostels, I think the supply is going to be massive.”

A definite highlight, Sleep Talking with Agence Jouin Manku saw Parisian-based design duo Patrick Jouin and Sanjit Manku take to the stage as Guy Dittrich explored the modus operandi of the award-winning practice. Describing themselves as realistic dreamers who like to believe anything is possible, they demonstrated the secrets to their worldwide success.

Another duo-based highlight on the second day of talks came in the form of Yabu Pushelberg, as George Yabu and Glenn Pushelberg attended Sleep exclusively for the discussion, chaired by Sleeper Editor Catherine Martin. The lively talk covered all areas of hospitality



Above: Inspired by The Business Design Centre's former life, The Royale Agricultural Bar by Stylt Trampoli displayed lush green walls

design including divulging an insight into their vision for the new Edition in New York's Times Square, a project with Ian Schrager set to open in 2015. Pushelberg commented on the upcoming hotel: "Edition Times Square will be the antithesis of what everyone thinks a Times Square hotel should be. We're doing a series of open air outdoor spaces and gardens that will be romantic.

Yabu concluded: "In the middle of Times Square, it'll be a different route from the noise, a more zen like approach. There is so much colour from the billboards, so this will be in black and white."

One prominent topic throughout the event was the growing importance of BIM technology, as demonstrated with the outdoor Polcom Modular prototype and Digital Lounge. Rob Charlton, CEO at Space Group spoke of the Digital Revolution and BIM, exploring the benefits to the design process from virtual design.

2014's Sleep Round Tables, hosted by Daniel Engleder, Managing Director at Benjamin West London, also proved a success as senior executives from the hotel development, investment and operator community fielded questions from table guests in a personal environment.

On the exhibition floor, new exhibitors included Designheure, Gira, Jacuzzi, Moroccan Bazaar, Orangebox, Sara Newman Design, Toto Europe and Ultrafabrics, while previous newcomers Punkt made a return. Says Jonathan Hinton, Managing Director of

Ultrafabrics Europe "The response to Ultrafabrics first showing at Sleep was amazing, and the interest in our product far exceeded our expectations. Such was the interest we were getting calls the following day from designers asking when we would be able to visit them in their offices. As an international company, the level of strong interest from outside of the UK was also very pleasing. We will certainly be returning in 2015."

The industry's favourite brands were once again well represented with Grohe, Acrylic Couture, Agua Fabrics, Bette, Chelsom, Crosswater, Ena Shaw, Jaymart, Keramag Design, Naturalmat, OW Hospitality, Umbrosa and Wilton Carpets unveiling their latest designs. For many exhibitors, both new and returning, the show is an opportunity to connect face-to-face with existing clients and discuss project requirements, as well as to engage with potential new ones.

"The huge diversity of the many elements of Sleep means that both participants and visitors can take away with them so many different memories and ideas, let alone new contacts and renewed acquaintances" says Kali Nicholson, Brand Director for Sleep. "Sleep is like a precious watch in which all the handcrafted elements rotate around one another to create a unique piece that perfectly tells the time – in our case ensuring our exhibitors do great business and our visitors are inspired."

www.thesleepevent.com