



INDEPENDENT HOTEL SHOW

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OLYMPIA LONDON

PRESENTED BY



THE HOTEL ROOM OF THE FUTURE REPORT

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DESIGNED BY



TWO'S COMPANY
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Introducing The Hotel Room of the Future

Travel forward in time with us at the Independent Hotel Show 2018, as we unveil our 'Hotel Room of the Future'. Discover our live installation by designers Two's Company Interior Design, inspired by lively roundtable discussions with our team of hotel experts – and read on for further revelations!

We already seem to live in a world of 'futuristic' hotels, from the six-star pleasure palaces of Dubai to the sleeping pods of the Far East. So what will guests actually want from their hotel rooms in the coming decades?

Working with the most forward-thinking brains in the British independent hotel sector, and top luxury living space designers Two's Company Interior Design – Nick Sunderland and incumbent president of the British Institute of Interior Design, Gilly Craft – the Independent Hotel Show has found out.

In our dazzling installation and this report, we've identified key trends in product innovation, consumer behaviour and, of course, technology to pinpoint what hotel rooms might look like in the years to come – and how they'll provide for guests' changing needs.

Rodney Hoinkes, head of innovation at the Independent Hotel Show says, "This is the independent Hotel Room of the Future. It may have slight differences from that of a chain. We want to inspire, through this future, and give people things to strive for, improve their thinking and their options with. But also, we want to challenge, so people think wisely."

We hope it'll help you, Britain's independent hoteliers, to future-proof your businesses – and encounter some stellar new ideas to take away and get excited about.

See you in the brave new world.

Kind Regards,
Miranda Martin

Event Director, Independent Hotel Show



Sleeping

Currently, hotel rooms are often marketed as the ideal place to indulge. In the decades to come, though, their original function as a place of rest will be reinvented for the new millennium.



SIMBA

The Hotel Room of the Future's bed, mattress, pillow and duvet are all created by Simba; a British company that began making thread for mattresses in the late 1970s before producing its own from 2002. Simba has adapted its sleep technology specifically for hotel guests, exclusively for the project. In a nod to space travel, the pre-settings include 'zero gravity mode' where the recumbent's legs are raised above the level of the heart for improved circulation and to relieve pressure on the lower back – common issues amongst travellers.

The base's design employs soft lines to blend into the room itself and encourage the guest to feel comfortable. It boasts subtle amber lights in its footing that encourage the 'alpha brainwave' state preceding sleep, plus inbuilt lavender scent diffusers and air purifiers. The mattress includes 'special zoning' which 'minimises transfer of motion', meaning you're left undisturbed by any tossing and turning on behalf of your partner.

These are but the most recent developments in the frontier of sleep research. In time, we can expect 'the Internet of things' to connect the mattress with the guest's personal data via applications on their personal device. Lighting to dim and brighten in accordance with their personal sleep times, mattresses to adapt to their preferences and body shape, curtains open and close, televisions and radios switch on and off. It's an ideal form of personalisation for independent hotels; the process is automated and the information gathering is effectively outsourced.

Bathing

At a time when luxury interiors have been democratised somewhat, and guests complain that their bed at home is more sumptuous, the bathroom is an opportunity to take them outside of their everyday lives. And our hotel bathroom of the future certainly has the wow factor. Designers Two's Company Interior Design sourced the Hammock Bath from Splinter Works to represent the future guest's desire for a 'state of the art' bathroom. The bath is made in England from carbon fibre, a material that keeps water warmer for longer, bolstering the room's sustainability credentials. At nine

feet long it suits a taller, contemporary frame and its continuous curved surface encourages long, luxurious soaking. Optimised for wet rooms, the Hammock Bath sits elevated from the floor, with its plug in the middle. Waste water drains through a hole in the ground directly beneath.

Seamless, all-encapsulating panels by Corian, installed with no need for grouting or silicon, wrap the bathroom space. The distinctive glow-effect bathroom lighting, created using LED-backlit panels from Addlux, is being seen for the first time at the Independent Hotel Show 2018. The balmy incandescence combines both a thoughtful form of luxury and a sense of wellbeing, the two foundations of our Hotel Room of the Future.

Furniture and Curtains

Our room's furnishings were chosen from British and German companies, emphasising a trend for high quality materials and manufacturing. The sofa and chairs were sourced from Knightsbridge Furniture's Nexus range. Their wire base encourages airflow and a sense of space, promoting wellbeing and general relaxation. A statement coffee table from Decca London is the lounge's centrepiece. Fabrics for the curtains and upholstery were chosen from JAB Fabric's Hideaways collection, which aims to promote a sense of the rustic in both colour and texture, again signifying that tastes are drifting from the technical and metropolitan, to the natural and far-flung. "The wilderness is where it's at," Tom Bell previously of Sawday's proclaimed at our roundtable thought leadership forum.



THE HAMMOCK BATH BY SPLINTER WORKS



CORIAN® USED FOR HOTEL ROOM DESK

Entertainment Technology

Our room boasts a bedside table with DuPont Corian technology that recharges phones and tablets placed on the surface with no need for plugs or chargers. But as popular as this particular function may be, technology itself is an ever more polarising subject.

At our technology-specific round table session, held at Citizen M's Tower Gateway hotel in London, many hotel industry experts insisted on optimum connectivity – that is, decent WiFi – for their personal devices. IT specialists like David Pryde, whose resumé takes in the Bespoke and Red Carnation groups, says "Connectivity is a given, no matter where you are in the market."

But others disagreed implicitly: "I can't imagine anything worse than being completely available," said Juliet Kinsman of specialist OTA Mr & Mrs Smith, and sustainability consultants Bouteco. "Ultimately, it's about how the room makes us feel," she said. "In the future, hoteliers may have to pare back tech. The best places don't have lots of it. They are forward-thinking though, and do the basics very well."

"Research shows that technology is important on both sides but should not be invasive or difficult to use. It should be intelligent and responsive, integrated into the room," says our room's designer Nick Sunderland. The media wall, hand made especially for the installation by Waites of Hampshire, features two 49 inch Samsung TVs with sound bars, each facing the lounge and bedroom respectively. While it is programmed to show the hotel's TV service, the system expects guests to 'BYOD' – 'bring your own device' – and intuitively stream to the TV.

Naturally when choosing whether to prioritise entertainment technology, consider your customer. "If I'm in the Lake District I'd much rather have a fantastic view than an enormous TV," says Tom Bell.

Comfort Technology

The concerns that our experts hoped the hotel trade would address in the future were all-too familiar: lights with switches that couldn't be found, aggressive temperatures, and house-keeping that required micro-management. "Seamless use of technology, in automatically updating housekeeping with individual requirements, for example, and a front of house that responds without intrusion or delay, is the aim," says designer Nick Sunderland, "In addition, the guest requires comfort, elegance and style that is unique and individual."

Just like televisions and sound systems, the operating technology used in our Hotel Room of the Future provides an 'ergonomic' experience that is instinctive, pleasurable and easy to locate. "Friction-less" is what Adam Rowledge, GM at Georgian House, speaking at our round table discussion, wants his interaction with tech to be. The room's technology, curated by integration specialists Crestron and Smartcomm, features no dials or switches. Instead, all three zones are controlled via smart pads with pre-settings, allowing the guest to have as little, or as much, interaction with the technology as they wish. Lighting, sound, air conditioning, even water temperature and the curtains, can all be controlled via instinctive keypads and a central panel. Bedside controls operate logical elements such as lights, air-con and curtains. Room service, concierge and housekeeping can be contacted through the same system.

FUTURE-PROOFING:

Essential Tech Intelligence

How guests feel about technology is becoming complex. Like all of us, they want to have access to the Internet and entertainment, crave the latest innovations in areas like sleep, and are excited by the potential of personalisation. But wrestling with devices, or downloading and registering for applications, frustrates them greatly. People are prepared to take time familiarising themselves with their home technology, but not your hotel's. Usage has to be as instinctive as possible.

Calm your guests' tech-rage by making their connection to your set-up seamless and natural. Many will 'BYOD' – bring your own device – and want to connect it to the WiFi and screen without feeling they are hacking into Apple's code. Like good sports referees or managers, technology works best when it's hardly there.

When choosing to work with next-gen applications such as property management system Mews, which provides big brand-style facilities like online check in for the independent sector, always ask if they support 'APIs', Application Programming Interfaces, which allow their app to 'talk' to your existing software clearly.



Guest Journey

Tink Labs' mobile phone application 'Handy' augments the travel experience by providing personalised information on both the locality (see also our 'Place Making' section in this report) and hotel amenities. Plus, app builders and software developers are racing to streamline painfully drawn-out processes like check-in, but what developments might improve the room experience itself?

Amazon has announced a version of its Alexa service adjusted for hotel use, partnering with Marriott (it may even be able to locate some of those notoriously elusive light switches; proof if it were needed, that the machines are finally taking over).

'Personalisation', though, is the buzzword of 2018 and the tech that's got the hotel industry excited collates data which tailors the guest journey to each customer. For instance, some may prefer that there wasn't any alcohol in the room upon arrival; or if there were chocolates on the pillow rather than a fruit bowl on the coffee table. But with data collection suffering a backlash, guests are divided as to whether that's rather charming or downright creepy. Moreover, hotels rushing to 'surprise and delight' their customers could be digging a hole for themselves, says 'The Hotel Tester' Giovanna Grossi. "I love the personal touch but I don't have the time to communicate what I want," she laments, adding, "nobody does."

Attentive staff with a generous sense of hospitality and local knowledge make the ideal replacement for personalisation tech – if they are available, of course. "Hospitality is the second oldest industry in the world, and its traditional values are as important as ever," says hotel marketing maven Imran Hussain of The Hotel Culture, "being charming and generous to your customers makes for a great loyalty scheme."

Wellness

The Lanesborough in London, is installing a wellness-themed members' club, swapping cocktails for cold pressed juices and private dining rooms for yoga studios. Guests, it seems, are looking for pro-active ways to balance their hectic, 'always on' working lives with their physical, mental and spiritual health. And they can do this in our Hotel Room of the Future.

Activities like meditation and yoga – branded mats for guests to walk off with and have their cards charged for afterwards, anyone? – can be facilitated with audio-visual guides, presented by the hotel's own health professionals. Spirit miniatures in the minibar (if your hotel still has those) can be swapped for anti-oxidant smoothies and pro-biotic concoctions. The abundant consumer culture around wellness certainly has positive implications for branded products associated with the 'chillaxing' environment of your independent hotel.



GARDEN TRADING, STAND 541

Working

Our room is mostly intended for leisure purposes, but it's important to consider that the trend for an 'always on' work culture is unlikely to reverse, and guests want to be able to work in their room at any time. The big chains, under threat from trends that better suit the independent sector like authenticity and personalisation, are gearing up to cater for laptop-toting professionals. The Crowne Plaza chain, for example, which is in the midst of a US\$200 million reboot, has even secured a design patent for its 'WorkLife Room', where business and leisure travellers are catered for simultaneously. Guests are again assumed to be travelling with their own devices; 'charging points' are in abundance. Decent sleep is prioritised and the desk is uncluttered. A 'welcome station' provides a spot for unceremoniously dumping personal effects. In a supposedly revolutionary move, the bed juts out into the room at an angle allowing the guest to 'fully experience' the room's features, and be able to see the television easily.

"It's a little disappointing that this is such a big deal," said wealth magazine Forbes on the WorkLife Room's unveiling, "every hotel room should have enough plugs, thoughtful interior design and a terrific bed."

Meanwhile, it seems there's never been a better time to jazz up the 'business centre' with some cacti and entrepreneurial self-help books, or cultivate a casual co-working space in one of the lesser-used lounges. Staff could be outsourced to guests as personal assistants, booking their next journey or conducting simple research. It's the sort of simple, but human, touch the busy guest appreciates – now or in the decades to come.



THE CROWN PLAZA WORKLIFE ROOM

Ageing

The number of British residents aged 65+ is expected to rise by over 40% in the next 17 years, to 16 million people. This implies a rise in the number of guests with physical disabilities, and forms of dementia including Alzheimer's disease.

The Blue Badge Access Awards, organised by Robin Sheppard of Bespoke Hotels, honours various innovations in hotel design that 'improve, modernise, and refine hotel experiences for both disabled and able-bodied guests'. Most recently, the winning designs included plans that made subtle yet significant changes to lobbies, and other communal areas, which vastly improve mobility for the disabled traveller.

But others are thinking about catering for the disabled in entirely new ways. MnM Studio architects were awarded top prize in the same 2018 awards for their 'empathy through aesthetics' programme. This is an 'accommodation solution' that not only includes visually appealing versions of disabled facilities, but also incorporates aspects designed to appeal to the senses of smell, taste, sound and sight, improving the guest experience for any visitors who are challenged in any of those areas.

Investing in this particular consumer niche could bring considerable dividends in the years to come – and put a smile on the face of some vulnerable people, too.

Operations

Artificial intelligence – or to be completely accurate, machine learning – is behind a number of innovations designed to simplify housekeeping and maintenance management. Essentially, the same algorithms that decide what advertising to show you on Google are teamed up in 'recommender engines'. These will, for example, work out what temperature most guests prefer the rooms at during certain times of year, or work out the quickest sequence to clean the maximum number of rooms before check-in time. It's the sort of tech that could be especially useful for novices starting new careers as hoteliers.

However, technology like this often needs a lot of data to be effective. In independent hotels, personalisation is perhaps better delivered by talented staff. Data though can be aggregated across multiple, rather than individual, guests. Most guests in 'the room where the bed's above the hot water pipes' will turn the aircon on at a certain time, for example. Start collating this data now, and evolve your offering alongside technological developments.



NEWBOOK, STAND 71

Placemaking

If personalisation is the buzzword of 2018, look for 'placemaking' to be the jargon splashed across your LinkedIn feed next year. Placemaking – taking a leading role in improving the locality – incorporates a number of key trends. Firstly, hotels are taking high street shops' role as the consumer space located in the centre of town. Secondly, guests wish to embrace the local culture. Thirdly, hotels are finding that mutually beneficial relationships with their neighbourhood – from employing locals to playing a significant part in district initiatives – generates a tangible feelgood factor in the owners, workers and guests. A fantastic example is celeb haunt Jake's in Jamaica. Since the 1960s the award-winning resort has steadfastly employed locals, plus funded projects like schools and sports fields. Think Jamie Oliver's famous Fifteen restaurant concept applied across a hotel project.

Placemaking can also help you sculpt your brand in the era of 'authenticity'. Draw inspiration from local history and culture for interior design and the experiences you offer. Collaborate with other local creative businesses: the brewery, art gallery, craft centre or coffee shop looking to expand. Bring the fruits of your relationships into the room in the form of local delicacies or prints by neighbourhood artists. Provide information on nearby events with your confirmation emails. Consumers' growing interest in heritage and community mean historic buildings, local quirks and the human touch are, perhaps paradoxically, very important to guests in the digital age.

Sustainability

"It's the new normal," says Tom Bell previously of Sawdays; but environmental concern is best expressed sincerely rather than as a token gesture. If you're actually a bit dubious about global warming, then find another aspect of environmental concern – a campaign to save the local sports field for example – rather than grudgingly trying to acquire green credentials.

Remember that only some guests take sustainability super-seriously, but most appreciate it. "Sustainability may not be a big factor in my choosing a hotel," says Travel Weekly features editor Katie McGonagle, "but I like to go into a shower and see a large container of shampoo rather than lots of miniatures. It leaves you with a good feeling." The sustainability support industry grows apace. Recycling of bars of soap and other 'single use' hygiene products can be outsourced to companies like Clean Conscience, who charge very reasonable fees to redistribute toiletries to families on the breadline.

40% of under
34 year-olds want
their hotel to be
'Instagrammable'.

Marketing

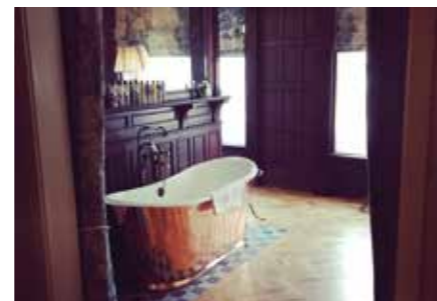
"40% of under 34 year-olds want their hotel to be 'Instagrammable'," says Mane Ryatt of consultants The Know, "and we're surprised the number's as low as that".

Award-winning travel writer Katie McGonagle's shrewd advice for encouraging guests to 'post content' about your hotel is to include a handful of photogenic or otherwise interesting objects rather than think you have to give the whole room the 'wow factor'.

Some tech gurus are beginning to eschew social media use. Jaron Lanier, the engineer credited with inventing virtual reality among other things, recently released a book titled 'Ten Arguments for Deleting Your Social Media Accounts Right Now'. Social media use might become less ubiquitous, or take more nuanced forms. The key element to remember is that instead of buying possessions, the next generation like to acquire data, whether they share it online or not – even if it's just photos on their laptop or simply great memories of their stay. Take a look at the 'Placemaking' section for ideas on how to add photogenic experiences to your guests' hotel stays while bolstering your authenticity and experiential characteristics too.



INSTA-FAMOUS HAM YARD HOTEL (@FIRMDALE_HOTELS)



INSTA-FAMOUS SOHO HOUSE (@SOHOHOUSE)



INSTA-FAMOUS CHATEAU RHIANFA (@CHATEAURHIANFA)



INSTA-FAMOUS THE NED (@THENEDLONDON)

Into the Future... And Beyond

If there's anything the 21st Century has taught us, it's that the future is unpredictable, and change is the only thing we can count on. For instance, judging by our research, it's possible that guests could reject technology, and even conventional notions of luxury, for simpler pleasures like isolation and nature. As you read this, antiques and handmade furniture are replacing modernist designer goods, jet travel is becoming a guilty pleasure and heritage buildings are the environments young people want to experience. Service quality is arguably replacing gadgetry as the mark of a thoughtful hotelier. And the concept of a hotel is expanding, from a place for travellers to rest their head into social hubs that facilitate rewarding lifestyles.

Creating the actual Hotel Room of the Future, however it turns out, will require creativity, dynamism, and a flair for cordiality. Thankfully, these are all hallmarks of the independent hotelier.

It Takes Two

INTRODUCING TWO'S COMPANY INTERIOR DESIGN

Nick Sunderland and Gilly Craft specialise in high luxury residential and hotel interiors, making them the natural choice to curate and build our Hotel Room of the Future.

"Twenty years ago wealthy individuals encountered high luxury interiors at hotels and resorts, and they wanted the same at home," Nick told our research forum, "fast forward to the present day and they've had it installed. They're used to it. So it takes careful consideration to impress them when travelling."

Nick and Gilly – who's the president of the British Institute of Interior Designers – undertook their own extensive research, with both hoteliers and their high net worth clients, to provide the foundations for The Hotel Room of the Future.

"Creating a room with 21st century technology, luxury, comfort and outstanding service for the guests are the challenges of today's hotelier," says Nick, "Our research shows that technology is important on both sides. But it shouldn't be invasive or difficult to use. It should be intelligent and responsive, integrated into the room. Seamless use of technology, like automatically updating housekeeping with individual requirements, for example, and a front of house that responds without intrusion or delay, is our aim. Additionally, guests require comfort, elegance and style that's unique and individual."

Nick and Gilly have excelled themselves with this opulent and forward-thinking installation and we're profusely grateful for the key part they've played in this landmark project.

Get in touch with Two's Company Interior Design via
twoscompanyinteriordesign.com

