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PEAK PERFORMANCE

WINTER 2012

SPECIAL REPORT:
GOLD KEY AWARDS

DESIGNER OF THE YEAR:
PIERRE-YVES ROCHON

THE CLIENT: ALIYA KHAN,
DIRECTOR OF RENOVATIONS,
W HOTELS AND ST. REGIS

Q+A: GEORGE GOTTL, UXUS

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GOOD AS GOLD

Co-sponsored by *Hospitality Style* and *HOTELS* magazines, the 32nd annual Gold Key Awards for Excellence in Hospitality Design redefine what it means to be creative.

BY MARY SCOVIAK

/// Now in its third decade, the Gold Key Awards for Excellence in Hospitality Design are as much a barometer of the health of the design industry as they are a showcase for innovation. Based on this year's entries, the outlook is bright on both fronts.

Even before the judges began their review, it was clear that the hospitality design community at large was a winner in 2012. "The sheer quantity of submissions was exciting. The 25 percent increase in

entries from 2011 to 2012 brought home the message that this industry is turning around," says Gold Key judge George Scammell, vp of global design, Wyndham Worldwide.

Scammell and his fellow judges—Ed Bakos, principal, Rockwell Group; Ted Brumleve, vp of architecture and technical services, Virgin Hotels; and Ron Kollar, chief design officer, Tishman—reviewed nearly 200 projects in 23 countries that were completed within the last 18 months. From that field, they selected innovative winners and finalists in 13 categories. New to the list of awards this year are the best midscale/upscale hotel; best midscale/upscale guest room and "So Cool."

What impressed the judges most was design that helped guests feel connected with the project. They liked sensory concepts: touchable textures, mood-enhancing lighting and visually exciting patterns. The ultimate compliment was that a submission was "memorable." But it also had to be relaxed, approachable and sexy.

Anything that looked contrived went straight to the bottom of the list. "There were a number of formulaic, generic luxury solutions that were technically fine. But, from a design standpoint, they were predictable," says Bakos. "What projects need now is a spark of creativity, a sense of style, something that conveys a bit 'more' without feeling forced."

Although the judges identified "electrifying" submissions in all categories, Brumleve says,

"The clearest innovation is in the food and beverage venues. They have the clear, appropriate, well-executed 'big idea' that reveals the soul of the space." Kollar agrees on F&B's leadership in design but adds, "Spa was the most competitive category. We saw a lot of very good projects." Guest rooms were the biggest disappointment. "We need comfortable guest rooms," says Brumleve. "I live in fear of dirtying the lovely white carpet, and I need a place to set down my bag.

Please, no more throw blankets at the end of the bed!"

Lobbies earned "most changed" honors. "We're moving away from the transitional public space with check in/check out functions. Now, the lobby and restaurants flow together. Their looks have to support each other. Design is shifting away from decorating a space that people just pass through to crafting a series of integrated experiences guests will remember," says Scammell.

That's exactly what the Gold Key and Designer of the Year honors are all about. So, turn the page to get a look at what's

trending now in top-tier projects, and to page 42 for a profile on Gold Key's Designer of the Year, Pierre-Yves Rochon. With his work on the Four Seasons London at Park Lane, Rochon demonstrates once again why his signature mix of classic and contemporary elements has made him a master of luxury hotel design.

The 13 projects that earned Gold Key honors this year cover the stylistic spectrum. But what they all share is the ability to make the guest look and look again. Whether it's a material used in a new way or lighting layered to enhance the mood, there's something unique in each of these spaces. FF&E is becoming as much a part of the art program as the functional design intent. Forget about rooms or areas; winning design is all about environments and experiences.



ED BAKOS

TED BRUMLEVE

RON KOLLAR

GEORGE SCAMMELL

Best Hotel—Resort

The St. Regis Aspen Resort, Aspen, Colo.
Rottet Studio, Houston

THE VISION

Harmonize historic luxury with an unpredictable, fresh attitude in a mountain manor that would impress the brand's originator, John Jacob Astor.

THE GENIUS

As part of a \$40 million interior/exterior renovation, the floor plan was completely restructured to provide panoramic mountain views from anywhere in the hotel. Astor would love the nods to the Gilded Age—the reception area chandeliers, the antiqued oak flooring and details like the dark metal door frames in the lobby. But he'd also appreciate the touches relevant to modern tastemakers, including the leather bed and desk designed by fashion legend Ralph Lauren and a bold, contemporary art collection.

"I love the use of texture and the amazing level of detail. The consistent level of refinement across the public spaces makes it a standout."—Ed Bakos

