

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

A New Way to Shop Design: Your Hotel Room

Designers are outfitting guest rooms to be shoppable

By Charu Suri | November 15, 2017



The notion that a hotel room is an extension of your home is a given: Most designers aim to make their hospitality projects feel that way, so that even the most frenzied jet-setter can feel at ease. It has also become natural for visitors to marvel at items found in a room, and wish that a plush robe, armoire, or clock could be theirs. Many brands are now enhancing the overall hotel shopping experience by making their rooms veritable boutiques where guests can shop the design around them—beyond just the hotel-branded robe.

Last year, [West Elm](#) announced that it would get into the hotel business with its West Elm Hotels, a series of boutique lodgings outfitted with the brand's furnishings; the first wave opens in 2018. It's a move echoed in more niche properties around the world.

[Eden Being](#), a lifestyle and luxury brand of the [Oetker Collection](#), launched in July 2016 and will sell luxury items like customized timepieces by the Bamford Watch Department and cashmere by India Mahdavi at its latest outpost, Le Bristol Paris. HôtelAmericano, a boutique property in NYC's Chelsea, announced a partnership with Mr. Porter through which seasonal buys, from polarized sunglasses to corduroy bomber jackets, can be delivered to guests' rooms. The idea behind the partnership was to enhance the hotel shopping experience.



Photo: Courtesy of 33 Main

When designer Annie Selke purchased a white Federal-style house in Lenox, Massachusetts, that became [33 Main](#), she integrated this concept from the initial design. The furnishings in the rooms were the product of careful research: All mattresses are from the Swedish brand Hästens; wallpaper is Ralph Lauren, and porcelain-marble bathroom tiles from the Tile Shop are found in each bathroom. “We have a card printed that mentions all the design partners,” she says. Selke’s showroom (with items from her brands, Pine Cone Hill and Dash & Albert) is across the street from the lodge, which she describes as more of an English country house than a hotel. She says that since opening in August, the hotel has seen guests who have loved shopping bathroom tiles that are in two palettes, including a gray Carrera marble color and a Calcutta gold version.

The design of the laid-back cottage rooms, which were named for places in the area, is not about “a hard sell of the products,” says Selke, but the hotel still makes it possible to shop these looks as well. “We’re not saying ‘Buy me!’” the designer says. “But if you love a rug, for example, we’ll give you the information you need to take it home with you.”



The china at Sonnenalp Resort.

Photo: Courtesy of Sonnenalp

At the 38-year-old chalet-style [Sonnenalp Resort](#) in Vail, Colorado, Johannes P. Faessler and his wife, Rosana, put a lot of thought into recreating a Bavarian outpost in Vail (his family owns a Sonnenalp in Germany that is over 100 years old)—and quickly realized this style could be profitable beyond room rates. "All the breakfast china has a pattern designed by my husband's grandmother," says Rosana. This has proved to be one of the hottest-selling items from the hotel. The linens in the restaurant, from the French brand Garnier Thiebaut, also do well.

"When we started the resort in 1979, we did not envision that we would be selling anything apart from the rooms," she says, but that changed over the years as visitors started asking if they could purchase items like down comforters, breakfast china, and armoires. The resort really became known for its Mark Roberts holiday fairies, which Rosana sold early on and now has on display in the lobby and the resort gift shop.

"Much of the chalet's upholstery is made with 300-year-old prints from Europe," she says, "and I sell reprints and have pillows with these in the rooms and people go crazy over them because they are truly unique." Over the years, she has seen people shop for items that cannot be found anywhere else. "Since we are a mountain hotel, every aspect of the design, from the European-style uniforms to the sheets, is reminiscent of this style of experience," she says. "People just want a memory of their vacation."



The Restoration Hotel in Charleston.

Photo: Andrew Cebulka

The same could be said for guests at [*the Restoration*](#), in Charleston, South Carolina. Located in the Historic District on King Street, this boutique hotel opened in 2016 following a \$27 million renovation and is comprised of five buildings with a “high- meets low-country” vibe. It has full-size Beekman 1802 bath amenities, Beekman cheeses and cookbooks at the property’s store, and photographs on walls by Ben Gately Williams that can be purchased and sent directly to the guests’ homes.

Designer Cory Ingram wanted a truly Southern experiential approach and curated items that guests would love to take back home with them. “Visitors especially love the gallery guide,” he says, which has details of seasonal exhibits that the hotel has become known for. A recent one featured rare and vintage flags dating back to 1858; another highlighted 14th- and 15th-century church relics. This “hotel meets museum” approach has created a demand for the artwork, barometers, and photographs. “We’ve sold more of these than we could have thought,” says Ingram.

The hotel recently started a project with Look Optic, where visitors can purchase reading glasses found in the rooms. At the library, vintage books are on offer through a partnership with Assouline. And if you’re really intrepid, take home a custom-designed motorbike by Ivan Remus, on sale in the hotel through the Open Road project—if you sell it, they will buy.