

# X2

GLOBAL HOTEL DESIGN

CITIZEN M • ARCHANGEL • MANDARIN ORIENTAL • MIRA • THE SAVOY



# Editorial

## Letter from the editor



We take you on a round trip of the globe in this issue from Glasgow across the pond to New York and then over that continent to Las Vegas taking in Philadelphia along the way. Then it's forward to Hong Kong, dipping into the Middle East and heading back into Europe, via Greece, Sicily and France before arriving in England at that Grand Dame of hotels, The Savoy. It has flung open its doors again after a huge £220m makeover for the 21st century that happily sees it retaining and enhancing all of its former glory. And talking of historical pedigree, more ancient history is brought to life in the temple-like Romanos in Greece, complete with monumental classical architecture. Coming forward in time we have a medieval coaching house stepping up to the mark as a way-station for travellers in the 21st century – with more than a dollop of the Italian renaissance thrown in for good measure. Geography, history – X2, not only an excellent read, it's highly educational as well! Enjoy the issue.

*Theresa*

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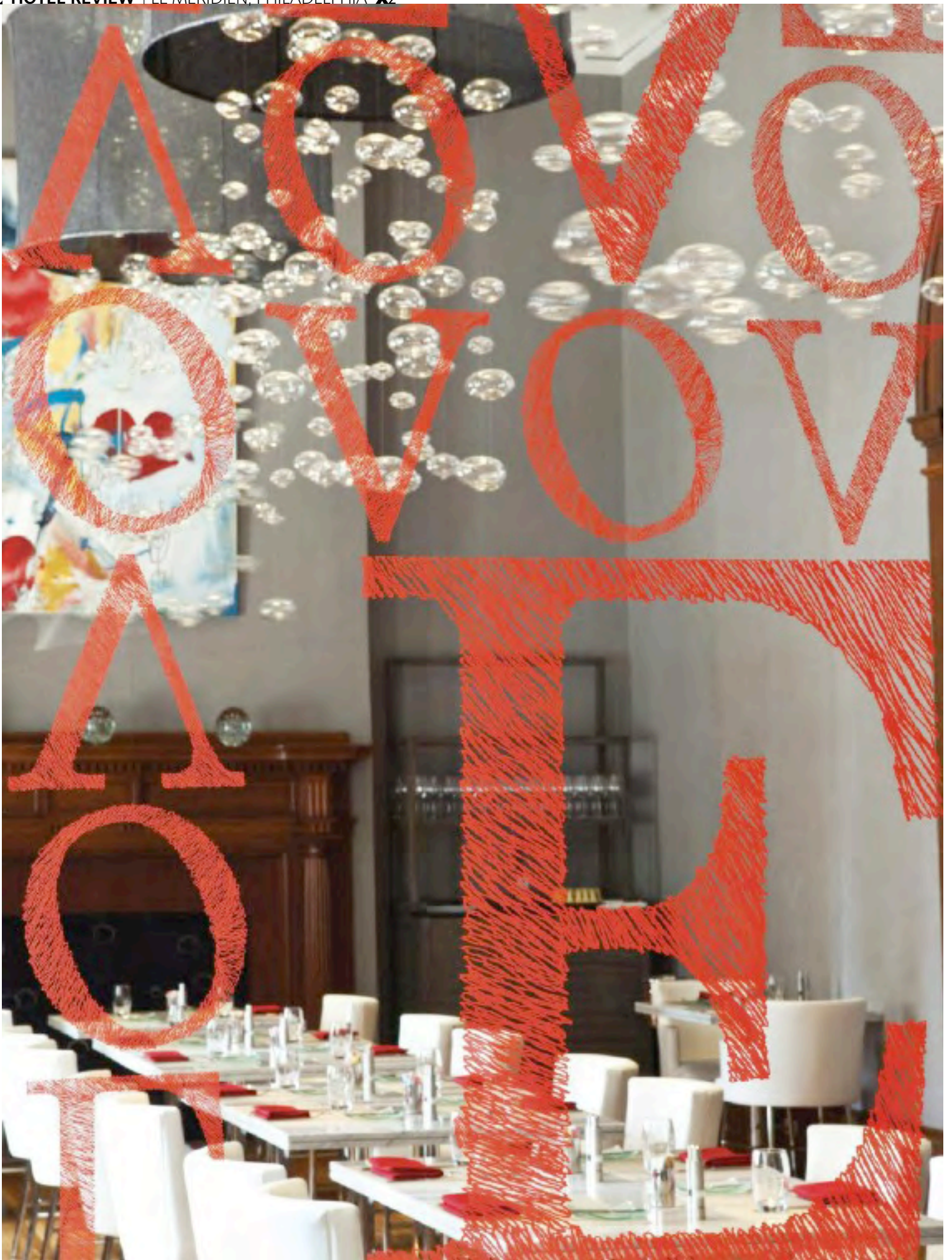


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# Le Méridien

## Philadelphia

THIS STATESIDE FLAGSHIP HOTEL PRESENTS A CONTEMPORARY AND LUXURIOUS OFFERING WHILE OBSERVING AND RESPECTING THE HERITAGE OF A LISTED BUILDING

ARCHITECT: STUART G ROSENBERG ARCHITECTS, BLACKNEY HAYES  
 INTERIOR DESIGNERS: FORCHIELLI GLYNN AND STARWOOD HOTELS

Rising elegantly from its city-centre location in Philadelphia, the 10-storey neoclassical structure that once housed a YMCA when first unveiled in 1912 has today been restored and transformed into a North American flagship for Le Méridien.

The design treatment of this Georgian revival-style building, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, becomes evident as soon as guests step into the entrance portal. As a contemporary pendant lighting fixture dangles overhead, the shadow of a traditional chandelier emerges from the ceiling, making a statement about the juxtaposition of old and new that permeates the hotel's interiors. Art, as a component of Le Méridien's identity, is also given top billing with an appliqué adorning the entry doors in a pattern designed by Hisham Bharoocha, one of the brand's LM100 artists.

Dominating the lobby, a mixture of chestnut and faux wood panelling is contrasted with a white terrazzo floor and clusters of suspended lighting, including foil-lined, oversized black paper lampshades. Seating groups, conceived to encourage interaction, vary from the centrally



Left and far left, the Amuse bistro features white leather seating and Carrara marble table tops, while sheer dark lampshades add lighting drama. Mirrored panels reference the neighbouring Love Park



Clockwise from this image, the library's historic wood panelling has been retained; the main doors has an appliqué in a pattern by one of the hotel group's LM100 artists; the guest rooms have textured walls and red velvet curtains; the Amuse bar is topped with CaesarStone

located Amuse bar, topped with engineered CaesarStone and flanked by black leather stools, to a 4m-long communal stained wood table. Adjacent to the bar, a seating island upholstered in mohair is complemented by pierced-metal chairs. Underneath, a hand-woven carpet in an ombré of warm colours carries a large European damask pattern, one that recurs throughout the hotel.

Three working fireplaces have been retained including in reception, where a forward-tilting convex mirror allows for discreet observation. White fibreglass lighting orbs from Dutch company Moooi have been arranged in multiples for a sculptural effect. The freestanding white stone and polished stainless steel front desk is framed by a lacquered display case and the only permanent piece of art at lobby level.

Developed in conjunction with Farmboy Fine Arts, architectural photos of a modern building have been screened on to a metal substrate to distort into a texture and invite closer inspection.

Permanent art in the conventional sense has been kept to a minimum, with striking pieces of furniture and lighting providing visual interest. Revolving art exhibitions will be held in the public spaces fostering links with the local community.

Neighbouring Love Park is honoured by love-inscribed mirrors found in Amuse bistro, an airy 35-seater that gleams with white leather and Carrara marble table tops, punctuated with red

pops of colour. Playful displays of clear glass balls are capped with sheer, darkly coloured lampshades to create dramatic lighting fixtures. The old/new theme is again explored in the private dining space, where the impression of a chandelier is formed by the use of a reflective lightbulb and Perspex cut-out.

As part of the original structure, a soaring 25m-high glass atrium serves as a secondary lounge, creating a courtyard in which exposed brickwork and sculptural seating add a graphic quality. Supported by steel girders, the bright white guest-room landings float out into the vertiginous space. Rooms themselves are relatively clean with textured wall coverings, red velvet drapery and armoires decorated with the damask motif breaking up the neutral scheme.

The ballroom and library, each with designated historic interiors, have been named in tribute of original architects Horace Trumbauer and Julian Abele. Both spaces meld classic and modern sensibilities, with the ballroom retaining its millwork and the library its wood panelling. The ballroom's contemporary touch comes in the form of sparkly fabric shades for the traditional chandeliers while the library's wall sconces are complemented by suspended glowing white globes set in another eye-catching formation. Carpeting that plays on the oversized damask pattern helps to unify the interiors. X2







## Interview with Cynthia Forchielli

### Co-founder of Forchielli Glynn



Based in Los Angeles, principals Cynthia Forchielli and Helen Glynn established their eponymous interior design firm in 1999. Since then their small practice has earned a reputation for sensitive renovations and extensions of luxury hotels, including work at The Peninsula Beverly Hills and Four Seasons Vancouver. Both principals handle the various phases of each project directly and are conscientious of budget and time constraints without compromising the end product. The firm has been named as a Gold Key Award finalist by the International Hotel, Motel and Restaurant Show for its work on the Lounge/Bar of Le Méridien Philadelphia, with winners due to be announced this November as X2 goes to press.

#### **You've contributed interiors to more than one Le Méridien so what do you enjoy about collaborating with this hotel group?**

It's a fairly new brand in the USA and I've come to learn that while there is a definite identity, there is movement in terms of what you can do. So the Philadelphia property was a perfect prospect for them because it's a beautiful old building that needed to be restored while moving on and being modernised. The European brand is all about combining traditional elements with modern wit. It's also the first time we worked to this extent on the conversion of a preserved building.

#### **What was the biggest challenge in Philadelphia?**

The building's historic status meant that we couldn't attach anything to the existing millwork. No artwork, no cabinetry, nothing could be attached to the walls, and the existing structure had to be respected in terms of layout. In the end though I think these constraints led to interesting design solutions. The hotel's busy bar, for example, captivates the attention as soon as you walk in. Traditional reception is tucked away to the side and the emphasis is instead on social hubs.

#### **Would you say Forchielli Glynn has a recognisable style?**

Our work is defined by the destination itself but we strive for great harmony between the architecture and interior design, and there is a constant theme of warmth and welcome in what we do.

#### **Your career in hospitality design began in 1982 at Hirsch Bedner Associates.**

##### **What keeps you interested and what changes have you observed?**

Every project is different but governed by the same principles. You have the challenge of working in different locations, with various architectural styles, budgets, deadlines and teams yet the end result must be consistent. I remember back in 1982 when some people didn't have faxes and FedEx didn't deliver everywhere. Today, communication and transmission of information is instantaneous and I believe this can be a detriment. We have to discipline ourselves to take time to think things through because there really is no substitute for that process. On the plus side, the contract market has evolved incredibly and there is much more product available. Anything is possible.

#### **What are some of the common mistakes that designers make?**

For me, it's when they don't stay true to a vision and get too flashy and tricky for the sake of it. I'm not saying that I wouldn't work on a trend-driven project but I think it's possible to get lost in trends. In Philadelphia we've taken classic forms but given them a modern interpretation, so they stand the test of time.

#### **What ingredients go into a winning hotel design formula?**

The Peninsula Beverly Hills is a place where time and tradition has been respected. It has a strong sense of identity, graciousness and harmony, all of which are important elements.