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SPECIAL REPORT
New concepts
in workspaces

DESIGNING A RESILIENT WORLD

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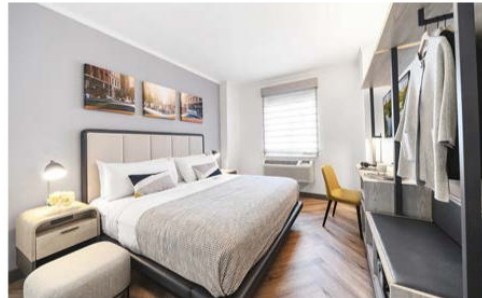
Focus

_Retail and Hospitality



ABOVE: At Harborside in Jersey City, New Jersey, the communal dining hall District Kitchen by TPG Architecture was designed to support local food vendors. Each stall is equipped with a sleek individual shell that can be branded and customized.

RIGHT: To communicate a welcoming residential feel at the Citadines Connect Fifth Avenue hotel in New York City, TPG outfitted suites with soothing neutral palettes and scaled-down furniture.



Proactive Service

HOW CAN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY ADJUST TO A CHANGING REALITY? INTERIOR DESIGNER SHAY LAM OFFERS SOME ADVICE

WORDS _Kendra Jackson

Even pre-pandemic, the hotel industry was confronted with change in the form of Airbnb and other rental-by-owner platforms. But when borders closed across the globe, grinding tourism to a halt, it had to pivot for survival once again. According to Shay Lam, managing executive and studio creative director of TPG Architecture, an award-winning New York firm known for approachable hospitality and retail designs, the future is not as bleak as it seems. Here are some of Lam's projections for how the industry can successfully adapt by focusing on the local and by keeping guests in control of their travel experiences.



SHAY LAM, TPG ARCHITECTURE

Embrace and advance available technology.

While online check-in options are not new, hotels both big and boutique would benefit from adopting them as permanent alternatives to in-person transactions. "Some guests want a human to speak to, while others would prefer not to be bothered," says Lam. "Upon entry, guests will be able to determine the level of care they want." Evolving to a completely frictionless procedure would also free up concierges' time, which could be better used to help guests instead of swiping credit cards.

Provide visual cues.

One concept that Lam and his colleagues have been contemplating is the establishment of clearly defined ways to identify the level of interaction with which guests are comfortable. "Colour-coding is a simple, non-aggressive way of communicating acceptable behaviours and protocols," Lam says, positing the idea of armbands for guests — red to indicate "I want to be left alone," yellow for "Interrupt if necessary" and green to signal "I'm open to interaction" — or a similar method applied to communal spaces. As an example, Lam notes New York City's private-member Soho House, which has "no photography" and "no phone calls" icons depicted on coasters at every table. "It's subtle," he says, "but it works."

Strengthen local businesses.

Long before international travel was stalled, many hotels promised an authentically local experience, although the reality often felt more like "lip service and manufactured," as Lam puts it. "Supporting local businesses is critical to the success and longevity of a neighbourhood in so many ways — now more than ever," he adds. One way to do so is to partner with nearby restaurants to supply prepackaged meals or vouchers for breakfast at their venue, creating a reciprocity that can be a "lifeline that local businesses desperately need." And with the survival of the free buffet breakfast that many establishments offer in peril, providing a locally made, prepackaged meal in-suite or for pickup at a designated spot and time is a promising alternative. tpgarchitecture.com

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