

DESIGN

The Business of Hospitality Style[®]



BLUEPRINTS FOR SUCCESS

Drawing from the inspiration of those who shape hospitality design

2012 PEOPLE

Also Inside:
Annual Purchasing
Company Listing

HFS  CONCEPTS 4



Intelligent Design. Welcome to the evolution.

Architecture Interior Design Procurement Construction Services

www.hfsc4.com



The lobby of the Hyatt Regency Montreal (left) and a guestroom at the Caribe Hilton in San Juan, Puerto Rico (right), illustrate the creative diversity in Therese Virserius' work.

Anyone stepping from the lobby of the Hyatt Regency Montreal into its lobby lounge/bar might not believe designer Therese Virserius was responsible for both spaces. And, for a woman who likes surprises, that likely would make her smile.

As the head of Therese Virserius Designs (TVD), she enjoys playing unexpected elements against each other, but not crashing them together. For example, the minimalist Hyatt lobby, with a gray upholstered bench and walls of hand-cast, white gypsum faux books imprinted in gold lettering with the last lines of famous stories, stands in strong contrast to the lounge, a domain of purple/black/gray hues complete with a violet felt-clad pool table. Neither space flows into the other; each tells its own story.

Virserius' vision, in a way, mimics her life path, which, at this point, has led her to design. Born and bred in Sweden, the designer studied law but decided "that was a little too dull for me." Instead, she opted to study Chinese (she is fluent in Mandarin), graduating with a degree. That, in turn, led to her being headhunted on campus by Swedish furniture company, IKEA, which was looking for management trainees to help launch IKEA in China. Virserius jumped on the opportunity, moved to China and opened the first IKEA shop in Shanghai, later moving into logistics and development.

In December 2000, Virserius moved to the United States. "I wanted to create more three-dimensional spaces, an environment where people can actually experience [something beyond] just sitting in a chair; I wanted 360-degree impact," she said.

Again, Virserius took herself to school, this time for interior design, and began working for Jeffrey Beers International, which has a strong hospitality design focus.

"I really enjoyed that. The projects were much more elaborate, much more fantasy," she said, acknowledging hospitality design offers a lot of



Therese Virserius

Therese Virserius Design

opportunity for creativity. "You could actually propose much more crazy, innovative ideas because you're creating an environment where people spend only a limited amount of time; it's not their house. People come to a hotel for a new experience...it's our job to give them that."

Ninety percent of TVD's portfolio consists of hospitality projects, and word of mouth about the team's abilities has garnered repeat assignments, including several from Hyatt. In addition to the Canada property, TDV worked on projects for the

lodging chain in Pittsburgh, PA, and Jersey City, NJ, and most recently, 41 suites at the Park Hyatt at the Bellevue in Philadelphia. "My firm really understands old-world architecture and merges that into a contemporary feel that blends the both," she said.

TVD also worked on the indoor/outdoor lounge at CityCenter in Las Vegas for MGM Mirage Group; lobby/lobby lounge and library lounge at the InterContinental, Milwaukee, WI; guestrooms, public space, ballroom and pre-function space at the Westin Ft. Lauderdale in Florida; the Pangea lounge and the Gryphon nightclub at the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino, Hollywood, FL; and the Caribe Hilton in San Juan, Puerto Rico, where TVD is continuing a project that has included guestrooms, meeting and ballroom space, lobby and lobby lounge. Virserius also convinced Hilton that its outdoor spaces could use some redesign and is tackling that as well. Other projects include the W Hotel Seattle and Sheraton Brussels.

With projects, Virserius said there "definitely needs to be a good relationship; there has to be mutual respect. If they want it to be cookie-cutter, it's not for us."

Virserius said it's important the firm understands the [hotel] brand. "They all want to feel unique, they all want to feel special. But they are all very specific in their brands. That's important, too," she said.

At the Hyatt Regency Montreal, for instance, TVD's goal with the design was to help reposition the property from just a place to stay to a place to have an experience. Completed this past January, TVD's three-year effort transformed the lobby, lobby lounge/bar, meeting space, wine bar and public spaces. For example, a large media wall in the lounge now streams artists' works. "So it's always changing," said Virserius, who sees creating impact as integral to her design philosophy. "I don't want people to just walk through a space; I want them to react."

—Stefani C. O'Connor