

SLEEPER

HOSPITALITY EXPERIENCE & DESIGN



RH GUESTHOUSE – NEW YORK • THE STANDARD – BANGKOK MAHANAKHON • THE JULIUS – PRAGUE

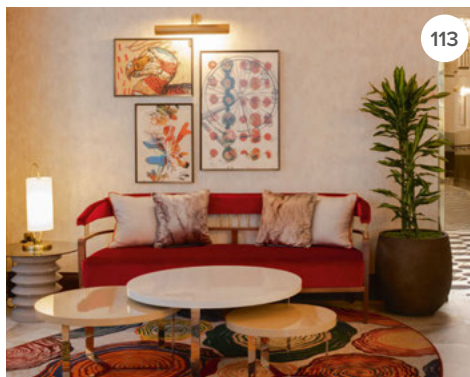
November / December 2022

CONTENTS

ISSUE 105

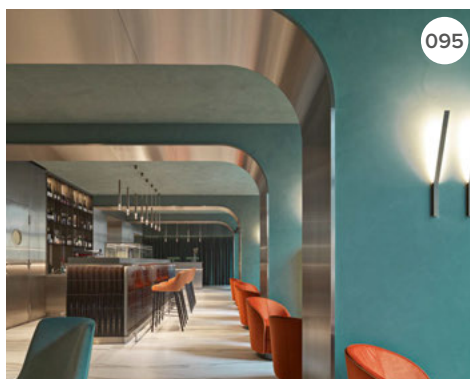


086



113

© Ica Studio



095

© Giordana Xerra



101

© Stephan Lemke

HOTEL REVIEWS

Regent Phu Quoc	060
Adler Spa Resort Sicily	068
Parkroyal Collection Marina Bay Singapore	076
Immerso Ericeira	083
The Standard Bangkok Mahanakhon	086
The Julius Prague	095
25hours Hotel Indre By Copenhagen	101
Bethlen Estates Transylvania	106
Lost Property London	113

FEATURES

Meeting... Gary Friedman 040

As RH opens the doors to its much anticipated Guesthouse, the furniture-maker's Chairman and CEO tells of humble beginnings to scaling a global luxury brand.

Meeting... Teddy Mayer 047

Following Virgin Hotels' debut in the UK, Creative Director and Vice President of Design Teddy Mayer reveals how the brand is retaining a playful identity while tapping into the locale.



076

FEATURES

Design Details 118
From a timber-infused suite in London to a South Tyrol spa that appears to defy the laws of gravity, Design Details focuses on the specifics that contribute to the overall experience.

Challenging the Status Quo 123
Having disrupted the traditional hospitality model since its inception, Yotel hopes to shake up new markets during its next phase of growth.

Radical Innovation 146
The future-forward competition that challenges visionaries to pioneer innovation in travel and hospitality, names its winner.

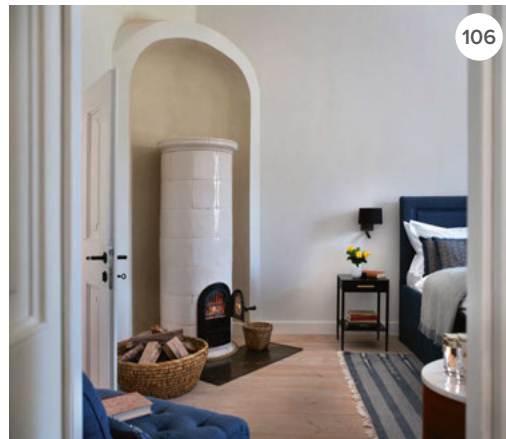
AHEAD 135
Spanning the lengths and breadths of their regions, from the verdant uplands of Bali to the concrete jungle of New York City, the AHEAD Asia and Americas winners showcase the very best in hospitality experience and design.

REGULARS

Check-In	026
Drawing Board	028
The Lobby	053
Business Centre	152
Fabrics, Surfaces & Wallcoverings	165
Beds, Mattresses & Linens	177
Specifier	181
Check-Out	202

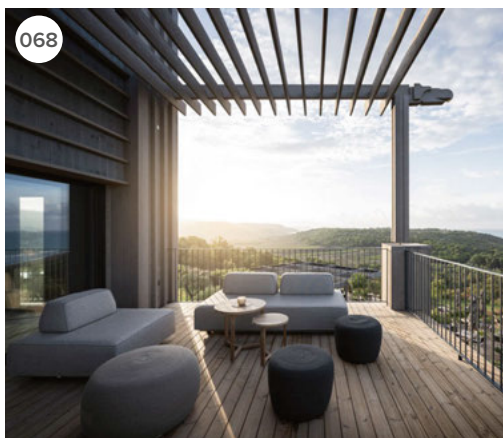


040



106

© Philip Vile



068



165

© Alex Fitz

Meeting... Gary Friedman

As RH opens the doors to its much anticipated Guesthouse, the furniture-maker's Chairman and CEO tells of humble beginnings to scaling a global luxury brand.

Words: Ayesha Khan

Retail brands venturing into hospitality is no novel concept, but how many design shops that started as mere tchotchke shops have ventured into the world of jets, yachts and luxury guesthouses? That is the very trajectory of RH, originally known as Restoration Hardware, a little company from Northern California that has, ever since going public in 2012, peaked at a stock appreciation of 3,000% and is now worth nearly US\$6 billion.

The man behind the brand is the first to admit that his humble beginnings belie the haute aspirations of the brand. "I'm the least likely guy to be doing what I'm doing," says Gary Friedman, as he sits by a bubbling fountain at RH Marin, a 60,000ft² gallery in California that blurs the lines between residential and retail, indoors and outdoors, home and hospitality. "We didn't have furniture growing up, I always tell people that I was a stamp collector as a kid – government food stamps!"

The young retailer got his start working as a stock clerk at Gap when a community college stint fizzled out – "the counsellor told me I was wasting taxpayers' money by going to college," he quips. He quickly rose through the ranks, first to store manager, then to district and regional manager. Working with visionary

retailer Mickey Drexler, who is credited with taking the Gap brand to its now-ubiquitous status, taught Friedman what it meant to grow a brand. "To this day, I call him one of my mentors. He led Gap through a complete renaissance, pointing it in the direction of a high-quality product in a cohesive and singular way. He was the inventor of vertically integrated retail where the store is the brand," Friedman recalls, foreshadowing his own approach.

Friedman then went on to take a job at Williams-Sonoma, attracted first by the prospect of moving back to his native Northern California. "It gave me the opportunity to be close to my friends and my mother, they offered me this big job and doubled my salary – those things were important to a 29-year-old," he notes. Over 14 years he grew Pottery Barn from a retailer of tabletop and décor to the multifarious outfit it is today, and went on to develop the West Elm brand, which saw design through a well-crafted Mid-Century lens. But with great success came great disappointment; in a career loss he still calls "heartbreaking" Friedman was passed up for the CEO position in favour of a more conventional choice.

But the ever-tenacious Friedman didn't skip a beat. He owes his success in the retail world to his work ethic. "I was just a kid who didn't know what couldn't





The brand's galleries in Chicago, Marin and San Francisco (above) are designed as engaging hospitality experiences, while the newly launched RH Guesthouse in New York (opposite), features interiors clad in European white oak and vein-matched Italian travertine

be done, I out-worked everybody," he says. "People say I had great vision; I don't know if I've had a great vision, I just stay curious, keep learning and keep looking around the corner. I'm always on the move."

The opportunity to join Restoration Hardware quickly reinvigorated Friedman, and he subsequently developed the brand to signify more than just a rustic-inspired furniture-maker. One of his first initiatives was to build awe-inspiring galleries in historically-significant buildings around the US, from San Francisco to New York City, pushing the task of home furnishing and design to an elevated experience rather than an intimidating one. With the growth of RH's interior design service, Friedman soon thought of offering RH's clients an engaging hospitality experience. "Our business progressed from selling products to selling projects," he explains. "We arguably have the largest residential interior design firm in the world; people are spending hours, days, weeks and months in our galleries, so how do we make that experience more hospitable? Why should they have to leave to eat lunch or dinner?" The first gallery to integrate F&B was Chicago in 2015, and the concept has since

expanded to 14 locations. To this day, a table at RH New York's Rooftop Restaurant, opened in late 2018, is a hot commodity.

So how does such a successful brand continue to flourish? For Friedman, it's all about ambition. "Most luxury brands were born at the top of the luxury mountain," he compares. "We believe we can be the first brand to climb to the top. We have to work hard to get there, and do something that is so extraordinary and so remarkable that it forces others to tip their hat and respect us." One of those remarkable achievements was to create RH-branded jets and yachts, available for charter by the world's elite. Featuring a slick phantom grey and metallic champagne-toned exterior and an interior lined entirely in European oak, RH One and RH Two are aviation masterpieces that truly push the envelope, even for reputed jet-maker Gulfstream. "We built the first all-wood jet interior," Friedman explains. "Gulfstream told us that it couldn't be done, but we took the risk and it paid off."

RH Three, the brand's 130ft expedition yacht is equally impressive, featuring four guest cabins and a lounge inspired by the subtle hues of the sand, sea



“People are spending hours, days, weeks and months in our galleries, so how do we make that experience more hospitable?”

RH Three is the brand's 130ft expedition yacht that is available for charter, featuring four guest cabins and a lounge inspired by the subtle hues of the sand, sea and sky

and sky. Entirely self-contained, the yacht features its own tenders, jet skis and snorkelling gear – enough to keep the Caribbean and Mediterranean sailing elite occupied.

For his next venture, the newly launched RH Guesthouse in New York's Meatpacking District, Friedman scouted a historic building and filled it with RH glamour. “This is the biggest flag we have planted atop the luxury mountain,” he proudly states. “There isn't any sheet rock or a drop of paint; it's built entirely in European white oak and vein-matched Italian travertine,” Friedman says of the groundbreaking hospitality concept. The street-level restaurant, The Dining Room, features a charming Parisian-style indoor-outdoor patio and stunning timber-clad coffered ceilings. Upstairs, the six guestrooms and three suites feature sculpted furniture, no fewer than 52 integrated lighting points per room, two bathrooms, a gym, gourmet pantry and a state-of-the-art thermoregulated FreshBed sleep system. There's also a Champagne & Caviar

Bar and a rooftop swimming pool with daybeds sculpted entirely from travertine; it's a veritable sanctuary in the middle of the urban bustle.

The next RH Guesthouse is slated for Aspen and will include a branded Bath House & Spa. And having reached the heights of the US luxury mountain, Friedman soon plans to scale up internationally. The first project is RH England, The Gallery at the Historic Aynho Park, a 17th-century country estate some two hours from London. This will be followed by a host of openings in Paris, Milan, Madrid and even the French countryside.

To the naysayers who argue that RH's development is too aggressive, Friedman simply explains his theory of scaling taste. “We always thought the idea of scaling taste was a large and far-reaching opportunity, and when you look at the top of the market, it is very fragmented,” he says, alluding to the opportunities for an integrated design brand whose development knows no bounds. “There are those with taste and no scale, and those with scale and no taste.”

