

DESIGNER DIGS

Ever since Louis Vuitton wheeled out his first monogrammed suitcase, fashion designers have been synonymous with high class travel. And this is true today more than ever, as **Sailee Sarangdhar** finds out, with an increasing number of designer hotels being erected across the globe.

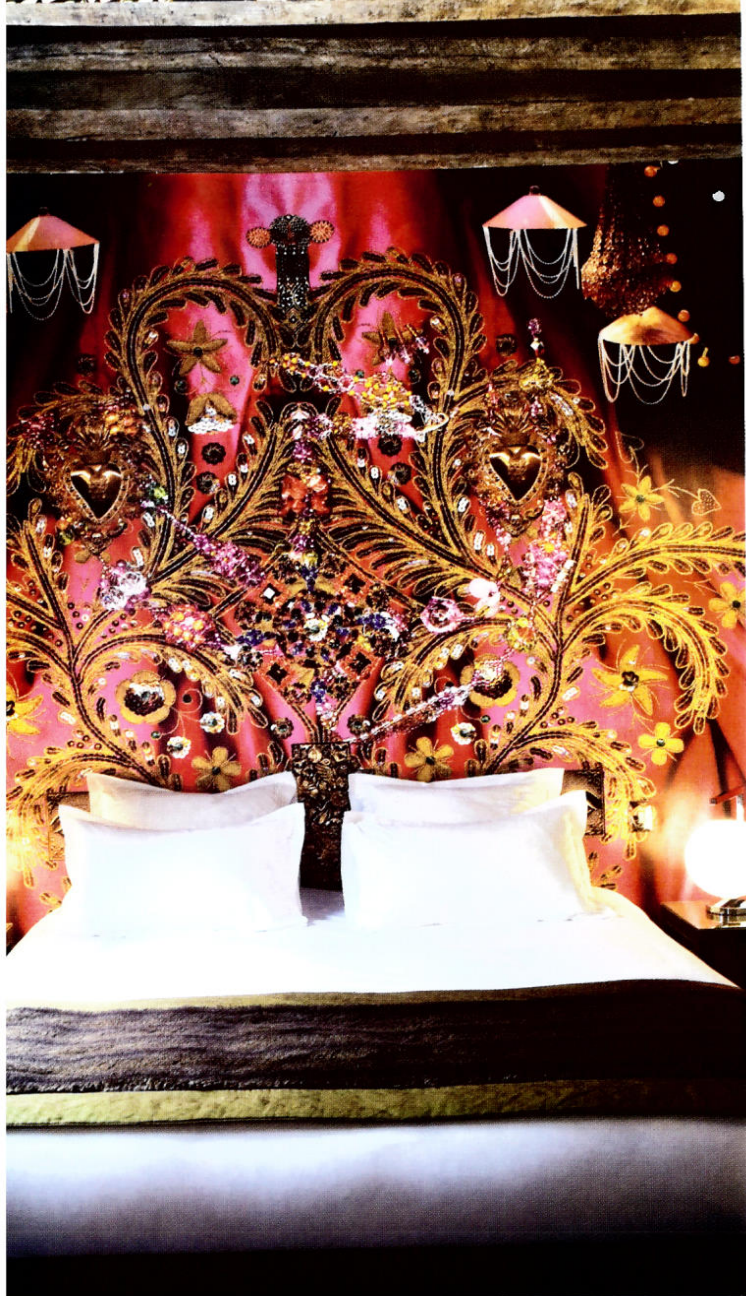
It could be argued that fashion designers are true connoisseurs of beauty and luxury. After all, if a brand holds the power to dress a person in a particular fashion, the same power can be wielded to dictate the ultimate luxury experience. So what does one get when the definers of opulence set out to create an experience for lovers of travel and leisure? The answer is: the designer hotel. Armani, Bulgari, Christian Lacroix and Versace are all brands extending their concepts of fashion and design into the hotel industry, opening up a string of hotels in breathtaking locations around the world. Paris, Florence, The Gold Coast, Milan, Bali and Dubai are all homes to projects that bring fashion and hospitality together. Personalized service and cutting edge technology are also an integral part of the designer hotel experience. Each hotel incorporates the same innovative ideas and concepts that come across from their fashion lines.

The transition of the fashion brand into hospitality came about in the early 80s, when Anoushka Hemple kicked off the trend for Blake boutique hotels in London and Amsterdam. Krizia Mariuccia Mandelli was the second big name in the transition with her luxurious K Club resort. Ever since then, the collaboration between fashion brands and luxury hotels has been on the increase, giving opportunity to renowned designers to bring the talent they have to creating lavishness and comfort within a space. Designers have made checking in just another process in the seamless lifestyle experience that comes with their brand name.

Clockwise from main picture: Byblos Art Hotel Villa; The Bulgari Resort, Bali; Palazzo Versace, Gold Coast; Hotel Du Petit Moulin; The Hotel Lungarno.







Christian Lacroix, the famous haute couture designer was called in to create the interior decoration of the **Hotel Du Petit Moulin**. Located on the corner of Poitou and Saintonge streets of Paris, the hotel is made up of two old buildings that have been joined together and re-furbished by the Bastie architectural partnership. The older of the two buildings housed the oldest bakery in Paris and rumor has it that Victor Hugo bought his bread there. Lacroix's decision was that the only way to collaborate design within the entire hotel was to ensure that every one of the 17 different rooms had a distinctly unique and stunning décor. The hotel concentrates on creating paradoxical facets, whether guests are interested in contemporary art, fashion, vintage or not, or quite simply a certain life style somewhere between ancient stones and modernity, creating a mix of trends which means there is something for everyone.

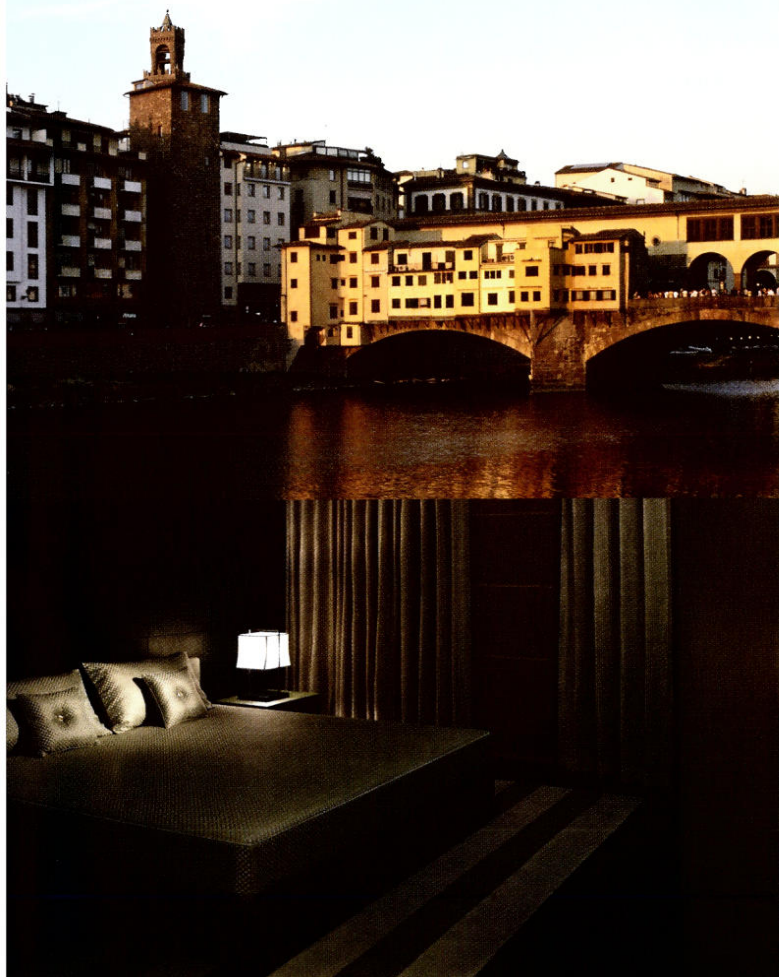
Byblos Art Hotel Villa Amistà, a new and exclusive hotel is where hospitality and fashion merge together. Conceived by the Byblos fashion label as a permanent exhibition of modern art, the interior of the hotel displays works by renowned artists of international fame. Situated in Corrubio, the heart of the Valpolicella, just a few kilometres from the centre of Verona, the hotel has been restored meticulously by the well known architect and designer Alessandro Mendini who has transformed this Venetian Villa into a real museum of contemporary art and design. The villa holds a conference room, a dining room, a restaurant and a bar, all dedications to a particular artist. A vast collection of design objects, both contemporary and historical, decorate the sixty rooms of the hotel and all common rooms. Amenities include a magnificent 20,000 square metre park, a gourmet restaurant open to the general public, a piano bar which hosts live music and the wine cellar in the fourteenth century vault, which houses wines that can be tasted from more than 300 different producers. An outdoor pool and the Dominique ed Henri Chenot Wellness Centre, all contrive to make this an exclusive luxury hotel.

The Hotel Lungarno, designed by Ferragamo, is located between Ponte Vecchio and Ponte S. Trinita along the river Arno, a spectacular location in Florence. The hotel boasts an individuality and image created by Architect Michele Bönan, making it one of the most desired destinations in international tourism. Inspired by the *nuova classicità*, the interior design is a smart balance of ivory toned fabrics and ocean blue carpets with details that recall the elegance of an aristocratic Italian

This page: Images from Hotel Du Petit Moulin.
Opposite page: Byblos Art Hotel Villa.







home. The antique furnishings, the collection of paintings from mostly 20th century Italy, among them a Picasso, are part of the hotel's brilliant originals and notably contribute to the link between the past and future. The restaurant Borgo San Jacopo, deemed the city's "dining room on the river", is also a special part of the hotel's experience.

The word Armani is synonymous with fashion, style and design. The extension of these words into the realm of hotels and resorts in the world's major cities mean that guests receive superior service, immaculate design and incomparable luxury. The collaboration between Giorgio Armani and Emaar with the **Armani Hotel, Dubai** means that a marriage between iconic design, aesthetics and the cutting edge technology occurs. Casual elegance is the style principal underlying in every space with the use of carefully selected textiles, fabrics and impeccable service. The hotel rooms and public areas are furnished with the Armani/Casa home furnishing collection.

Donatella Versace's ambition and passion are to bring choice and trends to the world of fashion and home styles alike. The extension of the Versace brand into the hotel industry, gives the world **Palazzo Versace, Gold Coast**, Australia an exquisite, exclusive destination created for the world to enjoy. Inspiration and influences from around the globe reflect in the classical and yet contemporary design of the hotel. Glorious climate, a cosmopolitan approach, and the wonderful facilities like three award winning restaurants, a private marina, and amazing accommodation all come together to make this the ultimate experience in luxury.

Bulgari Milan Hotel and **Bali Resort** are the architectural equivalents of the brand's jewellery, which exudes nothing but luxury, class and elegance. Both have been designed by the renowned Italian architect, Antonio Citterio and are a tribute to the world of luxury. Located in the Villa Privata Fratelli Gabba, the hotel is framed by a gorgeous backdrop of the private gardens and has a spectacular setting. A fantastic restaurant and café meaning to fulfil tastes for playful and refined delectable dishes, an indoor swimming pool and an exclusive spa all contribute to the amenities list of this five star experience. The second member of the Bulgari family is their Bali resort. This designer resort is located 160 meters above the Indian Ocean close to an old Hindu temple of Ganesha and features a marriage between classic Italian style and traditional Balinese culture. Local antiques combined with the use of rare materials like indigenous woods, carved lava and subakumi stone all create a unique luxury experience for guests. /

Clockwise from top left: The Bulgari, Milan; Hotel Lungarno; The skylounge of the Hotel Lungarno; The Hotel Lungarno's exterior; Bedroom of the Armani Hotel; The Palazzo Versace; Bedroom of the Palazzo Versace; Infinity pool at the Bulgari Resort, Bali.