

BOUTIQUE design

HOSPITALITY REINVENTED

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HIT MAKERS

GLENN PUSHELBERG AND GEORGE YABU
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EXIT Interview

CITIZEN OF THE WORLD

Vince Stroop has made a career out of building bridges between cultures and genres to redefine the potential for hospitality spaces.

BY ALICIA SHEBER

THIS MARCH brought a homecoming for architect and interior designer Vince Stroop as he returned to former employer, Jeffrey Beers International (JBI, New York). But he's certainly not the prodigal son. During his career-building five years with hospitality-focused architecture and interior design studio Stonehill Taylor, New York, he was a principal responsible for community-based hospitality throughout North America and international locations including London, Moscow, Hong Kong, Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Riyadh. The incredible opportunity proved a rigorous, knowledge-based laboratory to strengthen his design and leadership skills. Now, Stroop rejoins JBI as the first partner since Jeffrey Beers launched his company in 1986. As executive design director, he develops new creative business opportunities and is instrumental in the international evolution of the 50-person studio.

Stroop's enviable 25-year portfolio comprises designs for brands like Rosewood Hotels and Resorts, InterContinental Hotels Group, Raffles Hotels and Resorts, Hyatt Hotels Corporation, Marriott International, Kerzner International, MGM Resorts International and the Sydell Group. His work also includes luxury residences, libraries, wineries and restaurants. Here, Stroop dishes on his vision for designing a culturally-inclusive world.

WHAT RENEWED THE CONVERSATION WITH JEFFREY BEERS?

Jeff and I reconnected after he saw me speak at a 2017 London conference. The guestroom I designed for that event's competition will always make me smile because it embodies who I am as a person trying to embrace globalization: respecting other cultures but also creating a new one by blending them. Our Stonehill Taylor team's winning concept challenged travelers' thinking, embracing cross-cultural design and branding driven by political desires to expand borders rather than contain them. Istanbul-based Yapiarti fabricated our set so it could be trucked across Europe for installation in London. Jeff saw me present the concept. One thing led to another, and now, here I am!

WHAT'S IT LIKE RETURNING TO JBI? DO THE CONCEPTS YOU DEVELOPED THEN REFLECT YOUR ORIGINAL VISION NOW THEY ARE COMPLETE?

Working with Jeff and JBI again is an absolute honor and thrill. A big draw was the studio's diverse project types and scales. In addition to several hotels, a couple international resorts are on the boards plus several F&B projects, residential towers and high-profile offices.



One of my first projects at JBI was helping design One West End Luxury Tower in New York. We brought resort wellness amenities into residences in the heart of Manhattan with spaces encouraging social connection. JBI's diligence in getting the project across the finish line resulted in a spot-on realization of our initial design intentions.

HOW DOES YOUR PERSONALITY FIT WITH JBI'S DESIGN PHILOSOPHY?

I'm a warm, easy-going person who seeks quality, style and sophistication at an approachable level. My Instagram (@vince_stroop) followers say, "you take the best photos" that "capture the essence" and evoke emotional responses. Photography has been a creative outlet since my parents gave me a Pentax K1000 for Christmas in the ninth grade. The process of setting up views, waiting for just the right light, focusing on details or textures, awareness of color and balance, etc... aligns with my creative approach—and that of JBI's talented architects and interior, graphic and product designers, too.

WHAT WILL YOUR NEW ROLE ENCOMPASS?

I'm a hands-on, roll-up-my-sleeves guy and still love to envision and build things. So, I'll maintain a strong voice in that regard. Today, all developments want a degree of cool hotels' social vibe. More importantly, as Jeff's first partner, we'll nurture international relationships to build our global presence. Scarily enough, I've not set foot in a movie theater in over 12 years. I get my film fix from an aisle seat on Delta Airlines. This is totally OK, because design is a constantly evolving service industry necessitating emotional connections with both people and place. My most successful projects require me to be on site, engage in face-to-face dialogue and have a global entry passport. For me, business development becomes easy by being available, friendly and a good listener.

WHAT WOULD YOU LOVE TO DESIGN?

As an adventure-seeking traveler, I'd love to translate eco-resorts and agri-tourism's "immersive" experiences into an urban response with a deconstructed, neighborhood-centric hotel model. Airbnb disrupts the market by providing unique experiences. Hotels need to inhabit that space with city resorts where guests feel part of the community while enjoying hospitality services. ●