

# ALEXANDER JAMES INTERIORS

RICHARD MORTON, DIRECTOR OF INTERIOR DESIGN

Can Faik talks to Alexander James Director of Interior Design Richard Morton about his experience at all levels of construction and design...

**A**lexander James Interiors, formed from a group of leading hotel interior and architectural designers who have worked with many of the world's leading hotel groups across the globe. Some of their recent projects include the Doubletree by Hilton Minsk, and the Hilton and Crowne Plaza hotels in Bucharest.

**Tell me about your role at Alexander James Interiors?**

I head the team that provides full hotel interior design services along with interior architectural design for residential projects, my role involves contributing to, and overseeing, the design process, making presentations to clients and visits to site to coordinate our interior design scheme within the overall project.

**What five words would you use to describe Alexander James Interiors?**

I would describe Alexander James Interiors as expressive, inventive, collaborative, skillful and reliable.

**How long have you been involved with hotel design?**

I qualified as an Interior Designer in 1980. Hotel design as a profession in the UK was at this time finding its feet, it was an exciting and energetic time to work in the industry, we had fun pushing the boundaries of preconceptions.

**Have you noticed any particular trends in hotel design?**

The hotel has now become an experience destination, no longer just a 'home from home', there is also a focus on diverse brands, although guests always want value for money no matter what their budget. Recently priorities have begun shifting towards advances in technology.

**How important are public spaces in hotels?**

First impression is hugely important, it still holds the key to the guest's perception of the hotel, wow-factor on entry is the goal of all good design even though entry spaces are becoming more multifunctional, every square meter has to earn its keep. Many a successful hotel will include 'go to' restaurants and bars as places to meet up appealing to hotel guests and the non-residents alike, although never forget the toilets, you can pick up lots of points for good design here.

**With so many hospitality designers in the industry, how does Alexander James Interiors stand out from the rest?**

We deliver on our promises; our finished work is a carbon copy of our visuals therefore our client's expectations are realised. Our extensive experience of working closely with hotel operators helps us to create space-planning solutions even before an operator is appointed. >



**What is the biggest thing the company has learnt over its years in the industry?**

We have learnt that our skills have no limits; we recently designed our first shopping centre, which opened in Minsk last year, now acclaimed as one of the best in Belarus.

**How would you define your 'Hotel Style'?**

We believe we do not have an in-house style, rather we pride ourselves on our designers ability to respond to the brief, location, clients wishes and operator demands, our style is in the way we bring all these points together.

**Where do you draw your inspiration from?**

My inspiration stems from making things. I have always liked to work with my hands, especially as a child, the thought processes that go into making things goes side by side with conceiving designs from your desk, the ability to visualise the end product is vital.

**What does design mean to you?**

I am pretty sure design found me. At each turn events have taken me towards this profession, it means a lot to me to be a designer.

**What has been your favourite project to date?**

Currently my favourite project is Hilton Doubletree Minsk, we received an enthusiastic pat on the back from the client for this one, it was selected by Hilton to go before the board in the US as a fine example of interpretation of the brand. We started by completely changing the public area space planning, along with optimising the room distribution, we worked closely with the client who directed us towards an art deco style which we used as a design inspiration but we do not overplay it in the final scheme. Currently the Hilton Doubletree Minsk is the number one performer in the city.

**Is there anything exciting that you are working on at the moment that you can tell us about?**

One of the exciting projects in the office at the moment is a Luxury Collection Hotel in Yerevan, Armenia; our design team took this project from a bare concrete shell and created amazing interior spaces. In a few months' time, it will open as a 5-star luxury hotel.

Areas include 40 different room types including a presidential suite, reception area, bar, a pool and restaurant, both with panoramic views, as well as a cigar lounge and spa.



Restaurant, The Alexander Luxury Collection, Yerevan



Salon, The Alexander Luxury Collection, Yerevan



Presidential Bedroom, The Alexander Luxury Collection, Yerevan



Sky Bar, Doubletree Minsk



Guestroom The Alexander Luxury Collection Yerevan

**What would be your dream hotel project?**

The great thing about being an interior designer is that you always get to realise your dreams with the completion of every project.

**Where currently ranks highest on your travel wish-list?**

Japan, for its culture, art and design, I will be going soon.

**Where do you see hotel design in the future?**

I predict that there will be an increase in the desire for sustainability, the trend is towards environmental awareness, smaller hotels, with an increase in multi-functional spaces, which may develop as part of this movement.

**What would you say are the three best places you've ever stayed?**

A Greyhound Bus from New York to Phoenix Arizona, it was the best way to travel and felt like home for a few days! Rock near Padstow is always a favourite. Sandton Hilton Johannesburg, I completed the scheme in 1996, it was an amazing place to stay.



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