



High fashion hotels

FORGET IT BAGS, SHOES AND FROCKS; STAYING AT ONE OF THE FABULOUS HOTELS DESIGNED BY A FAMOUS FASHION DESIGNER IS HIGH ON THE HOT-LIST RIGHT NOW REPORTS STYLE WRITER JANE GIFFORD.

With the imminent opening of the Armani Hotel Dubai, **Giorgio Armani** joins the swelling ranks of high-profile designers-turned-lifestyle brands who have added luxury hotels to their portfolios. This burgeoning trend means that it's now possible for fashionistas, and anyone interested in design, to check in and live the lifestyle of their most loved labels.

With the smooth running of the hotels taken care of by hospitality specialist partners, the focus is squarely on style and leveraging established reputations. Branching out into hotel design seems to make sense, too, as a marketing tool. It is, after all, an opportunity to showcase the whole brand, products and lifestyle included, to a revolving door of people who may not yet have succumbed to the allure of the fashion, jewellery and home accoutrements on offer.

Armani
For his venture, Giorgio Armani partnered with Dubai-based developer Emaar Properties and the chic 160-room Armani Hotel, located over nine floors of Burj Dubai, the tallest skyscraper in the world today, will be the first of several properties in the works to open. Other locations planned for Armani Hotels & Resorts in the next several years include Milan, Marrakech and New York. Armani's intention is for guests at these namesake establishments to be treated with the same attentive service they would receive in his own home. All the rooms and public spaces will be decorated with custom-designed Armani/Casa furnishings and with the presence of a signature Armani nightclub, chocolatier, spa and of course, the designer's eponymous fashion boutiques on the premises, there will be plenty of opportunities to indulge, play, and dress, the Armani way.



Images L to R: The new Armani Hotel Dubai



Versace

Giorgio Armani is a new arrival on the catwalk-to-hotelier scene compared to Donatella Versace who hung her family's shingle on a grandiose 270-room property on Australia's Gold Coast almost a decade ago. The Palazzo Versace, with its ornate columns, gold statuary and vivid textiles, distinctly reflects the label's glitzy-glamour style. Now, years later, another even more opulent Palazzo Versace is nearing completion in Dubai.



Missoni

Cutting-edge festival-goers might be interested to learn that the heart of the Edinburgh Festival's home town in Scotland is the location of the first Hotel Missoni, a collaboration between the hip Italian fashion and home furnishings label known for its iconic zigzag and stripe patterns, and Brussels-based hospitality experts, the Rezidor Hotel Group. Creative director Rosita Missoni's stamp is unmistakable throughout the mostly black and white interiors which feature an array of items from the Missoni home collection, from bath towels to glassware and fine china, along with a bespoke fragrance and hand-picked pieces of furniture by the likes of Marcel Wanders and, with a nod to the hotel's Scottish location, Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Future Missoni hotels are slated for Kuwait, Cape Town, Brazil and Oman.



Bvlgari Hotel Bali



Bvlgari Hotel Milano



Bvlgari Hotel Bali



Bvlgari Milano



Bvlgari Hotel Milano

Bvlgari

Italian jeweler Bvlgari has also expanded into the realm of hospitality. A few years ago, the century-old company joined forces with Luxury Group, a division of Marriott International that also manages The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, to launch an exclusive collection of contemporary properties under the umbrella of Bvlgari Hotels & Resorts. Bvlgari Milano, an 18th-century building transformed by renowned Italian architectural firm Antonio Citterio and Partners into a sophisticated, luxurious and thoroughly modern 52-room urban retreat, has become a popular hangout for high-flyers during Milan Fashion Weeks. Open too, is the joint venture's spectacular cliff-top oasis overlooking the ocean in Bali, designed by the same architects.



Images L to R:
Portrait Suites.

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Ferragamo

Other designers have taken a more subtle approach to expanding into the hotel industry. The Ferragamos of shoe-making and luxury leather goods fame, for example, decided to diversify their business a while ago, and have, since 1995, opened a succession of six elegantly appointed lodgings in Florence and one in Rome under the umbrella of Lungarno Hotels. Despite the official name, people tend to refer to the company's Florence hotels as "the Ferragamo hotels." Inside these boutique properties, the aesthetic is elegant, comfortable and sophisticated, with references to the shoes and accessories the family is known for.



*Ralph Lauren
(The Pineapple House)*
A few years ago, Ralph Lauren revamped ocean front rooms in the Pineapple House at the legendary Round Hill Hotel and Villas in Jamaica, where he is a part owner. The look he chose to complement the colonial architecture – a crisp white palette with splashes of tropical colour and four-poster mosquito-netted beds, slip-covered chaises and other furnishings from the Ralph Lauren Home Design Studio – is straight from the evocative pages of the designer's summer catalogs – good news for anyone who wishes they could dive into the photographs.



The interiors of the hotel's 15 charming villas are elegantly simple - typical de la Renta - who also designed the furnishings.

*Oscar de la Renta
(Tortuga Bay Hotel)*

Oscar de la Renta, a long-time favourite of American First Ladies and society doyennes, has also seriously dabbled in the business of hotel design. In the late 1990s he became a partner in the development of the Punta Cana Resort & Club in an unspoilt remote coastal region of the Dominican Republic and was the creative force behind the design of the resort's exclusive Tortuga Bay Hotel. The interiors of the hotel's 15 charming villas are elegantly simple - typical de la Renta, who also designed the furnishings so that most of them could be made locally from materials at hand.



Philip Treacy
(g Hotel Galway)

Among others, even milliner-turned-furniture designer Philip Treacy is in on the act. In 2005 he signed on as the design director for Monogram Hotels' flagship property in Ireland, the g Hotel Galway. The interiors there display the wild creative flourishes and eccentricities he usually applies to hats, as worn by the late international style icon and Treacy muse Isabella Blow and other important British ladies, to great effect.

While expanding into hotel design seems like the height of fashion right now, one can't help wondering how long it might take for these properties to suffer the dreaded fate of falling out of fashion.