



## EMBRACE AUTHENTICITY, CREATIVE DESIGN AND PRACTICALITY FOR SUCCESS: BLINK HOSPITALITY ROUNDTABLE

For Immediate Release

30 April 2014

**SINGAPORE** - Leading luxury hotel design firm BLINK Design Group's core belief that authenticity in hotel design is one of three key industry drivers has been echoed at the second in its series of hospitality roundtables at the recent HICAP Update event in Singapore.

The high-powered gathering attracted senior industry practitioners who were united in their view that authenticity was key in today's design world, and that creativity should start from a place of meticulous research, intellectual curiosity and deep understanding about the history, culture and design vernacular of a place.



Hospitality heavyweights gathered in Singapore for the second in the series of BLINK Design Group's hotel industry roundtables to discuss the future of luxury hotel design. For high res image please click [here](#).

The participants also agreed that original thinking and practicality in design, based on a deep understanding of how hotels work, were instruments operators could use to improve their bottom lines and differentiate their products in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

"We live in a world which is more interested in design than ever before," said Vincent Yeo, Chief Executive Officer of Singapore-based hotel operator CDL Hospitality Trusts. "We don't want to go overboard in terms of spending but the real value for an owner is in creativity on the product part. It

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helps rationalise manpower requirements too, which is important with rising labour costs."

Phuket's 'industrial chic' Indigo Pearl resort, the Rock Bar at Ayana Resort and Spa in Bali and the Peninsula Hotel Hong Kong were framed as illuminating examples of how authentic and creative design separated properties from lesser rivals, winnowing the competition and giving them a magnetism that lured a consumer who luxuriated in the genuine and original.

BLINK Design Group Director Christopher Chua said hotels that refused or were unable to adjust their step to be in time with this reality could become distant images in the rear-view mirror of propellant, enlightened brands.

"Many hotels need to recalibrate their thinking and understand that consumers will no longer settle for the same ol' same ol'," he said. "You have to embrace the essence of your destination and offer a transcendent product by encapsulating what draws people to a specific market. Failure to do so will inevitably lead to failure."

Jumeirah Group Regional Director of Development Paul Wiste agreed, saying the 'glue for a brand' was authentic cultural relevance and the design remaining current while appealing to a cross-sectional demographic.



BLINK designed Jumeirah Dhevanafushi Maldives appeared on the Conde Nast Traveller Hot List shortly after it was opened. For high resolution version, click [here](#).



Conrad Sanya Haitang Bay Resort won the Hospitality Design Luxury Hotel Award. Designed by BLINK. For high resolution version, click [here](#).

"I insist on making sure guests wake up in their rooms and they know where they are," he said. "Our design guidelines can be technical but we do not have standard floor plans for example. Generations X and Y have very different design preferences."

The roundtable also heard how thinking outside the box matched the mindset of most guests, who were no longer satisfied with hotels that delivered 'vanilla products' but insisted on properties that breathed the 'innovation is key' maxim. Increasingly educated guests were not deceived by the superficial - creative design was appreciated now more than ever.

"This was achieved brilliantly through a radical industrial chic concept at Indigo Pearl in Phuket," said Fabrice Burtin, Commercial Director of Bangkok-based hospitality brand and communications agency

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QUO Global. "It is very unique. You either love it or hate it. But if you love it, and a lot of people do, they'll choose to go there as it is different and suits their tastes. Because it is so unique it makes the competition irrelevant."

While authenticity and innovation were vital to a hotel's success, industry figures postulated, practicality couldn't be ignored. Design needed to be practical as a 'well-designed space was sexy, not just in the image but in the quality and efficiency of the loading docks too'.

Mr Burtin said some budget brands were practical but didn't win awards, yet design needed to be based just as much on functionality - something budget hotels excelled in.

Mr Chua endorsed that, saying: "It is important for the brief to be clear from clients and for them to give us all technical specifications so that we have guidelines for our work. Once we have these we are able to work out the practical and functional elements of a hotel so product delivery can be seamless, stylish and efficient."

**Present at the roundtable were:**

FIH Regent Group Senior Vice President of Development and Technical Services, Arjan De Boer  
Patina Hotels & Resorts Chief Executive Officer, Marc F. Dardenne

BLINK Design Group Director, Christopher Chua

CDL Hospitality Trusts Chief Executive Officer, Vincent Yeo

Jumeirah Group Regional Director of Development, Paul Wiste

ONYX Hospitality Group Vice President Development, Markus Aklin

QUO Global Commercial Director, Fabrice Burtin

Tourism Solutions International (TSI) Managing Director, Eric Levy

Space Matrix (BLINK parent company) Chief Marketing Officer, Howard Wolff

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## Notes to Editors:

**Blink Design Group (BLINK)** has reinvented the traditional service model to offer clients an integrated stay from check-in to check-out. BLINK's end-to-end suite of services includes architecture, interior design and branding. Founded by Clint Nagata in 2006 and operating out of Bangkok, Singapore, New Delhi and Shanghai, the company designs luxury hotels, resorts, restaurants, clubs, spas, and residences for leading global brands. Believing each project is a platform to achieve something extraordinary, BLINK draws on the instincts and intelligence of its inspired team to create icons of design in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

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