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Partner
DesignAgency
Toronto

I was born in Beirut but grew up in Toronto from a very young age.

As a child, I wanted to sketch, design, build, and create—I spent hours and hours playing Legos. When I was really young, I had a sketchbook with notes of what I wanted my first company to be: L.D.E.A.S.—Innovations & Designs for the Enhancement and Advancement of Society.

I grew up in the family restaurant business, and I remember going to work at lunchtime between classes in primary school. I loved it. I would bus tables, make falafels, and serve my teachers. My earliest foodie memory was when I was around 12 years old: we were

1. A dining nook at Brassali in Toronto.

2. At Momofuku Toronto, the bottom of the adjacent Shangri-La Hotel's pool is covered in wooden slats.

3. A graphic of a man doing a backflip graces a wall in Generator Hamburg's breakfast area.

4. Green tones, wood paneling, and rich materials define the ground floor lounge of the Soho House Toronto.





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always traveling to Mexico, where I had my first experience with authentic Mexican street food. From then on I was fortunate to travel a ton with my family, and food was always the center of the universe.

I chose an engineering design path at the University of Western Ontario because I wanted a solid background in the way things worked and how they were constructed. I needed to get out of Toronto for a while and had the arrogance not to study architecture because I thought I could become an architect with an engineering degree but not vice versa.

I graduated in the late '90s and opened my own restaurant sPaHa Modern Bistro on campus at the University of Toronto and started my own design studio. It taught me how to design, build, and coordinate a 3,500-square-foot restaurant within a massive new building done by Stephen Teeple [principal of Teeple Architects] and Morphosis Architects. It was an epic and irreplaceable learning experience.

My design studio in 1998 was called Precipice Studios, and it was with one of my friends and still business partner Matt Davis. He had studied landscape architecture at the University of Toronto with his good friend, and also now still partner Allen Chan, who at the time was [getting] his master's in architecture at Columbia University. We just jumped into the business. I focused on hospitality projects, and the guys brought other experience from brief stints at other design firms. The rest is history.

After about four years, we were offered to take over a very popular HGTV design television show, *Designer Guys*, and ended up filming 74 episodes over three years, which got us some international recognition because it aired in over 10 countries around the world (and I think it still does today).

Other career highlights: designing restaurants and bars all over Toronto and contributing to the development of the scene; working with David Chang for Momofuku Toronto and Nick Jones for Soho House Toronto; and meeting Josh Wyatt from Patron Capital, the visionary behind the 'designer hostel' that today is Generator, and helping craft and create that vision.

My first reality check was in 2005. I was

trying to do it all: restaurateur, designer, entrepreneur, television personality. It was too much, and I choose to focus on design.

For me hospitality is an ingrained emotion and inspiration. I love creating a space, event, concept, menu—the whole thing—and watching how people interact with it. It's a complete rush.

The most rewarding part of the job is working with my team and partners, and our clients and consultants to make something a reality.

Mentor: Ian Schrager. Designer I admire: Philippe Starck.

My guilty pleasure is food tours with clients to different cities to do research.

I would describe my style as eclectic contemporary and playful chic.

I thrive on the company of others, red wine, nature, and love.

Success is being happy and making a difference.

Recently Completed Projects:

Soho House Toronto
 Momofuku Toronto
 Barque Smokehouse, Toronto
 Hudson Kitchen, Toronto
 Generators in Dublin, Hamburg, Copenhagen, Barcelona, Venice, Berlin, and London

Projects on the Boards:

Ispania Tapas, Toronto
 Butcher Shoppe, Toronto
 Generators in Paris and Rome

winner **midscale/economy public spaces**

generator barcelona

Photography by NIKOLAS KOENIG

Owners

Generator Hostels and Patron Capital

Management Company

Generator Hostels

Architecture Firm

Ibinser, Barcelona

Project Architect

Carlos Coido

Interior Design Firm

DesignAgency, Toronto

Interior Design Team

Anwar Mekhayech and Matt Davis

Purchasing Firm

Benjamin West

HOTEL LOBBY AND LOUNGE

Wallcovering

Tres Tintas

Flooring

Ivanka

Furniture

Patrick Norquet, HAY, Sancal, and Gopak

Art

Julie Plottier

HOSTEL LOBBY AND LOUNGE

Furniture

MUT Design

Pillows

Woouf!

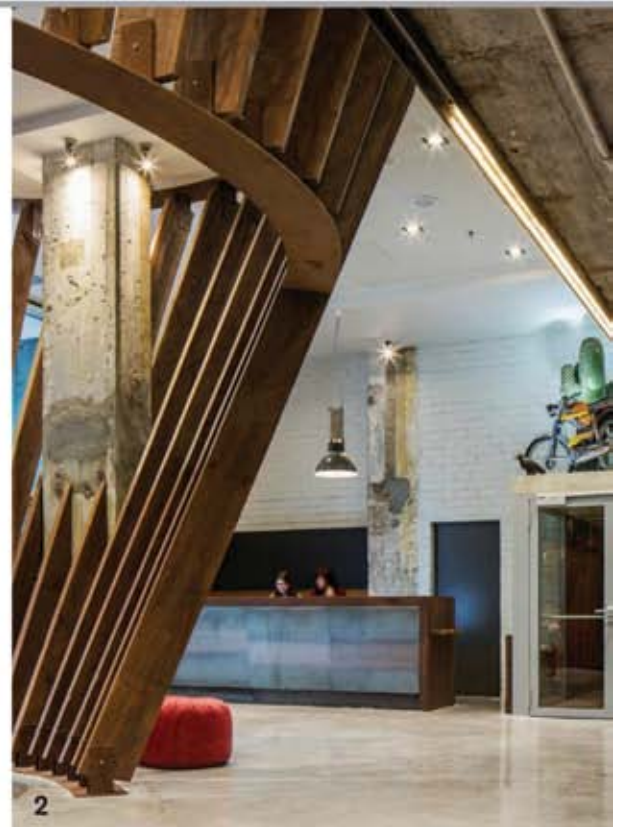
MEZZANINE LIBRARY AND GAME ROOMS

Furniture

Sancal

Pillows

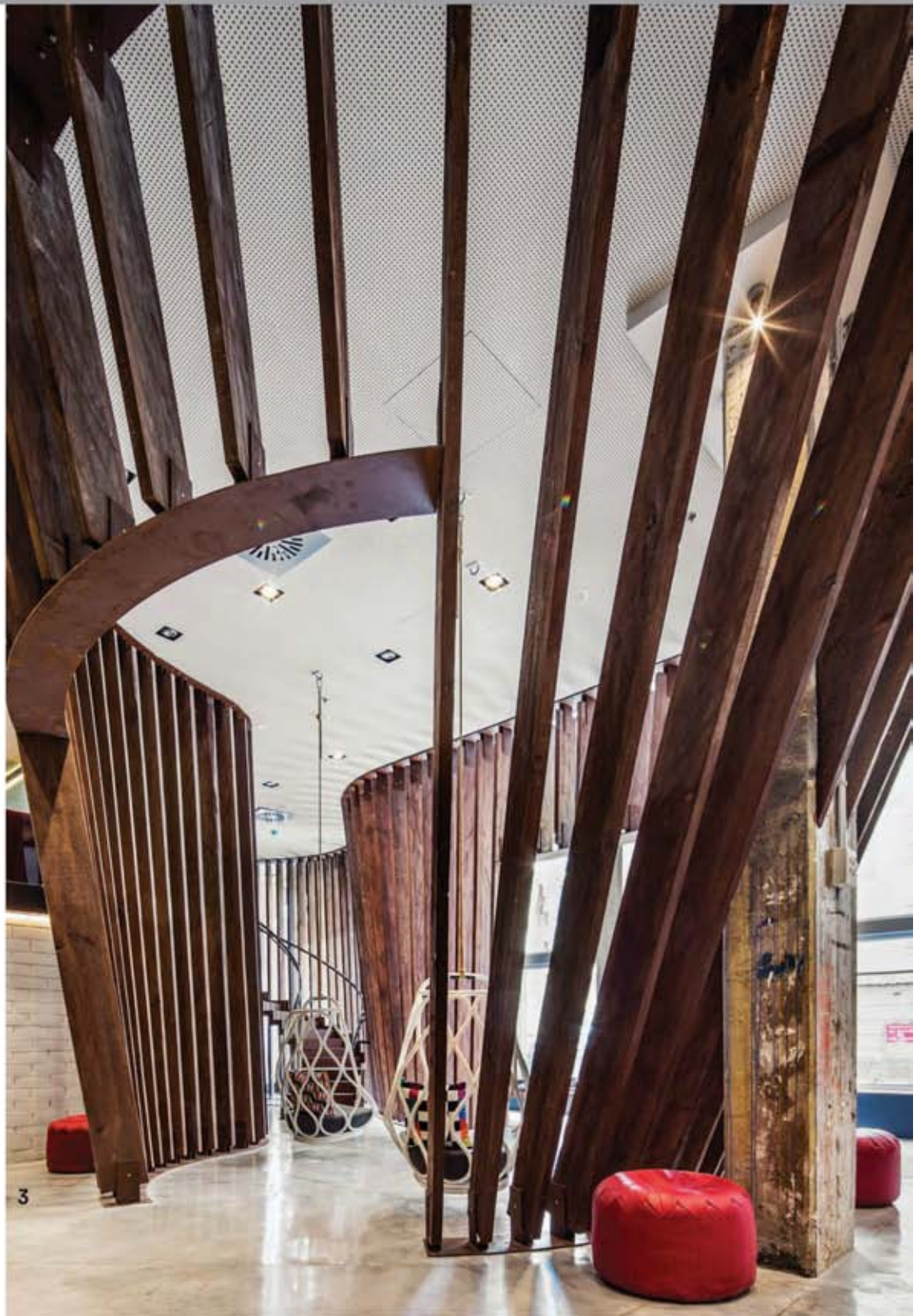
Woouf!



1. The bar, located off the hotel lobby, features repurposed wood walls and vibrant lanterns that are a nod to the street canopies of Barcelona's annual festival, Festa Major de Gràcia.

2. The hostel's reception features timber and blackened steel, exposed concrete, as well as a vintage 1973 Spanish motorcycle with a collectible rubber cactus.

3. The internal pavilion in Generator Barcelona's hostel lobby takes cues from the city's nautical past with 23-foot-high wooden boards that mimic a ship's hull.



winner **midscale/economy hotel**

generator barcelona

Photography by NIKOLAS KOENIG



1. A feature Corten staircase winds through the hotel lobby, where guests can relax on hanging loungers.
2. More than 300 lanterns by a local artist float over the hotel lobby, which offers a tapestry of styles including Hungarian cement floor tiles.
3. Generator Barcelona offers simple, comfortable rooms—some with private terraces with city views.





Owners
Generator Hostels and Patron Capital

Management Company
Generator Hostels

Architecture Firm
Ibinser, Barcelona

Architecture Project Team
Carlos Coido

Interior Design Firm
DesignAgency, Toronto

Interior Design Team
Anwar Mekhayech and Matt Davis

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HOTEL LOBBY AND LOUNGE

Wallcovering
Tres Tintas

Flooring
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Pillows
Woouf!

MEZZANINE LIBRARY AND GAME ROOMS

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Sancal

Pillow
Woouf!

GUESTROOMS

Floors
Gerflor

winner lifestyle/boutique public spaces

generator venice

Italy

Photography by NIKOLAS KOENIG



1. Red armchairs sit under a playful chandelier, creating a cozy space around the lobby fireplace, which is lit by a neon fuoco sign.

2. Mismatched furniture and an oversized mirror add to the lighthearted design of the 241-room hostel, which was converted from a former granary warehouse.



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3. A whimsical saying in neon greets guests in the lobby bar.

4. Two stairwells from the original palazzo building are enhanced with colorful wayfinding graphics and natural light.

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Generator Hostels and Patron Capital

Management Company
Generator Hostels

Architecture Firm
Progetto CMR, Milan, Italy

Interior Design Firm
DesignAgency, Toronto

Interior Design Team
Anwar Mekhayech

Purchasing Firm
DesignAgency

MAIN FLOOR BAR AND LOUNGE

Lighting
Goodwin + Goodwin Design, Tom Dixon, and Murano Glass

Flooring
Fantini

Furniture
Moooi, Marcel Wanders, and Francisco Segarra

Wallcovering
Flavor Paper

Graphics
Generator and PCMR