

X2

GLOBAL HOTEL DESIGN



Hotel Paris Keppler

IT MAY BE SMALL, BUT THE
LATEST HOTEL FROM RENOWNED
DESIGNER PIERRE-YVES ROCHON
IS 'DELICIOUSLY DECADENT'

ARCHITECT AND INTERIOR DESIGNER: PIERRE-YVES ROCHON



The latest hotel by Pierre-Yves Rochon and his team (PYR) looks set to quickly take its place among Europe's growing collection of luxurious, individually designed small hotels. Hotel Keppler, confusingly situated in Rue Kepler with one 'p', is accommodated in a Haussmannian 19th century building on a peaceful little street in Paris' golden triangle near Avenue des Champs-Élysées. The 39-key hotel brings classical French and contemporary aesthetics together, and from the moment of arrival, guests are absorbed into an atmosphere more akin to the drawing room of a collector of quirky pieces than a hotel lounge bar. The area is full but smart and sophisticated; Rochon's famed ability to combine the traditional and the modern is clearly apparent. It is pleasing to

sense that the man who designed such extensive hotel piles as George V Paris and Sofitel St James London gained as much pleasure in designing the finer details of this little hotel.

Hotel Keppler is essentially a B&B, which makes sense when the gastronomic restaurant down the road provides bike-in and Keppler staff are on hand to serve your dinner in your room. Thus the limited ground floor area is given up to the library bar and courtyard lounge. The breakfast room is in the basement, which has been disguised by driving in a light well the length of one wall, filled with planting. The eclectic mix of furnishing and fabrics is luxurious but the closeness of most of the tables in the centre of the room does seem to expect rather too much of guests' sociability at 8am.



The 34 guestrooms and five suites are delightful in their detail. The bedrooms are predominantly ivory and black with honey highlights; tones of rich red and cream proliferate in the suites, complementing dark wood floors and Turkish rugs. Leather and luscious fabrics abound; particularly in the suites where the panelling alongside the bath is daringly covered with a velvet striped silk. Sophisticated but not over serious, the trappings are deliciously decadent but designed to work.

Hotel Keppler is described as a 'home away from home'. We should be so lucky. For most of us, it offers the seemingly effortless luxury, wit and constant visual stimulation that we might only dream of achieving back home. ✕





Black and white dominates the colour scheme in Hotel Keppler's guestrooms (above) while rich red and cream proliferates in the suites (left and opening image). Designer Pierre Yves Rochon describes the colour

scheme as 'traditional French but can also be very modern'. A master at combining the classical and contemporary, Rochon aimed to create a luxurious environment that was comfortable on a human scale

Interview with Pierre-Yves Rochon

Founder of PYR



Pierre-Yves Rochon is one of the most acclaimed designers working in the luxury hotel sector. His eponymously named design practice has offices in Paris and Chicago, from where Rochon works across the world. His name is most closely associated with the grande

luxe brands: Four Seasons, The Ritz, Le Méridien at Beverly Hills Hotel and The Savoy in London; but he has recently lavished his trademark attention on every last detail of a 39-key townhouse hotel (see article opposite on Hotel Keppler) and is respected worldwide for his restaurant designs.

Pierre-Yves Rochon also designs some of the products that may be installed in his interiors. He admits he prefers to control every aspect of the design, from the concrete to the flowers.

You were still a very young man when you founded your business in 1979. What inspired you to do this at this time and to concentrate on hotel design?

After I had completed my studies in fine arts and interior design, I spent 10 years designing offices and banks. It was at the time that I received my first hotel commission, the Château Les Crayères in Reims, that I decided to establish my own practice. I had resolved never to do the same thing twice and hotels offered the opportunity to fulfil this ambition.

Since then, we have been very fortunate in the growth of the business and these days I have managing directors in both Paris and Chicago who help me run the practice on a day-to-day basis.

Is there a 'Rochon' style?

Far from it. I love to work in many different styles: modern, classic, Asian, French, you name it. I often jump around from one influence to another. However, what is consistent in all my work, whether the project is a century-old castle or a modern hotel, in Beirut or New York, is that I educate myself about the building, the site and the client's objectives before I start dreaming up the design.

In my opinion, a hotel should feel warm and residential and simultaneously comfortable and stimulating. The designer's task is to ensure that the individual quality and beauty of each hotel are protected and never compromised. If there is a 'Rochon' style, it is that each project is unique.

Does your French nationality inform your hotel design?

French design has an extensive and rich history, and I believe that we must understand our past before embarking on something modern. Designers must have a clear sense of their foundation before they can successfully build upon it. Personally, I relish the chance to leap from tradition to modernity and vice versa and I enjoy combining the styles but, in order to do this with credibility, you have to educate yourself as much as possible and then use this as a springboard for your design. You have to examine the past and be interested in the present and review all the things you have studied. Only then can a designer create a compelling environment.

As a Frenchman, I love the French flavour but I also like to mingle it with other styles. Take, for instance, the Sofitel St James in London. My goal was to combine the best of

France (it was a French operator) with the best of Great Britain. It was essential to preserve the heritage of the old bank that had occupied the building for so many years while introducing the Sofitel spirit – good manners combined with French elegance, you might say.

What do you think are the main challenges facing hotel designers today?

Hotel designers have a number of masters to please – the owner, the operator and the guest. And, it can be a challenge to create a beautiful, high quality design and a memorable experience for guests while keeping to a tight budget. I always start with a grand vision and then work closely with the client to translate it into reality.

What is your starting point in hotel design projects?

Once I know everything I can about the history and context of the building and its location, and have asked lots of questions about the hotel's proposed functionality and guest profile, I begin to dream until I come up with the most simple and elegant solutions. In doing this, I always remember that if I make changes to the existing architecture, such as a new fireplace or a column, I always want guests to feel that it has been there forever. I am always thinking about the guest experience.

My greatest satisfaction comes from providing opportunities for guests to see something differently or to appreciate beauty in a new way. I want to give each guest the most authentic and extraordinary experience. I sincerely hope that guests learn from what I have designed, the heritage I aim to celebrate and the new elements I bring to it.

How have attitudes towards hotel design changed in recent years?

We have had the minimalist wave in design and this created a new style of hotel that was also good for historic hotels. Technology, especially in respect of lighting, has been of great benefit. Of course, there is now a new generation of people using hotels who have different lifestyles and expectations from the previous generation. This means, for example, that luxury hotels today must have a spa.

Tell us about Hotel Keppler, which opened in Paris this summer. What was your inspiration and what particularly pleases you about the result?

The Keppler was a wonderful project. I wanted to bring classical and contemporary elements together and create a luxurious environment that was also very comfortable and on a human scale, a residential rather than a corporate atmosphere. The colour theme is black and white with some brown, which can be traditional French but can also be very modern. Increasing natural light into the building was key. We transformed a dark basement into a light-filled breakfast room by digging into the floor above and we took the courtyard and created a winter garden with a magnificent glass roof.

Is there a project that you long to do, hotel or otherwise?

The creation of a hotel in an historical and listed location.

When you are a guest in a hotel, are you always on duty looking at the design?

Absolutely!

For what would you most like to be remembered?

Quality and elegance.