

# hospitality design



the economy's a bitch  
...but creativity is thriving!

## San Diego All-Stars

Seven years in the making, the 184-room Se San Diego (formerly the Setai) has finally debuted. The \$150-million-project is the result of a superstar team—Rockwell Group (rooms and common areas including conference space and a pool deck), Dodd Mitchell Design (restaurant and bar), and Sherilyn Olson-Rigdon (spa and the grand penthouse).

The dramatic tone is set from the moment guests enter the 9,000-pound pivoting door. In the lobby, Shanghai pavers cover the floor, black ebony columns are adorned with strands of turquoise patina beads and teardrop crystals, and instead of a traditional reception desk there's two Asian-inspired bureaus next to a leather-clad wall. "There is a real focus on luxury, but we were looking to create a slightly more 'Californian' atmosphere—relaxed, but still sophisticated," says Ed Bakos, a principal with Rockwell Group. A see-through fireplace gives guests a glimpse into the Dodd Mitchell-designed sensuous lobby bar with columns wrapped in bronze tiles, a wall lined with plants, and a stingray bar.

Guests ascend a floating staircase to the 140-seat second floor restaurant dubbed Suite and Tender, where conversation starters include a wooden wall carved with various sayings like ecstasy and the area's first unisex bathroom done head to toe in white polished stones set in Lucite. "It's a space created for comfort and intimacy with a certain sex appeal," says Gulla Jonsdottir, vice president of Los Angeles-based Dodd Mitchell Design.

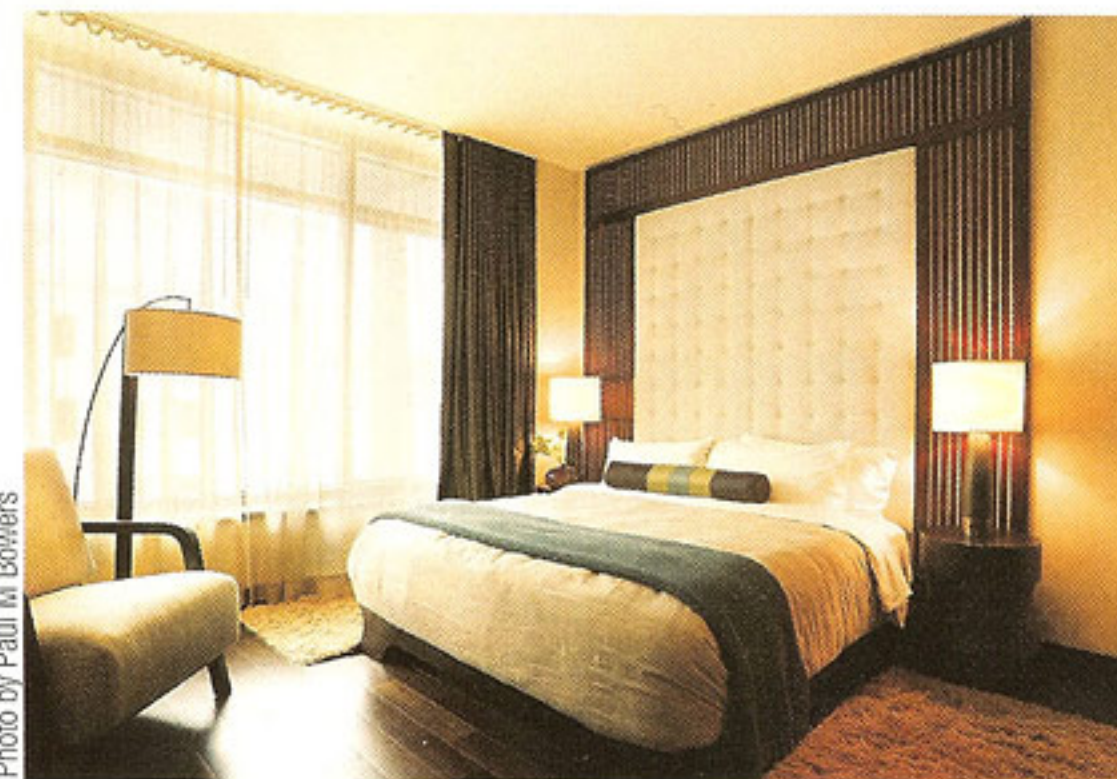
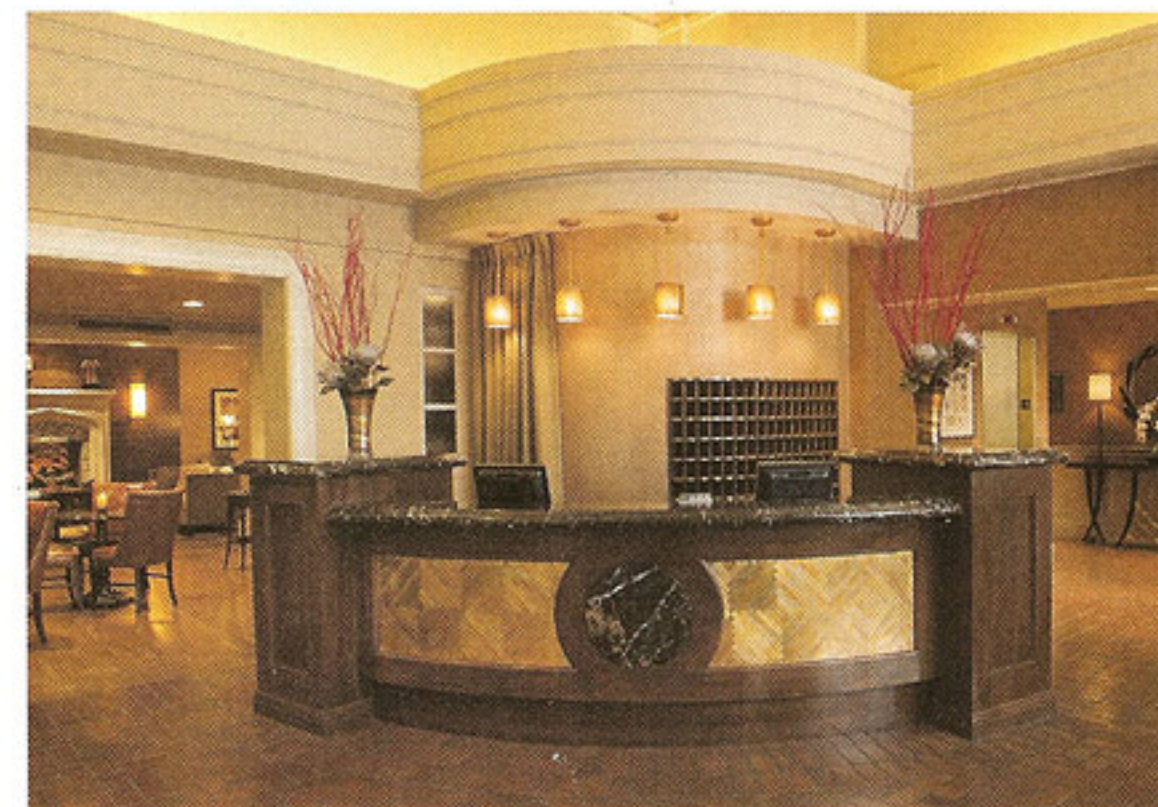


Photo by Paul M Bowers

Upstairs, the understated, but elegant, rooms done in a chocolate and silver color palette feature Brazilian walnut floors, a stone vanity with a hand-chiseled edge, and a floor-to-ceiling diamond tufted blue-gray suede headboard. This level of detail continues in the Moroccan-inspired spa where teakwood marble that resembles wood wraps the entry stairs, showers, and steam rooms; walls are clad in walnut burlwood veneer; and an art installation by Jennifer Pritchard made of hundreds of small and colored teacups covers the wall behind reception. [www.sesandiego.com](http://www.sesandiego.com); [www.rockwellgroup.com](http://www.rockwellgroup.com); [www.doddmitchell.com](http://www.doddmitchell.com); [www.designstudiolimited.com](http://www.designstudiolimited.com)



## Brand New

After launching successfully in suburban markets with Larkspur Landing (upscale, limited service, craftsman-themed extended stay hotels), and the 4-Star segment with the Larkspur Collection, Larkspur Hotels and Restaurants is entering the 3-Star category with Larkspur Hotels. "We see an opportunity in the unmet traveler demand for independent hotels in this segment," says Karl Hoagland, the company's chairman and CEO. "Historically and in recent years boutique hotels have enjoyed great demand in delivering more value and higher guest satisfaction, but most of these hotels are in the 4-Star and above niche. A significant and growing portion of all travelers wants hotels that are more personalized and genuine than cookie cutter chain hotels."

The overall design scheme: "welcoming, comfortable, inviting, genuine, unique, thoughtful, and in response to our guest's values, needs, and sensibilities," he says,

adding that Larkspur's signature use of natural materials and handcrafted materials will continue into this brand.

The first opened in Union Square in San Francisco (in what was formerly the Cartwright Hotel) with a design by Best Santos Studios out of Walnut Creek, California, that features a neutral color palette, residential-inspired furnishings, and an abundance of wood—on walls, furniture, and as accents.

Next up: "We have 23 hotels (in our portfolio) and we would like to get to 50," Hoagland says. "As the economy works its way through current challenges there is more focus than ever on value, and while all of Larkspur brands provide extraordinary value within their niche, it is especially nice to have a brand now in a more mid-priced hotel segment and that can serve a very broad spectrum of traveler profiles." [www.larkspurhotels.com](http://www.larkspurhotels.com); [www.bestsantostudio.com](http://www.bestsantostudio.com)