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# MODERN OUTLOOK

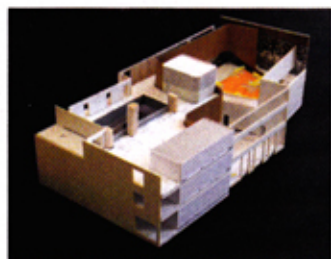
Peter Davey revisits the  
1960s New Zealand House



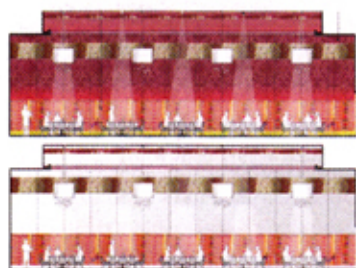
PLUS **HOTEL & RESTAURANT FOCUS:** PROJECT ORANGE + NIGEL COATES + TERENCE CONRAN



# 'As a cultural outsider, it's easier to abstract notions of tradition'



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1 Study model of lobby area. 2 The banquet hall uses light and projection to alter mood. 3 Boardroom/board game. 4 & 5 The dark hotel bedrooms have bright-coloured furniture which is locally lit.

Director James Soane reveals Project Orange's most ambitious project to date: the interior of a 235-bedroom hotel in central Pune, India, which it started designing at the end of last year

Interview Will Hunter

**Project Orange completed a hotel in Mumbai two-and-a-half years ago and more recently a restaurant in Delhi — on this project do you now feel you're working in familiar territory?**

In terms of the complexity of the brief this is probably the most special project we've done, not least because hotels have such a culturally critical position in society. The client, The Park Hotels, is design-led so no two of its seven Indian hotels are the same. So while we've worked in the country before, we've wanted to do our own research into the specific qualities of Pune as a city.

**What have you discovered?**

Historically the region has been quite culturally progressive, with an emphasis on the education of women, for example. Today the university is seen to be the Oxbridge of India. Commercially it's also an expanding IT hub. Although the city is huge it's pretty up-and-coming like, say, Manchester was 10 years ago.

**What was your brief?**

We were asked to come up with a narrative that connects the public spaces to the bedrooms. The building itself has been designed by an Indian practice Karan Grover & Associates and our role is to do the interior fit-out and design the guest experience from start to finish.

**What narrative have you come up with?**

We're designing the hotel as an educational institute, where all the public spaces are a university department. Some are quite literal — the oriental restaurant is oriental studies — while others are more conceptual. The coffee shop becomes the department of philosophy and the nightclub, the institute of mixology and chemistry. We want the hotel to be a place where people come not only to stay but for an experience — a film, a dance piece, a reading — so there is a conscious programming on the hotel's side to engage with people in the city.

From the urban perspective the hotel's form is important, but as a guest 98% of your time is spent within. Creating a sense of an interior

world, and one that is specific to the location, is really important.

**So how are you creating this inner world?**

In India, pattern is a purveyor of meaning, and we're using these to provide identity. Perhaps as an outsider to the culture, it's easier to abstract notions of tradition and imagine remaking them through other materials. One of the restaurants is themed on philosophy and scripts, and we're seeking to embed certain meanings into the interior. We're also proposing to create domes — found in lots of classical Indian architecture — from treated copper and suspend them so they appear to float. They move from something that's known to something unknown, to make a connection between history and progress.

**How far is this investigation into pattern going?**

For the old-style Indian coffee shop that comes off the lobby it is perhaps more of a surface treatment. But for the banquet hall it allows the space to resolve the conflicts of the brief. Here we're sandwiching locally made saris — from colourful silk with gold thread — between glass, to create interest at eye level; above these projections and lighting can change the mood from something neutral to something full on, depending on whether it's day or night, a wedding or a conference. The meeting rooms become more like a board game, which you see played a lot on the local streets.

**How does the intensity of this experience culminate in the bedrooms?**

We're introducing very dark, large-scale parquet on the floor, continued with a sooty grey timber behind the bed and on to the ceiling. This dark C-shape section creates a sense of night — when most people are in their hotel rooms — and, in the narrative of the hotel, of conclusion. These are generous rooms, about 30sq m, but instead of overstuffing the room with furniture, we're curating a few brightly coloured pieces and lighting them locally within the space. The effect is both playful and immediate.



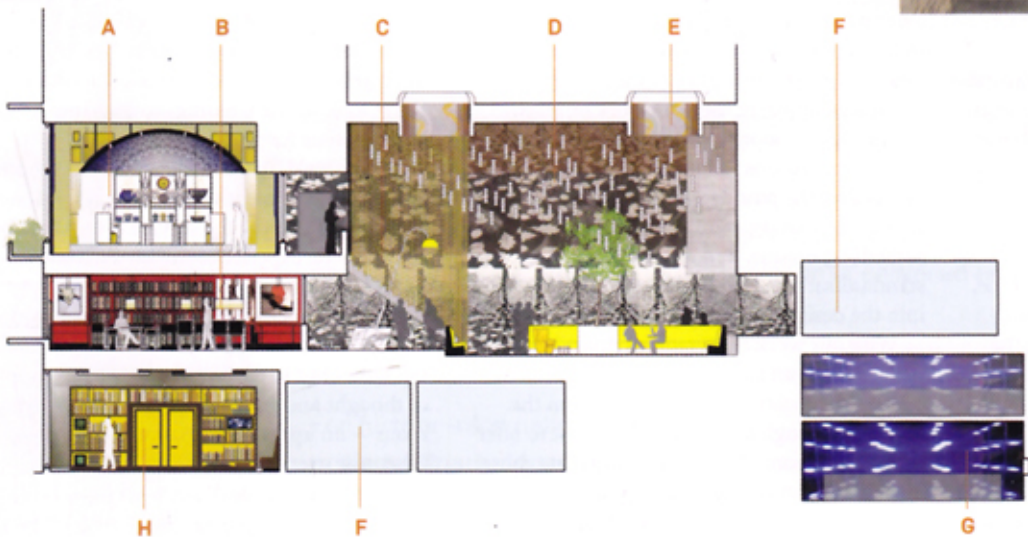


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**1 & 2** Project Orange is using pattern to express identity, shown here in the tea terrace of the proposed new Park Hotel in Pune, India. All the public areas are conceptualised as university departments.



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**A** Indian restaurant with dome **B** Speciality restaurant **C** Screen **D** Pendant light installation **E** Skylight **F** Toilet **G** Nightclub **H** Coffee shop