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the New + the Next

fall 2004

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CLEANING UP

— ✨ Our annual snapshot of innovative America finds that even Vegas is seeking solace in the beautifully spare

Bathed in glory: Richardson Sadeki's Bathhouse in Vegas is a unique earthy retreat in a sin-craze-saturated town. See overleaf for the complete story

IMAGE ANDREW BORDWIN

INTERIORS

At Bathhouse, visitors can lose themselves in the cool holistic treatment by the design team Richardson Sadeki

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Touch Stone



Cast in stone. Much of the interior of Bathhouse is rendered in black slate so that every surface "utters quiet." The designers treated even the most mundane upgrade as a graphic exercise as part of their holistic approach to the design.

When New York designers Clarissa Richardson and Heidar Sadeki designed Bathhouse, a new spa in Las Vegas, they analyzed every detail — from the river stone gray interiors to the simple, still graphics of the logo, even the soap. The designers opted for a feeling, as opposed to just a look, that is cool, meditative, quiet. Refreshingly un-Vegas.

Tucked beyond a second-floor entry above the lobby at Mandalay's The Hotel lies a deep cavern of calm: 15,000 square feet of corridors, communal pools, and saunas, relieved by near-ecclesiastical shafts of light. Endless amounts of black slate — applied in quantities not usually seen outside of a religious edifice — cover walls and floors; the designers say that constructing practically every surface from the dark, weighty-looking rock "utters quiet." So does their strategy of presenting the volume as a massive >>

> singular object, which appears to have a moat, pools, niches, and deep, close bathing chambers cut into it. The effect is extravagantly heavy, slow, and ritualistic. The space may be easier to feel than see. "You want this spa to be haptic, not optic," Sadeki explains. "In designing the space and graphics, we wanted it to remain minimal and monotonous."

"In the past decade, the

logo design, graphics, and product packaging. So from the moment your Pradas hit the lobby to the time they pad out past the designed boxes of candles, body wash, and shampoo, you're immersed head-to-toe in a singularly soothing Bathhouse mood.

For Richardson Sadeki, immersing people in concepts this way — by handling the total identity through the design of the



city is becoming more modern. We're the first non-Vegas firm (the Mandalay has worked with," Sadeki says. "They know that if they want the new visitors, they need design by people who know them."

But who (besides some teen goth) knew that gray walls, ceilings, and floors could come off so gloriously urban chic? The reception area, men's and women's lounges, and pools emerge as glistening modern grottos around corners and at the ends of passageways on the main floor. Glass-railed stairs traverse a moat and lead to manicure areas and to all but one of the 13 treatment rooms on the mezzanine.

The designers reproduced the quarried colors and "cuts" of these spaces in the

space, products, packaging, signage — is an objective they've aimed for since they tricked out Manhattan's Bliss spas in 1998. (Skinklinic, a New York City medi-spa also marked by their thorough conceptualization, followed.) Now, Sadeki says, "We can't work on a project unless we have a concept. People like to go where they know what to expect." And what they expect, he believes, is determined directly by a consistent design identity. The firm was weaned on concepts for retailers with strong identities, including BMW and Fred Segal, where their holistic design treatment can help market the brand. "In each large project we've done, the identity is clear, and, even in another location, you would recognize the identity."



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DESIGNER: CHARLOTTE RONSON

From the young designer who describes her look as "flirty, retro, downtown chic" comes a cocktail that's equally *Cointreaversial™* and alluring.

glamourtini

1 oz. Cointreau®
2 oz. vodka
1 oz. ruby red grapefruit juice
shake and strain into a martini glass



"We can't work on a project unless we have a concept. People like to go where they know what to expect."

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Sadeki says, beaming.

It's a theorist's view. But the Princeton grad school alums happily concede they're bleeding-heart theorists. "Our backgrounds are theoretical, since we come from a school which favors concept over design," Richardson says. Occasionally, they run the risk of sacrificing a job to this cause. When Bathhouse's developer Mandalay Resorts said it didn't need the designers to visit the site during construction, their response to Mandalay chairman Bill Richardson (no relation to Clarissa) was, "If that's the case, you're wasting your money.

This is more than architecture." Even though the designers had been the ones to approach Mandalay for the job, after hearing about it in the news, the developer ended up bending to the firm's point of view. Once enlightened about the holistic approach, Mandalay also asked them to design uniforms for The Hotel. For this, the firm turned to Icelandic clothing designer and friend Stienunn Sigurd for an appropriately Type-A job. "They look so good. I've worn one for a night out partying," Sadeki says. "It's one of my best suits." **KELLY BEAMON**

Product placement: Richardson Sadeki also designed packaging and product for the spa, including sandals, body treatments, soap, candles and stationery