

THINKING OUT OF THE BOX

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high standards

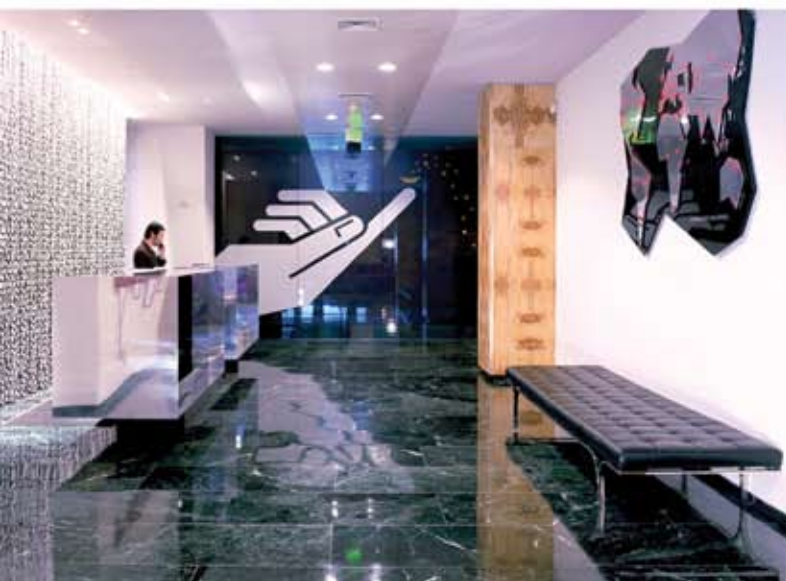
Raising the standard for the hospitality industry
excellence in the City of Angels

Text by Sam Yen Photography by Tim Street Porter

Being André Balazs must be a cool thing. Not only would you be the owner of the glamorous Chateau Marmont on Sunset Strip, and the lofty Mercer in Soho, you would also be the brains behind two of the hippest hotels that Los Angeles has to offer - the Standards (a pun-worthy name if we ever heard one). United by the principle of 'creating a unique site-specific hotel', The Standard Hollywood and The Standard Downtown LA have been great successes. And by doing so, started serving up not-so-standard fare for discerning travellers in America. For trivia geeks, the reason the hotels may look so familiar is because they have appeared in *Sex and the City*, *Manhunt* and *Ocean's Twelve*. How's that for Hollywood glamour?



LEFT
Flames of the forest.
 BELOW
The only way is up.
 OPPOSITE PAGE
Playing pool.



The Standard, Downtown LA Slick in the City

Where West Hollywood is best described as planate, downtown LA is an undulating beast packed with skyscrapers. And there is a new one that is stamping its mark on the Los Angeles skyline and psyche: The Standard, Downtown LA. The former Superior Oil building (made from marble and stainless steel in 1956) is now home to another daring Standard as crafted by André Balazs, production designer Shaun Hausman and architects Koning-Eizenberg. The sequel to the original cheap-chic Standard on Sunset Boulevard, the Standard Downtown LA was not meant to be a cookie-cutter design but to merge the designers' modus operandi to the existing mould offered by a building that had stood vacant for nine years. A complete aesthetic overhaul was demanded, but certain classic items were retained for preservation - a frieze depicting the drilling and refining of oil over the front door, the dark green marble in the lobby, a row of glass-tube clocks that show the time in 15 time zones and S-shaped bronze door handles, now standing for Standard.



Cool in a Hot Climate

To complement what was restored, plenty of the new was brought in. An Alexander Calder-inspired mobile now hangs over a lobby with a large mirrored pool table, a 70s vintage white organ and a 125-foot hot pink Omnibus sofa by Vladimir Kagan that perambulates its way across the floor. The reception desk area looks like the sleek lair of a James Bond villain with its polished reflective surfaces and a stainless steel abstracted world map with pulsing pink lights showing Balazs Standard Holdings' world domination. The bedrooms are typically stylishly spacious in predominantly neutral tones, while the bathrooms sometimes have unique surprises - a five foot high rubber-foam black foot designed by Gaetano Pesce, for example, intended as a cheeky conversation piece. But the piece de resistance is the rooftop pool. The Astroturfed area is a veritable playground for city folk with vibrating waterbed pods, an artificial grass lawn, playful topiary, canary yellow Pantone chairs and cheerleader-dressed waitresses. Not forgetting the spectacular 12th-floor panoramic view of downtown LA from the confines of a safety wall and a Mojito. Downtown LA chic has just been given a new spin.

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CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT
Open 24/7.

Foyer pleasure.

Ouch and couch.

OPPOSITE PAGE
ABOVE
Elevator music.

BELOW
Getting plaid.



The Standard Hollywood

Welcome to Hotel California

Finding The Standard Hollywood isn't tough. Look out for the distinctive sign that reads *Standard The* and enter a hotel that unabashedly targets the young and the restless; trendy 20s and 30s types that are looking for a swank venue to crash without breaking the piggy bank. Originally built in 1963 as the Thunderbird hotel, the Standard Hollywood is now the part-retro-part-edgy pad for them to recuperate between a heavy night of mingling with the stars and preparing for the next. If venturing out is not the order of the day, there's plenty within the hotel compound to busy oneself with - whether it is catching some rays on the cobalt-blue AstroTurf rooftop pool or a follicle makeover at a branch of Seattle-based Rudy's Barber Shop. A live DJ plays at a DJ booth built into the reception desk, which stands in front of a glass vitrine where a model (nude or otherwise) lounges as performance art. For the Gen-X crowd, there's plenty to capture the attention.

Standard Setting

Balazs terms the Standard Hollywood's décor as 'timeless modern' - a noughties synthesis of the best elements of the 50s, 60s and

70s. The realisation of that concept was helmed by production designer Shaun Hausman, who bequeathed the hotel lobby with a 'conversation area' complete with white shag carpet, Ligne Roset sofas, Arco lamps, Baleri egg seats and an abundance of immaculately potted cacti. Eero Aarnio bubble chairs hang in the foyer, while Alvar Aalto lamps and beaded curtains add to the 50s atmosphere of the restaurant called *24/7*. The personal space of the bedrooms are populated with Gio Pionte inspired platform beds, silver beanbag chairs, Eames surfboard tables, inflatable sofas and Warhol poppy print drapes, all on a theme of blue. The bathrooms, however, are based on an electric orange palette. And in keeping with the au courant irreverent mood of the hotel, the minibars are filled with goodies like Rice Krispies, animals crackers, Go-Go drinks and Vaseline. Even the air conditioner control dial reads - Stop, Blow Hard and Blow Harder. Offbeat touches which make a stay at the Standard Hollywood an unforgettable experience. 📺

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