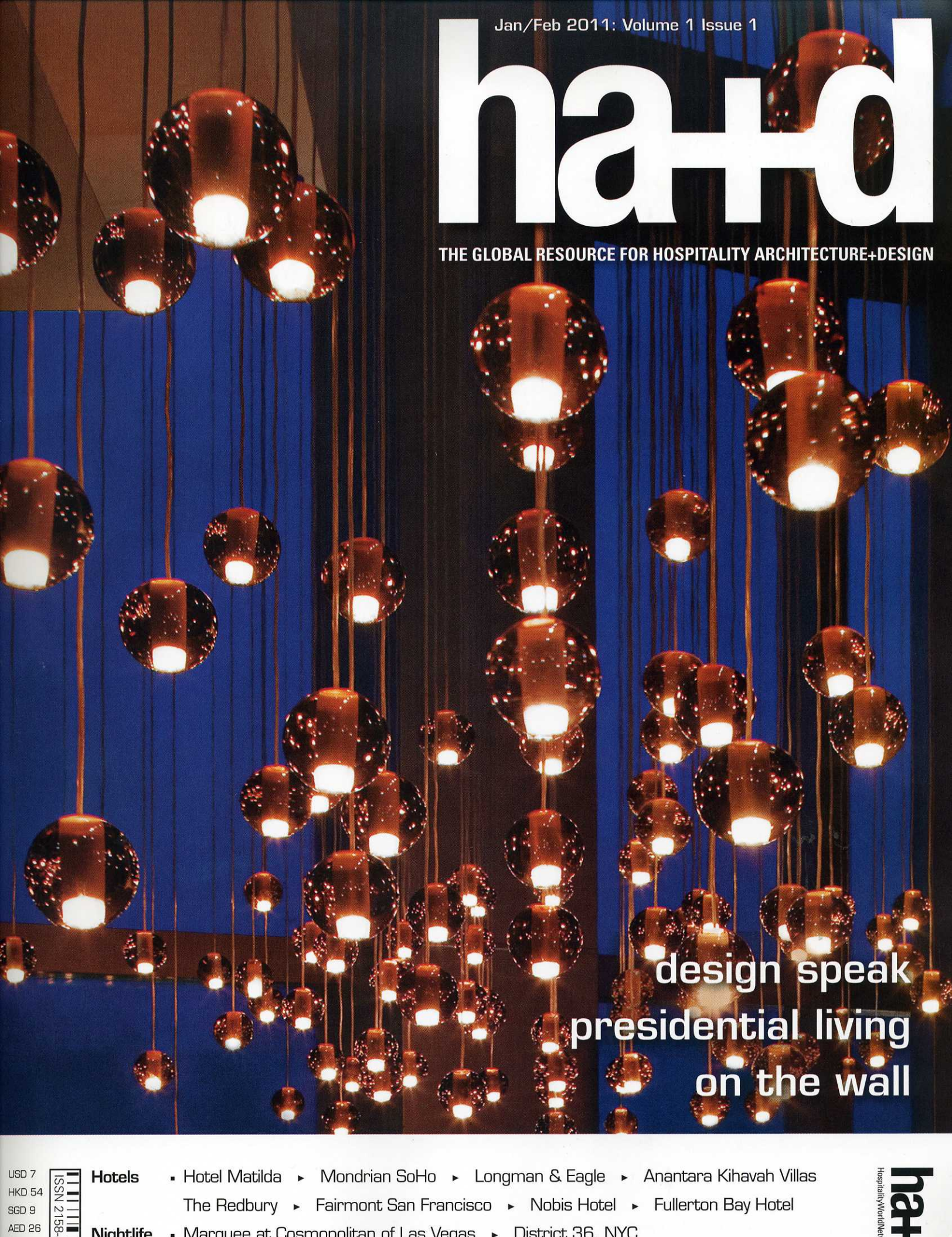


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# hotel matilda

**SERVING AS A** showcase for an extensive collection of Latin art, the new Hotel Matilda, tucked into the 468-year-old city of San Miguel de Allende in Mexico, carefully couples contemporary urban design with thoughtful nods to a lengthy colonial history.

The new art-centric property is eponymously named for the subject of a renowned painting by Mexican artist Diego Rivera, a larger-than-life portrait of Matilda Stream, the mother of Hotel Matilda's owner and developer Harold Steam III.

Designed by Alabama native Ray Booth of McAlpine, Booth and Ferrier Interiors, the new property boasts a neutral palette of creamy blacks, browns, taupes and beiges, serving as the ideal backdrop for the rotating art collection of Latin American artists.

"The overall look of the hotel was to be a clean-lined, contemporary design to stand quietly in contrast to the colonial architecture of San Miguel," explains Booth. "It is almost a 'palette cleanser,' allowing guests a repose to reflect on the beauty of the old city. We chose to use materials that one typically sees as they walk the streets—warm stucco, enduring stones and textured woods that you would find on the gates of the city."

The hotel's 32 rooms and suites feature contrasting walls of creamy whites and brooding browns, coupled with Calcutta marble floors and lush furnishings in caramel-colored velvets with tufts, tassels, studding and fringe. Sleek yet slightly industrial lighting marks the bedroom and living room areas, casting a glowing gaze on walls adorned with the work of Mexico City photographer Eduardo Zaylan.

"We found that by creating so many things locally and utilizing the extraordinary craftsman in the region, that not only did we get unique and interesting work, but all that and at a better cost," says Booth.

Celebrating yet another local artist is the ceiling of the hotel's lounge, where Aldo Chapparo created a light sculpture crafted from optic fiber, illuminating the vaulted brick ceiling whose rustic elements are offset by the industrial chic of a metal mesh curtain that separates the lounge from the bar.

Guests will discover a similarly soothing palette to that of the guestrooms inside the restaurant, lounge and bar, but here a modern flare is fully realized where the more classically designed restaurant, serving up a delectable combination of American, Latin American and Continental cuisine, spills onto the patio where amoeba-like tables and undulating woven stools take center stage. Dramatic lanterns cast a sensual glow along the walls, while flickering candles light up the lush foliage (all indigenous) that is also featured prominently throughout the property.

Designed by Linda and Markus Luck of Sozo Landscapes, the greenery surrounding the infinity pool is an ideal manifestation of Hotel Matilda's celebratory collapsing of indoor and outdoor spaces, offering agave plants, lurid yet lovely purple wildflowers, Mexican weeping bamboo and tumbling ferns, creating a kind of urban lagoon.

"We worked a great deal with architect Marco Martinez Valle in helping to establish a vernacular that transcended from the interior to the



exterior," says Booth. "Since so much of your experience in San Miguel is indoor/outdoor, it was key for these two environments to mesh seamlessly."

Booth also says that one of the biggest challenges and rewards of designing Hotel Matilda was the development of the programming—most specifically the spa—which increased the cost and operational foresight but also bolstered the hotel's offerings and experience significantly.

Spa Matilda began as a few treatment rooms and grew into a full-blown, 4,700-square-foot solace developed by Under a Tree Consulting, a branch of Amy McDonald and Associates. Guests are greeted at the spa's entrance with a liquid wall tumbling down from the infinity-edge pool above, as well as an indigenously-decorated Hammam, a meditation garden, two pre- and post-treatments patios and an indoor/outdoor relaxation lounge with a fireplace.

"It was hard to come into the context of San Miguel and resist the urge to just replicate what is so wonderful about that city," explains Booth. "Instead we worked hard to take elements that we found there, isolate and celebrate these pieces so that we respectfully engage with the old city without copying it." ❖

*Clockwise from above:*  
View from an Owner's Suite;  
Bar Matilda patio at night;  
Inside Bar Matilda;  
Lobby area;  
Library;  
Grand Deluxe bathroom;  
A Luxe Suite;  
The resort infinity pool.

Photography: Hotel Matilda

