



Novotel: In Conversation with *Sundukovy Sisters*

Founded and run by twin sisters Irina and Olga Sundukovy, design and architecture studio [Sundukovy Sisters](#) developed a concept for Novotel that took a business-orientated approach to ‘co-living’. The result: a new design approach offering warmth and comfort, set amid lively, natural surroundings that expertly blend modern and timeless features. Irina and Olga share some key insights below on the inspiration behind the new design approach:

Why partner with Novotel?

This was a brand-new experience for us since it was not only a design for one project, but also a total design guide that would result in hundreds of new projects all over the world. Usually, when working with hotels, we receive a guideline which we must follow. However, the creation of a global Novotel guide meant that we were the ones setting the trends and standards, which is a whole new level for us. It will be exciting to see how our concept will evolve through the eyes and minds of future designers of Novotel properties around the world.

How did you interpret the brief?

We were tasked to propose ideas that were radically new, yet still in line with the Novotel brand DNA. We decided to emphasize timeless elements that would stay relevant for years to come, since the time-lag between the release of the design guide and opening a newly constructed or renovated hotel can be quite long. Therefore, we created an ageless design language, based on multi-functionality and the ‘social hub’ concept, which involves numerous convivial zones where travelers and locals can work, eat and unwind in a completely non-traditional way when it comes to midscale hotels.

What were the most challenging and exciting aspects about bringing new designs to a midscale brand like Novotel?

Though dealing with a midscale brand, it was important to us to give Novotel a more upscale feel. It was both challenging and exciting to elaborately work around design solutions that were within a certain budget, yet made the hotel look and feel premium, leaving guests with a new and unexpected experience of the Novotel brand. Besides that, it was an interesting challenge for us to adapt our concept to specific Novotel locations – the Middle East and Europe for example. Although it is one brand, the criteria of a functional design is different due to geographic and cultural specificities.

Can you speak to the inspiration behind the design?

We outlined the following trends as concept cornerstones: co-living, fluidity, new experience and sustainability. These are delivered through multifunctional, convivial spaces, intuitive design and natural materials. The lobby is called a 'social hub', consisting of three mandatory elements which bring guests a completely new experience of interaction: welcome area, living area and a food bar. From that basis, we offer additional optional areas. The idea is that a lobby is not simply a space with a bar and reception, but offers a whole range of facilities and entertainment, such as a family zone, library, a multi-purpose hall, grab & go concept, and a food bar that transforms into an evening bar. Thus, the concept is a living entity, which adapts and transforms in accordance with time of day, needs of guests, local features and budget.

How long did it take to develop the concept?

The concept is still a work in progress – its variations, to be exact. Together with Novotel and Accor teams around the world, we continue to customize and refine it. Our work started out as a concept for the Middle East, continued to the European segment and advanced further to other markets in various adaptations. For instance, darker shades of the lobby, which feel prestigious in Dubai are not suitable for the UK, where the climate tends to be more overcast. Just when it seems that the concept is finished, a new stream takes off, always a new interpretation and discovery. The multifunctional and transformable concept continues, engaging us in this continuous and fascinating journey.

Have you undertaken something similar in the past?

The Novotel Global Guide is the first and only project of its kind for us so far. We are honored that Accor chose our studio to take part in a closed competition. And we are proud to have won the right to create such a large-scale brief for all segments (hotels, resorts and the extend stay Novotel Living) of the Novotel brand worldwide.

What prepared you to take on this project?

We started off creating private premium residential interiors back in university and hired our first employees in 2004. One day we realized that we wanted to create signature spaces not for few, but for all, including ourselves; spaces, where we could enjoy our time as well. That's how we started working mostly with public spaces. Having survived two financial crises and filled our portfolio with hotels, we were up to fifty employees in 2016. The same year we won two design competitions to renovate the Pullman hotels in Versailles and Berlin. In 2018 we were proclaimed Designers of the Year by the Gold Key Awards. Today we continue to focus our work on public spaces, creating signature interiors where we would love to spend time ourselves.

Can you share one thing you'd like Novotel guests to take away from this new design approach?

We want them to feel and live through the 'social hub' concept of a hotel as a limitless, changing and multifunctional space not only for visiting guests, but for local residents as well; as a centre for

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interaction and multicultural exchange through various events. We believe that this will be a new and truly unique experience for all.

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About Novotel:

Novotel Hotels, Suites & Resorts offers destination hotels designed as comforting and energizing places where guests can ‘press pause’ and take time to enjoy the moments that really matter. The brand’s wide array of hotels, suites and resorts offer a multitude of services for business and leisure guests alike, including spacious, modular rooms with natural and intuitive design; 24/7 catering with nutritious choices; dedicated meeting spaces; attentive and proactive staff; family zones for the youngest guests; multi-purpose lobbies; and accessible fitness centers. Novotel, which has over 530 locations in more than 60 countries is part of Accor, a world leading hospitality group consisting of more than 5,100 properties and 10,000 food and beverage venues throughout 110 countries.

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