

It's not easy being GREEN . . .

Especially in Las Vegas

As Kermit the Frog used to say, "it's not easy being green." Whether you are speaking of the skin or the idea of being environmentally conscious, there is some difficulty and resistance to the idea.

I recently accompanied my husband to Las Vegas where he was attending some meetings. Just before I left Portland, another designer mentioned there would be a convention on "Green Design" at the Las Vegas Expo Center while we were there. Thinking this would be a great opportunity to find out more about what is going on, I quickly signed up and unknowingly got myself involved in a full day of hearing the ins and outs of Green Design in the hospitality industry. It seemed that "Going Green" in Las Vegas was somewhat of an oxymoron.

Even though I don't do much hospitality design, I found that many of the issues being discussed that day were the same issues I had encountered in specifying green products for residential clients. What does "green" mean exactly? How "green" do we need to be to be acceptable? Is there a universal standard for green building, lighting and furnishings? Can green design look elegant and stunning?

First thing on the agenda was to hear what the CEOs of some of the top hotels had to say, followed by a principle of LEED. They had come to discuss and debate what the standards should be for the industry.

The morning session started with lectures relating to the benefits of going green, some of which included energy and cost savings, tax incentives, higher room rates, attracting top level employees, improved brand perception, marketing angles and more.

The next session was focused on achieving the new look of green. The presenters in this session were looking at tools and techniques for achieving sustainability goals without compromising guest comfort or budget. The living building challenge was discussed as a way to redefine the future of hospitality design.

Hospitality Design magazine hosted their third annual green luncheon with environmental lifestyle expert Danny Seo as the keynote speaker. Danny shared his creative eco-friendly way of living, with a great deal of humor. He has become America's leading lifestyle authority on modern, eco-friendly living and has produced many books on the subject of living green. Earth-Minded Awards for hospitality projects, and products were presented by ASID and HD and the NEWH Sustainable Hospitality Student Design Competition.

The afternoon sessions included panel discussions with questions and

answer time that really got everyone involved and thinking deeper about the necessity and possibility of going "very" green in hospitality design. During the final hours of the day, roundtable intensives were formed, where each of us was given an opportunity to have input into creative ways to help the hospitality industry understand, and do green better, as well as educate its designers and clients toward more responsible use of space and product.

The next two days were devoted to vendors making green wares available to builders, architects and designers. It was helpful to learn which companies have green or partially green products. It was obvious that these people were seriously concerned about their industry as well as the environment and the effects that over-building and over-opulence is having on our world.

"I came home with a renewed commitment to do more research into environmentally responsible choices in my specifications of products."

Sherrie Lynn Harries

I came home with a renewed commitment to do more research into environmentally responsible choices in my specifications of products. I also realized that it is my duty to understand

what is available, where to get it and how to educate my clients toward more environmentally healthy choices. I am now challenging myself to be more creative with my designs. I believe that designers can help the world to see "green" design as the "in" thing.

Good design doesn't have to be huge, opulent and over the top. Beauty can be attained by using green resources in a creative way, to serve a function and provide good balance, flow and form. By being more creative in the products we choose, we can be respectful of the earth and the spaces we occupy and still create a beautiful environment for our clients. Creating elegant green spaces may be challenging but I ask you, as I asked myself, "Isn't that the fun of being a creative person?"

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