

July 2009

hospitality-interiors.com

# HI



Ego - Tandem  
Experience luxury outdoor living with Leisure Plan



# Interview: Philip Nixon

Interview by David Carter, Images courtesy of Philip Nixon

Philip Nixon Design is a multi disciplinary Landscape and Garden Design Studio based in South West London. Having achieved both Gold and Silver awards at The Chelsea Flower Show for its work on show gardens, the company is also moving into the hospitality sector, its most recent project being St James's Hotel in Mayfair. Philip Nixon took some time out to talk to HI about the importance of outdoors design for hotels and restaurants.

**HI:** Are you usually given a brief, or are you presented with a space to design and given a free hand?

**PN:** We are usually given a fairly tight functional brief but a much looser aesthetic brief. The management of hotels have a very good idea about how their clients will use the space. You have to respect that expertise based on years of working in the best hotels with demanding clients. The aesthetic element of the design process is often narrowed down by us when we get down to work with the architects and Interior Designers.

**HI:** Is garden design in the hospitality sector becoming more important in integrating the inside with the outside and would it be planned at inception or as an add-on?

**PN:** The key is to make sure the interior and exterior work together and have a unity of design concept. It is essential to work closely with the design team of architects and interior designers. The theme of integrating inside and outside is a defining element of garden design in the last 10 years and this is the case with both private gardens and hotel and restaurant gardens.

**HI:** How flexible are you in compromising on your ideas to allow the client some input?

**PN:** The client is the boss but that does not mean you can't put your case strongly. We have a great deal of knowledge in spatial design and if the client is suggesting something we think will not work we will not be shy in saying so. The best projects come from close collaboration with the clients as well as the rest of the design team. We welcome lots of client input. That is how you get to the right solution.

**HI:** Do you consider yourself a designer first and then a horticulturist?

**PN:** Neither. We are designers and horticulturalists. But design is the thread that ties together all the elements that go to make a successful garden space whether that be Tree and plants or lighting or hard materials or furniture and so on.

**HI:** What inspires you?

**PN:** On one level I can get inspiration from pretty much anything. The fashion designer Paul Smith wrote a book



St James's Hotel roof terrace, London, by Philip Nixon Design

called "You Can Find Inspiration in Everything (and if you can't, look again)" which made me smile as it is so true. You have to be observant and curious. The smallest idea can develop into something original and unique. The key with 'inspiration' is that you have to go looking for it. It won't come looking for you. On a different level I get inspired by working with people who are skilled and enthusiastic and want to produce the best work they can.

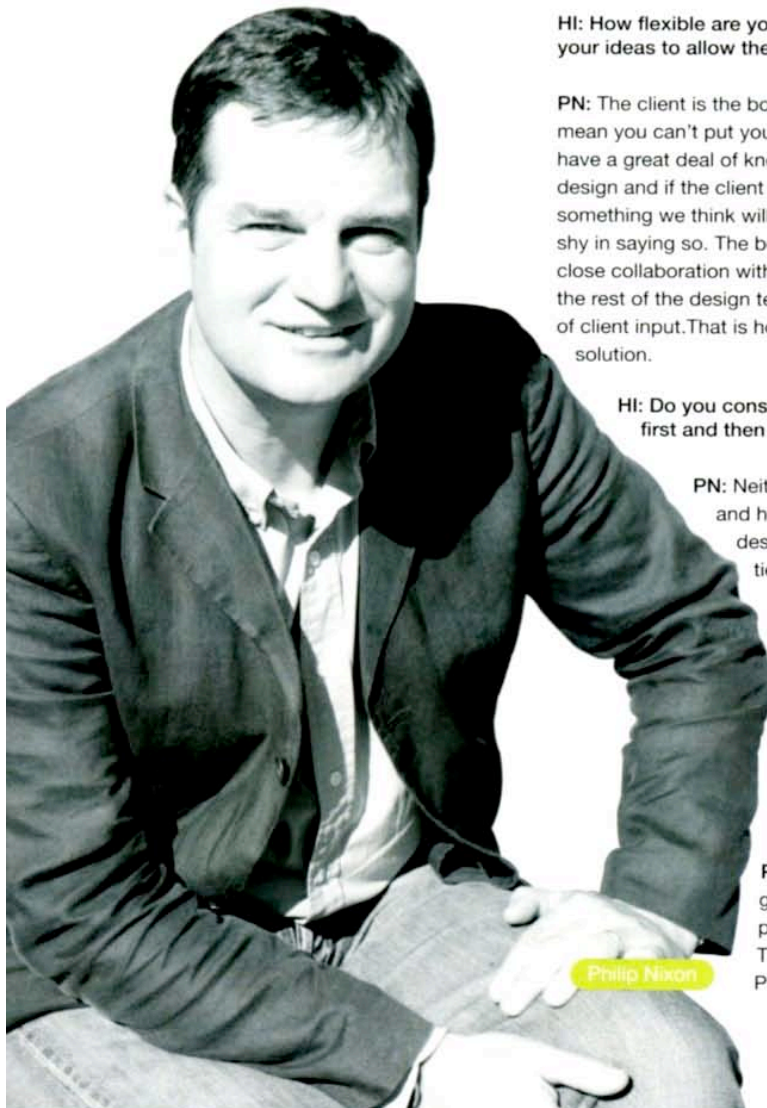
**HI:** Is demand for garden design in the hospitality sector on the increase?

**PN:** I think there is a greater awareness of the value that the garden can add to the hotel both from a PR point of view (a good garden space can set the tone for the mood of the hotel) as well as being a valuable and useable private or public space. This is true whether it be a resort hotel or a city pied-a-terre hotel.

**HI:** How do you envisage Philip Nixon Design developing over the next ten years?

**PN:** We want to keep working with great clients on fun projects. We have been very lucky to be asked to work in some amazing projects around the world in recent years and I hope that continues.

[www.philipnixondesign.com](http://www.philipnixondesign.com)



Philip Nixon