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MEET THE DESIGNER

Alexandra Champalimaud by Mollie Mag

A WORLD-CLASS HOSPITALITY DESIGNER CHANNELS HER SENSE OF COMMUNITY INTO SPA PROJECTS

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East Meets West | A trip to Bhutan inspired the design of Charym (RIGHT), Alexandra Champalimaud's (ABOVE) spa, fitness and integral health center in Litchfield.
Organic Experience | For NYC's Peninsula Hotel Spa reception area (BOTTOM) and pool (BELOW), Champalimaud created a feeling of balance. See Resources.

How did you end up in hospitality design? I have been a designer since I was 22 years old. I learned early on that with creativity, intense passion and a capacity for leadership, one can handle very large projects. Hotels offer an incredible variety of spaces in a single project. I always immerse myself in the local culture and community and try to incorporate elements of those into my design. Particularly with hospitality, it is wonderful if you are able to create something that has a real connection to the surrounding community. **Tell us about Charym, your community-based wellness spa in Litchfield.** Charym strives to be so much more than a spa. Its underpinnings are ultimately deeply spiritual. The physical place resembles a resort with gardens, exquisite design and a calming atmosphere. The inspiration for Charym came from my visits to Bhutan. The Bhutanese government measures its success in terms of "Gross National Happiness," or the wellbeing of its people. It is a country of extraordinary beauty—a beauty found in its people, landscape and architecture. Charym (which means "beauty" in Bhutanese) was created to be accessible and inclusive. It was designed to offer a sophisticated, five-star experience, but one that still feels grounded and real.

How do you describe your aesthetic? Pared-back elegance and simplicity that is extremely comfortable and well appointed. Design that doesn't try too hard. Light and comfort are essential. **Tell us about your latest project.** I've been quite busy and have worked on the Peninsula Hotel Spa, The Carlyle Hotel and The Pierre Hotel, all in New York City, The Bel Air in Beverly Hills and a number of projects in China. **Which is your most memorable project and why?** I would say the top floors of The Dorchester in London. Also, the conversion of a jail to a hotel—The Liberty in Boston—won a 2008 *Interior Design* Best of Year Award. **What's exciting to you right now in the world of interior design?** There is a new sense of humility in design right now that is quite healthy, I think. People understand that you don't have to overdo it, that you can create interiors that are real and livable and modest, but still beautiful, without the excess. **Name a source of inspiration:** Light and water elements. **What is something you can't live without?** My husband, my children and my dog. **What's your motto?** Keep positive.

