

FRAME

THE NEXT SPACE

ISSUE 147

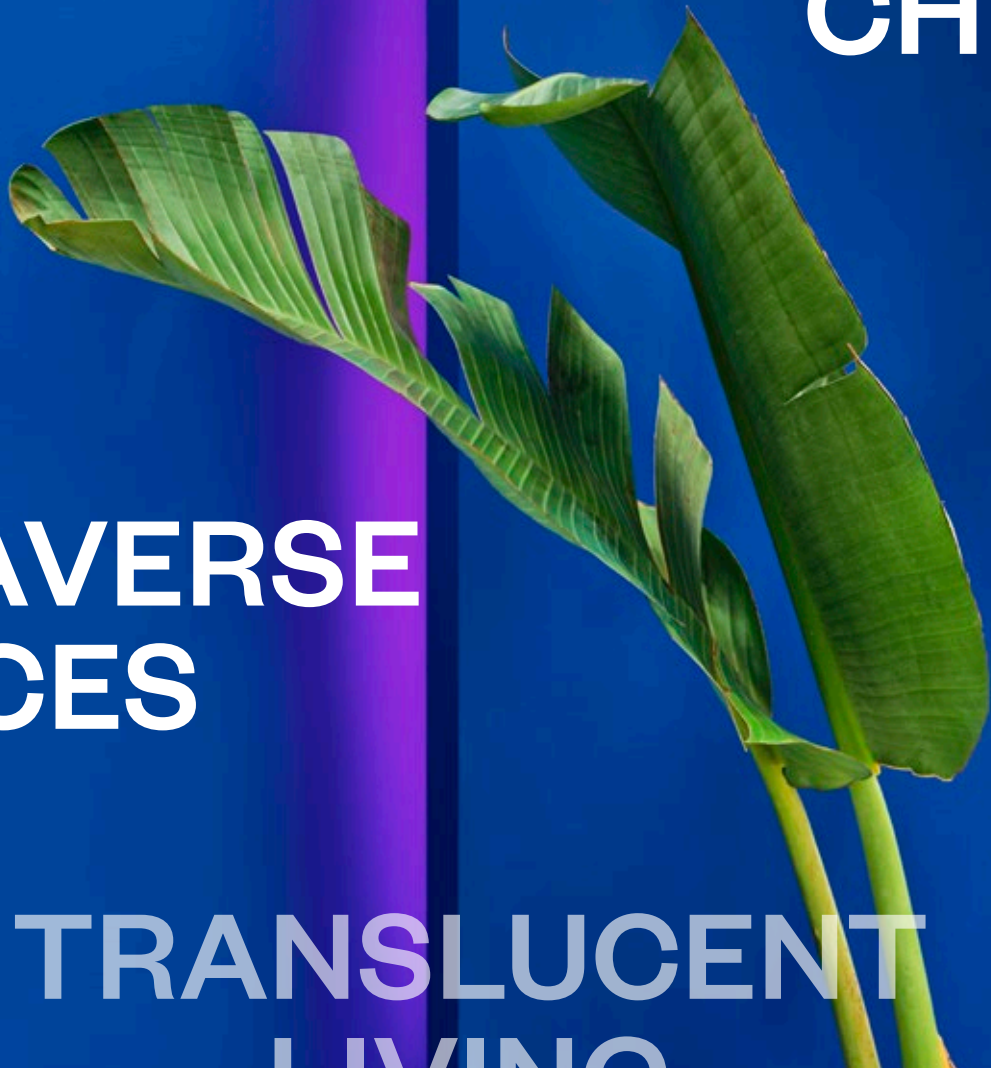
JUL — AUG 2022

NEO-NOMADISM

KRISTA KIM

STREET
≠
CHEAP

METAVVERSE
OFFICES



TRANSLUCENT LIVING



BX €22.95 DE €22.95 IT €24.90 CH F 33.00
UK £19.95 JP ¥3,800+tax KR ₩40,000



Nicholas Worley, courtesy of Grzywinski+Pons

hospitality lab

It may have taken a global pandemic, the necessity of office closures and a great resignation to break into mainstream consciousness, but digital nomads are (ironically) not going anywhere. As this rising demographic searches for a seamless blend of hospitality and work, how are hotels responding? And what new typologies are emerging to fill the gap?



Zoku's expansion from the Netherlands to Copenhagen (pictured) is a sign of the demand for more flexible international hospitality-work spaces. The project is the first home-office hybrid hotel in the Danish capital.

Courtesy of Zoku

NOMADLAND

In their 1997 book *Digital Nomad*, Tsugio Makimoto and David Manners predicted a future in which technology would facilitate a return to nomadic lifestyles. The rise of the internet and portable communication devices, coupled with the human race's inherent urge to travel, they said, would free us from settled states to once again wander as our ancestors did. And they were right.

A 50 per cent rise in US-based digital nomads alone since 2020 has seen this demographic reach 32 million strong worldwide – a number expected to rise to 1 billion by 2035. As Gen Z turns to freelance roles at a higher rate than any previous generation, and the movement makes inroads even among the salaried workforce, this prediction may prove equally prescient.

During the course of this demographic's growth, hotels have emerged as key spaces, with 53 per cent of digital nomads using them as an operations base. Indeed, few sectors have adapted as immediately or visibly, with designers accelerating efforts to serve this crowd through spaces that hybridize elements of work, life and play. But as a growing number of specialist venues seek to attract digital nomads away from hotels with particularized environments tailored to their needs alone, the margins are becoming increasingly thin, and this pole position is under threat.

Over the next few pages, we explore how the digital nomad movement is driving a new typology of hotel space that highlights fluid transmissions between form and function, and why hospitality design at large is being redefined in the image of wandering lifestyles.

Words Kristofer Thomas

1 — FLUID FORMS

Business centres, co-working desks and hireable meeting rooms are no longer enough; digital nomads desire hotel spaces as flexible and free as their lives have become.

As one of the earliest spaces dedicated to travelling professionals and working beyond an office remit, the hotel business centre was ahead of its time. Much has been written of its demise, though to claim this facility is a thing of the past is to ignore both its lingering influence and the evolution of its form. Indeed, the reorientation of the business centre as a co-working space was a key factor in the rise of the digital nomad lifestyle, and its proliferation now drives change in hotel design at large – no longer a corner of tucked-away desks, but in some cases the core touchstone for entire brands.

With the defining characteristic of digital nomads being an ability to work from anywhere, their design influence in the hotel can largely be charted by the development of such facilities. As far back as 2013, Ace Shoreditch was predicting the shift with its

communal lobby and desk arrangements, while the launch of Locke and the maturation of the aparthotel concept saw the nomad spread beyond these desks to occupy lounges and bars. In 2015, the opening of the first Selina hotel marked the point at which digital nomads warranted a design-and-brand vocabulary of their own, before The Hoxton's flagship Working_From venue raised the stakes with a complex of studios, clusters and casual office-lite spots – essentially an office in a hotel outfit. This trajectory continues today as Scandic rolls out the largest network of co-working spaces in Scandinavia in 270 of its hotels.

Where some of this proliferation could be attributed to the increasing number of freelance workers – up by 47 per cent between 2011 and 2018 – the nomad's adoption of hotel »



Hybrid hospitality spaces can learn from multifunctional designs like Snøhetta's 'superfurniture' – a feature of co-working space Pangea in Tokyo – which shifts from reception to amphitheatre to phone booths to meeting spaces to individual workspaces.

Nacasa & Partners

‘Everything from colour to architecture is moving beyond one-size-fits-everything. Because above all, what these guests most value is the freedom of choice’



Courtesy of Baranowitz + Kronenberg

space is significant, in that many of the freelancers or agile start-ups that occupy standard co-working spaces do not also require a place to sleep. For the travelling nomad, however, the combination of hotel and office has negated the cost of paying separately for both, and it is within this specific combination that a new typology of hospitality design is taking form.

With co-working facilities rendered uninhabitable during Covid-19 lockdowns, a closer union of design was required in guest rooms, which major operators including Hilton began selling as day-rent offices in a bid to negate losses driven by the collapse of nomadic travel. But these spaces have traditionally been designed for sleeping, relaxing and not much else, and so an adaptation of function was required.

The recently launched 3-in-1 guest room concept at the Philippe Starck-designed Mob House in Paris features modular living space alongside an office and meeting room, and is billed as an intersection of professional and private for ‘the travelling entrepreneur’. Likewise, the adaptable guest rooms at Valo Hotel & Work in Helsinki – the product of a collaboration between interior design studio Fyra and office specialist Workplace Oy – translate the hybrid work-meets-living values of its public space as mechanized and adaptable sanctuaries wherein nomads can use a dedicated app to control a system of interchangeable beds, desks and sofas. In this context, fluidity of form has become a core tenet in hotel design aimed at serving the digital nomad; this guest profile has fused living and working habits via experiential travel, and so requires environments that do the same. Not so much a third space between work and living, but rather a framework of dual functionality that combines the two.

Indeed, it is this fluidity that inspires Co-Hito, a new concept from Baranowitz & Kronenberg that sees underused hotel space converted into hybridized office/guest rooms that can shift with changing demand. ‘By 2050, 70 per cent of the world population is going to live and work in cities, and the workforce has become hybrid, so we need to create spaces that respond to this,’ says Alon Baranowitz, the studio’s cofounder. ‘This synergy isn’t just working and living – it’s designed for a new, nomadic community that is travelling with lots in mind all at once. In terms of the physical state of the guest room, it’s moving towards a form of hospitality that is able to completely transform itself.’

‘The work is all in cities,’ adds cofounder Irene Kronenberg. ‘It’s difficult for young entrepreneurs, creatives and freelancers to pay for that, and we disagree with the brands that are building more co-working space in order to have this functionality within the hotel; it’s not about building more, it’s about the effective use of space.’

Influenced by the growing number of travelling nomads juggling the disciplines of work, life and play all at once, this hybridized use of space and dual functionality is now bleeding into every level of hospitality design and experience. Whether that be entire transformable rooms like Co-Hito or single fixtures in the vein of Snøhetta’s ‘superfurniture’ for Tokyo’s Pangea – a table, desk and seat contained in one continuous form – hospitality design in general is adapting to the needs of guests who demand multifunctional quality from the same quantity of space. ‘Everything from colour to architecture is moving beyond one-size-fits-everything,’ says Baranowitz. ‘Because above all, what these guests most value is the freedom of choice.’ »

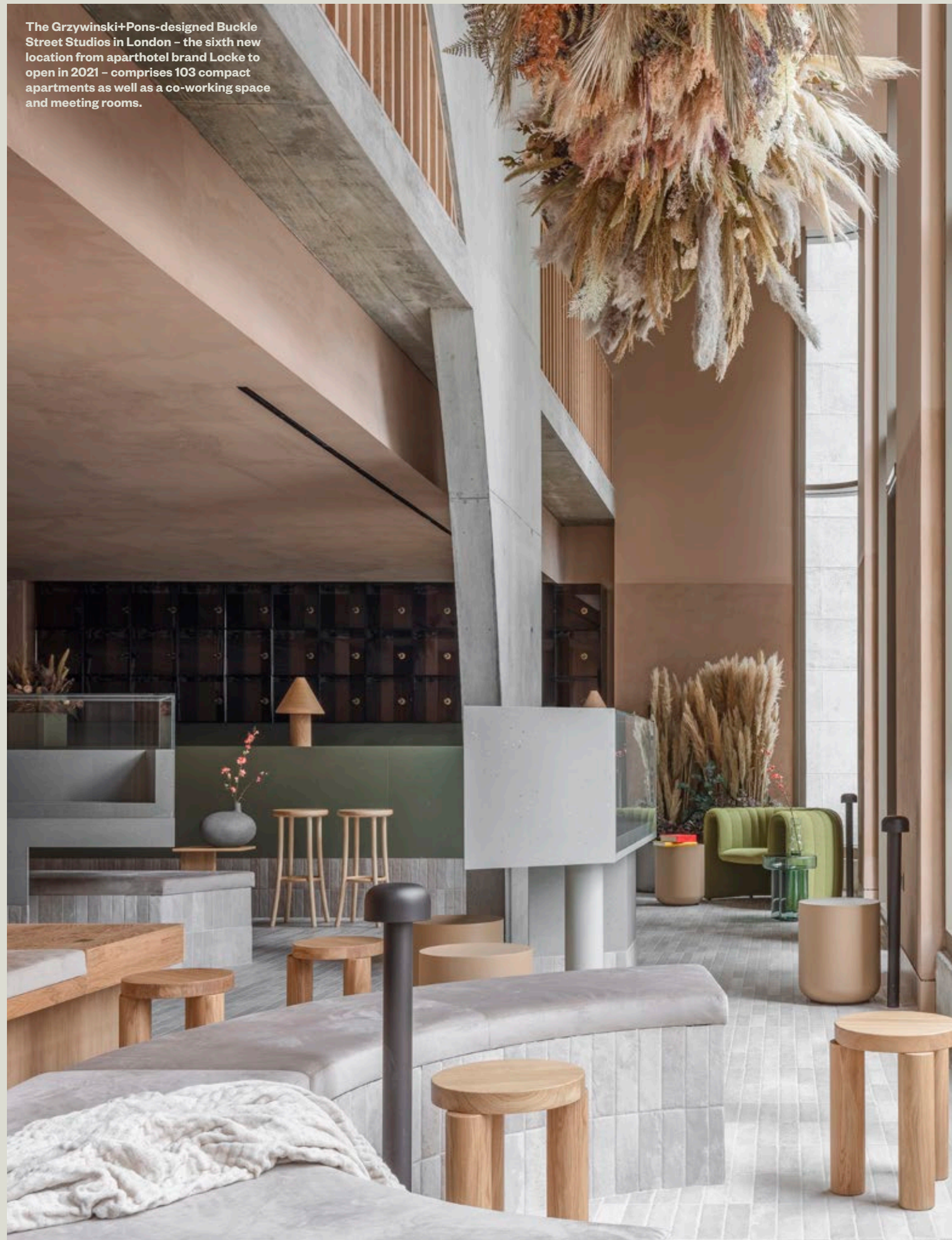
Co-Hito, a new concept from Baranowitz & Kronenberg, sees underused hotel space converted into rooms that transform from sleep space by night to workspace by day.



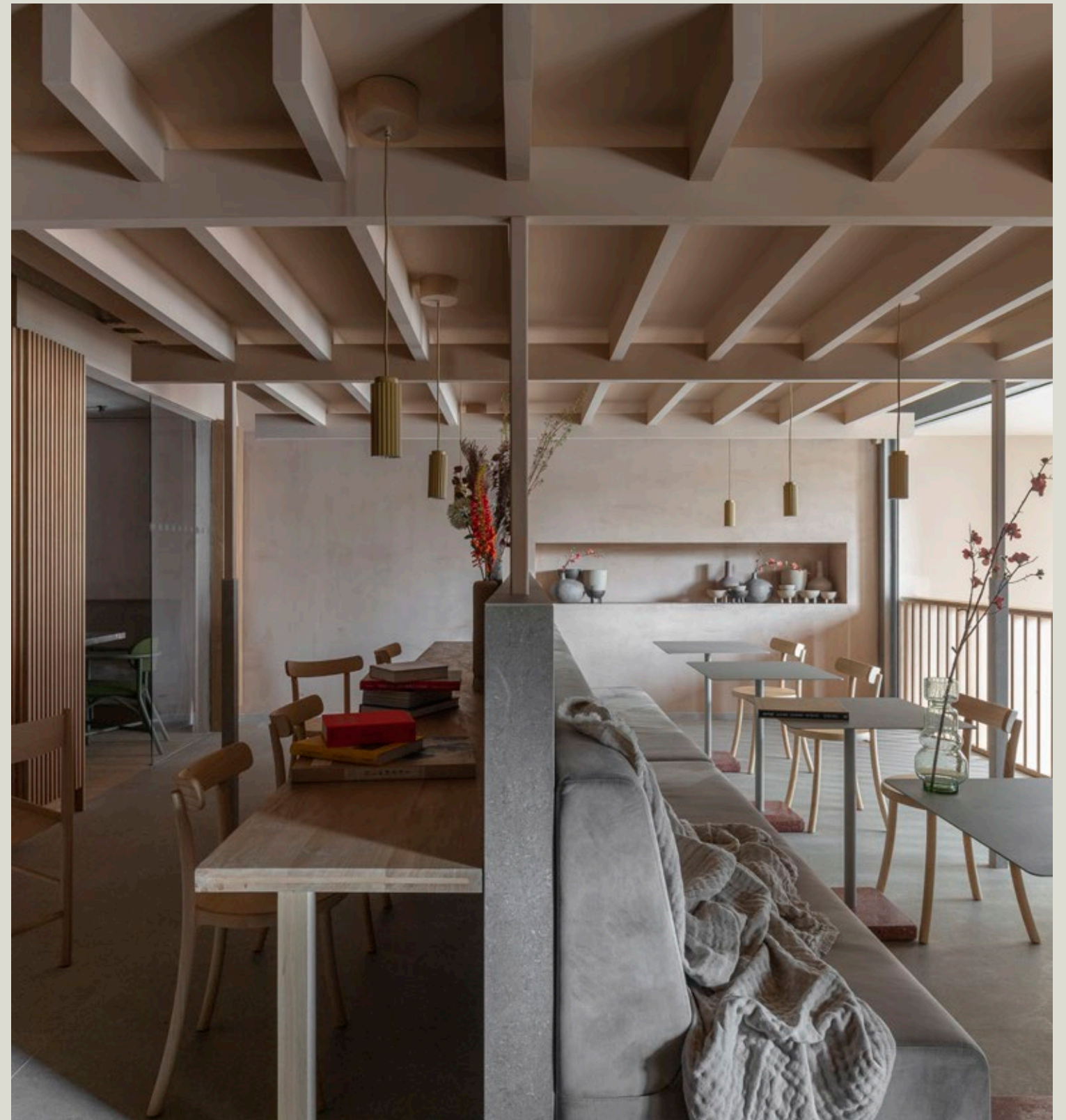
The 3-in-1 guest room concept at the Philippe Starck-designed Mob House in Paris features modular living space alongside an office and meeting room, and is billed as an intersection of professional and private for 'the travelling entrepreneur'.

Grégoire Gardette

The Grzywinski+Pons-designed Buckle Street Studios in London – the sixth new location from aparthotel brand Locke to open in 2021 – comprises 103 compact apartments as well as a co-working space and meeting rooms.



Nicholas Worley



Digital nomads have fused living and working habits via experiential travel, and so require environments that do the same

2 — PERSONALIZED SPACE



DSL Studio

Unlike the corridor-with-rooms layout present in most hotels, models with shared zones interspersed between private space – like Helen & Hard's co-housing design at the 2021 Venice Architecture Biennale – permit users to organically define their environment and interactions.

Staying longer and searching for a home on the road, this rootless demographic is challenging designers to combine traditional hospitality space with co-living ideals.

With 80 per cent staying in one place for three to nine months – falling to 66 per cent for three to six months – digital nomads are sticking around significantly longer than traditional profiles. But while this remains an attractive prospect for hotel operators looking to maximize occupancy rates, designers will once again be required to give this new behaviour a suitable form to flourish.

Closer to tenants than guests, digital nomads simultaneously desire a home away from home *and* a place to express their rootlessness. As such, just as they have accelerated the interweaving of workplace elements within the hotel, so too are they behind the proliferation of co-living concepts in this sector. As the lines between three previously distinct spaces and functions begin to blur, the definition of the hotel is in a state of transience, and if a balance cannot be found then it is likely that this fickle demographic will turn to standalone residential-style short-lease projects created specifically in their image, as opposed to the hotels they are forced to share with standard guests.

Over in Hong Kong this proximity between hotel and co-living space is coming to a head with an experiment of sorts, as major investment funds motivated by lingering pandemic disruption are converting hotel stock into co-living facilities. Some are opting for mixed-use developments, while others are making purchases with a total reclassification of purpose in mind. And where both operate with the expectation that shared service touchpoints and design DNA will result in a straight translation, in the case of mixed-use projects especially this has not been so simple. 'It became a controversial situation because residents and business permit users are using the same building services and facilities like staircases, lobby and elevators,' says Frank Wong, managing partner of planning and development at Pruden Group. 'This often resulted in a very disorganized environment and created undesirable interfaces.'

For hotels seeking to appeal to digital nomads as well as an audience of more conventional guests, this does not bode well. Save for dedicating costly newbuilds to this demographic entirely, the fact remains that the combination of co-living ideals and standard hotel function may prove a more complicated design prospect that the introduction of workspace elements.

Indicating that a shift away from hotel infrastructure may be necessary for co-living to thrive, what can designers do to head off this potential exodus? As it happens, in this same APAC region lies a potential blueprint for synergy. By eschewing the hotel as a template for co-living, brands like Figment are appealing to digital nomads with smaller-scale conversions of Singaporean shophouses, instilling these structures with design schemes that mix the convenience of serviced aparthotels with more homely residential layouts and interiors.

Likewise, the dispersed nature of these projects places guests into more authentic settings, allowing for closer-knit communities and interaction with locale away from the contained limitations of existing hotel space. In this context, a shift away from hotels could prove fruitful; as futurist Eric Hunting said to *Forbes*: 'The trend in neo-nomadism is more typically motivated by Existential Nomadism – a desire for authenticity in life through the experience of a perpetual foreigner, stranger, or traveler, freely sampling the cultures and lifestyles in different places.'

Allowing for guests to customize and make the space their own is also a key consideration, one that Figment and Ministry of Design took to the extreme with an all-white scheme intended to highlight any accents or trinkets accrued by tenants. As such, predetermined, pre-furnished hotel designs may not be as conducive to longer-term guests as spaces that allow digital nomads to personalize their surroundings. For hoteliers, then, striking a balance between aesthetic »

continuity and malleability could be a shortcut to this state.

In the meantime, looking to more recent experiments in co-living design, it becomes clear that a standalone typology is blossoming. Hotel designers would perhaps be best placed to deal with the demands of digital nomads by taking cues from projects like the DROO-designed City Approach apartments, which comprise a series of four newly constructed interconnecting apartments atop a London warehouse. Co-living functions flow between differing scales and volumes, mixing open-plan and closed nooks to counter the extroverted character of many networking-focused facilities.

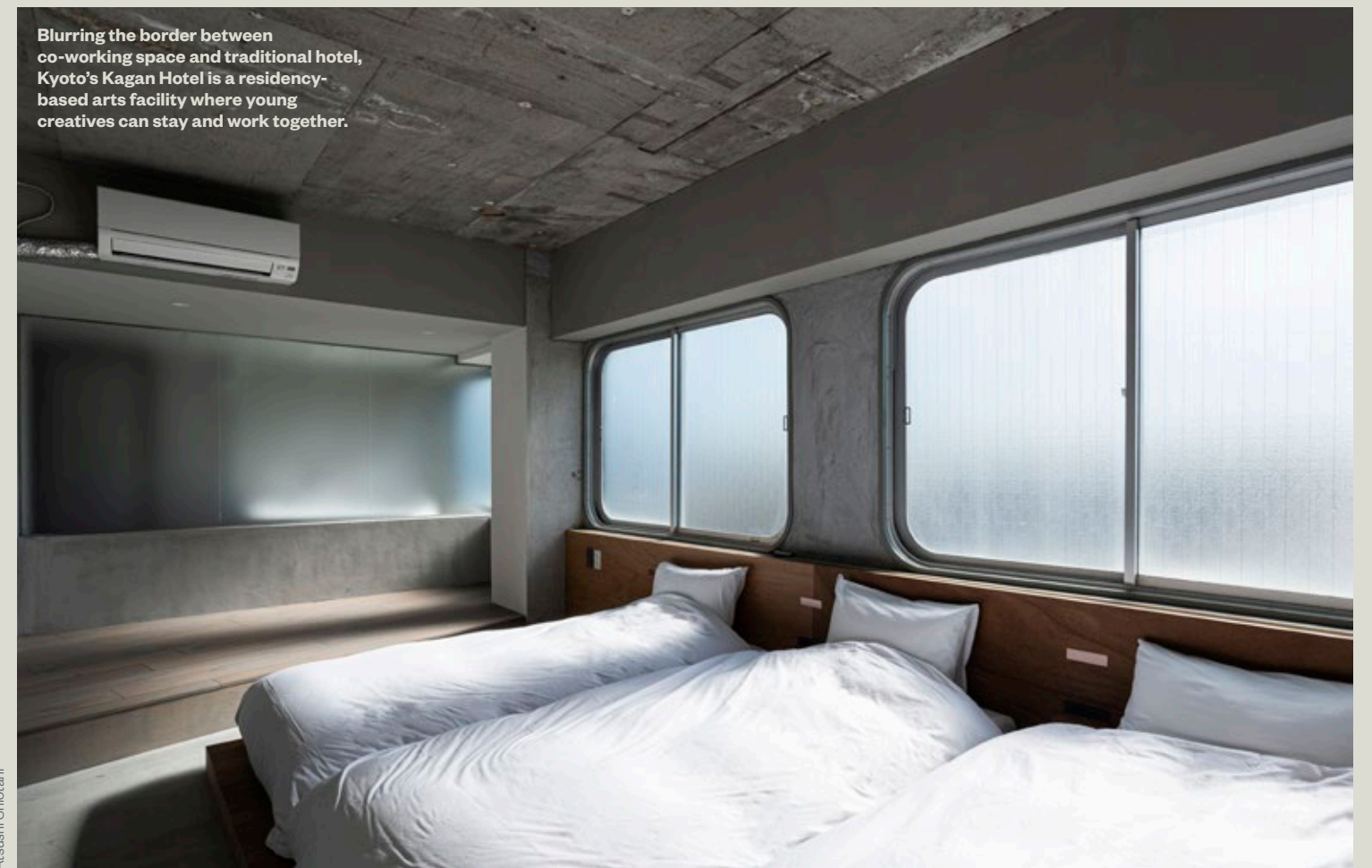
Likewise, at last year's Venice Architecture Biennale, the Nordic Pavilion's full-scale co-housing design by Helen & Hard showcased a radical combination of shared zones interspersed between private space. A far cry from the standardized corridor-with-rooms layout present in most hotels, this model permits users to organically define space and so too their interactions with the community. Siv Helene Stangeland and Reinhard Kropf, the studio's founders, described to *Berlin Art Link* how the project is based on the Scandinavian model of housing cooperatives whereby inhabitants co-own the property and intend to build a community. 'The pandemic has clearly shown us how important our living environments are: not only the quality of our private unit but also our immediate, close neighborhoods, the green areas and the shared areas in between our houses . . . We want to show how common

space between the private dwellings offers possibilities for sharing and social activities, and has rich architectural potential.'

With co-living emerging as a more appropriate medium for digital nomads and their long-stay, low-committal needs, the manner in which hotel designers can adapt not only the framework of guest rooms but the spaces connecting them will be key in attracting digital nomads. But that is not to say hotels don't still hold some cards. 'Co-living is an opportunity to live in your own private place but still be part of a family,' says Jamiee Williams, project lead for Ikea's Space10 shared-living research studio. 'But our concept of home is changing – away from the idea of ownership, to seeing it as a service, like many digital platforms have allowed us to do with music, media and cars.' As such, where the competition from standalone co-living facilities untethered from hotels is benefitting from a design language of its own, the purchasing power and living habits of digital nomads may ultimately align closer to the hospitality service model. Striking a balance between this housing-as-service attitude and a form of hotel design more attuned to the needs of long-term living will be a defining trait of the next generation of hospitality concepts.

But as countries like Spain, Portugal and Italy launch specified digital nomad visas and prepare entire villages of co-living facilities to house these visitors, any significant alterations will need to be implemented sooner rather than later if hotels are to retain their lucrative crown as de facto digital nomad homesteads. »

Striking a balance between the housing-as-service attitude and a form of hotel design more attuned to the needs of long-term living will be a defining trait of the next generation of hospitality concepts



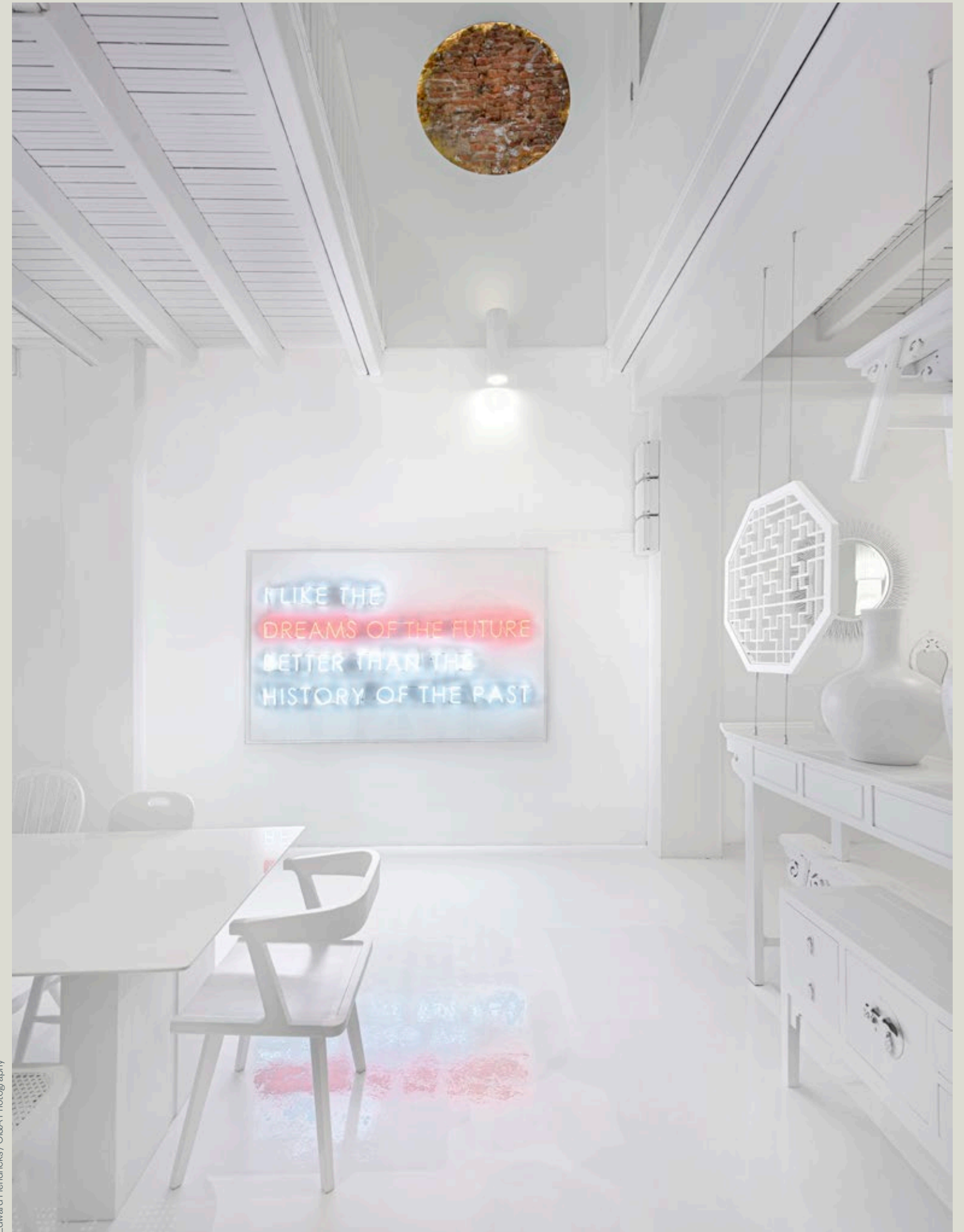
Blurring the border between co-working space and traditional hotel, Kyoto's Kagan Hotel is a residency-based arts facility where young creatives can stay and work together.

Atsushi Shiotani



A feeling of spatial ownership is key at Singapore's Canvas House, a Figment co-living space designed by Ministry of Design. The all-white scheme is intended to highlight any accents or trinkets accrued by tenants.

Closer to tenants than guests, digital nomads simultaneously desire a home away from home *and* a place to express their rootlessness



Edward Hendriks / O&A Photography

3 — MOBILE UNITS

Beyond hybridized space and multifunctionality, hotels will need to shed any signs of stasis and embrace physical movement if they are to truly serve the nomad.

When the organizers of Nomad Cruise opted to host a skill-sharing conference on a boat and visit four different countries in a 12-day itinerary, it was not simply an aesthetic choice, but one based on a keen understanding of its core demographic. Aligning itself with the digital nomad's main motivators of travel, transience and mobility, the event tapped into a rich vein of thematic resonance – namely in the values of movement its audience favours over the prospect of prolonged stasis. The pandemic may have scuppered plans for its next edition, but the suitability of this format persists, and hoteliers and designers alike should reassess whether a fixed mode of hospitality design is best placed to serve digital nomads, or if upping sticks to follow them in rootless pursuit is the logical endpoint.

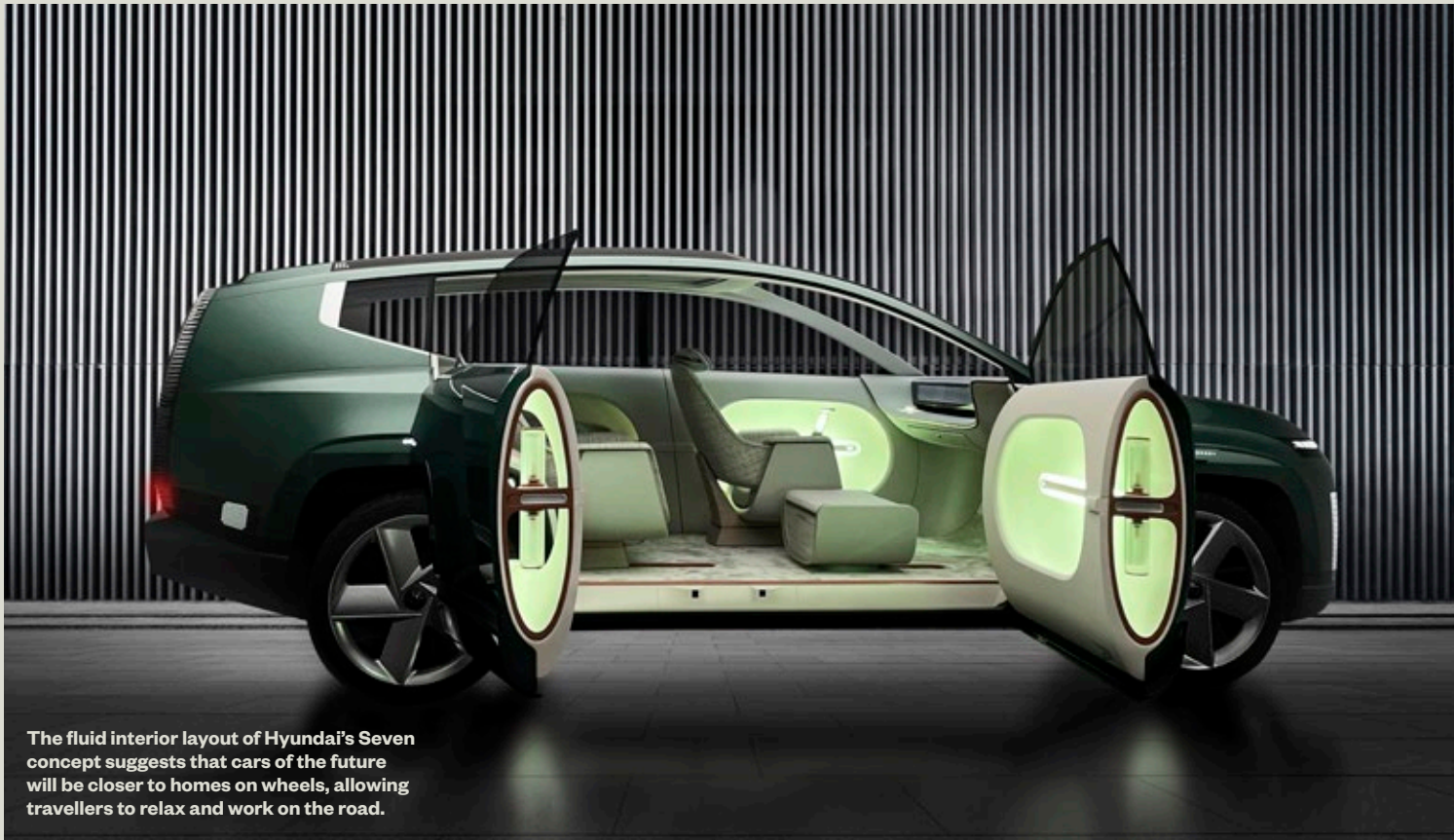
On paper, the impermanent connection between hotels and digital nomads is well suited, but for hospitality brands with ambitions of retaining the loyalty of a guest that wants to mix things up, a fixed abode

is a precarious long-term strategy. Despite best efforts by 25Hours and nomad mainstay Selina to achieve a system of continuity with subscription models that allow travellers to access the brand across multiple continents, this operational strategy remains at odds with the nomadic way of life. It might prove cheaper, but the similarity between venues and service culture will soon grow stale and set eyes to wandering. The solution, then, is perhaps not to expect guests to follow brands around the globe, but to design for the reverse.

Billed as the world's first nomadic hotel, Moliving is a prefabricated, moveable pod unit with the capacity to function alongside existing properties or stand alone in disconnected locales. Customized to best suit the needs of location and guest alike, the modular units can switch up elements from façade material to roof profile – the flexible sensibilities of this concept going beyond interiority to considerably extend both geographic and experiential reach. 'The traditional hotel »



Billed as the world's first nomadic hotel, Moliving is a prefabricated, moveable pod unit that can function alongside existing properties or stand alone in disconnected locales.



The fluid interior layout of Hyundai's Seven concept suggests that cars of the future will be closer to homes on wheels, allowing travellers to relax and work on the road.



Courtesy of Hyundai

The best concepts will be those that reconcile tangible transformation of physical form with the more experiential journeys sought by perpetually wandering, horizon-chasing nomads

development model has proven its success for generations. Now, lifestyle habits and travel behaviors have greatly shifted,' the company's founder and CEO Jordan Bem told *Hospitality Design*. 'Moliving is accommodating by design, its flexibility feeds the desire to roam freely helping the industry to embrace the nomadic, adventure-seeking traveller of today, who still wants all the benefits of the traditional five-star accommodation.'

Where many of the aforementioned examples in this series have fallen under an urban banner - in close proximity to both the strongest internet and networking connections - wandering, single-unit designs are a response to the rising nomadic demand for rural locations, and so too a prediction that the burgeoning workcation trend will lead to an influx of new nomads.

In drawing inspiration from the transient nature of these guests, designers are reimagining hotel space beyond the traditional framework, and the hospitality market is increasingly considering the importance of movement in its products. Be that prefabricated projects that can be constructed in a variety of environments like Nomadic Resort's The Looper - a luxury pod constructed in an orthogonal structure and clad in long-lasting recyclable membrane flysheet - or globetrotting pop-up concepts as in 700'000 Heures, which sees hospitality experiences temporarily occupy existing structures before decamping to pastures new, the hotel model and so too the architecture that contains it is being altered. 'Hotels no longer need four walls, a rooftop bar and suites with 2,000-square-foot [186-m²] bathrooms,' says 700'000 Heures founder Thierry Teyssier - who has boiled down the criterion for potential project locations to 'wherever makes me start to dance in the sand'.

As major hotel brands like Accor begin to experiment with vehicular hospitality concepts and manufacturers like Hyundai refocus efforts to develop an all-encompassing

'mobility of things' ecosystem - both of which reimagine previously static objects as mobile, often autonomous alternatives - it is becoming increasingly clear that the reintroduction of nomadic lifestyles will not be a static affair.

Suggesting that cars of the future will be closer to homes on wheels, SangYup Lee, executive vice president of Hyundai Motor Company, told the *Daily Mail* that the company's Seven automobile concept cares for passengers as a family living space . . . it goes way beyond the idea of just transporting you and reimagines the time and space you travel in, allowing users to enjoy leisure time, work, and communicating with others flexibly and comfortably, just like they would in living space at home.'

As we have observed with the ever-closer proximity between living space, hotel space and workspace that digital nomads have driven, this sentiment will also apply to hospitality environments, likely with more flexible possibilities as operators gain the valuable ability to extend their branded remit far beyond the limits of conventional products.

So, where the trend towards hybridism and designs that marry unfamiliar function within familiar environments are open to interpretation and a higher degree of user-definition, the notion of movement is more explicit.

As such, if the future of hotel design is seeking to position itself as an equally mobile contemporary for this growing demographic of digital nomads, the best concepts will be those that reconcile tangible transformation of physical form with the more experiential journeys sought by perpetually wandering, horizon-chasing nomads. In 'nomadland', flexibility is a state of mind as much as it is a material quality, and it is perhaps this altered perspective that will be key in retaining and helping digital nomads to thrive as opposed to simply attracting or serving them.●

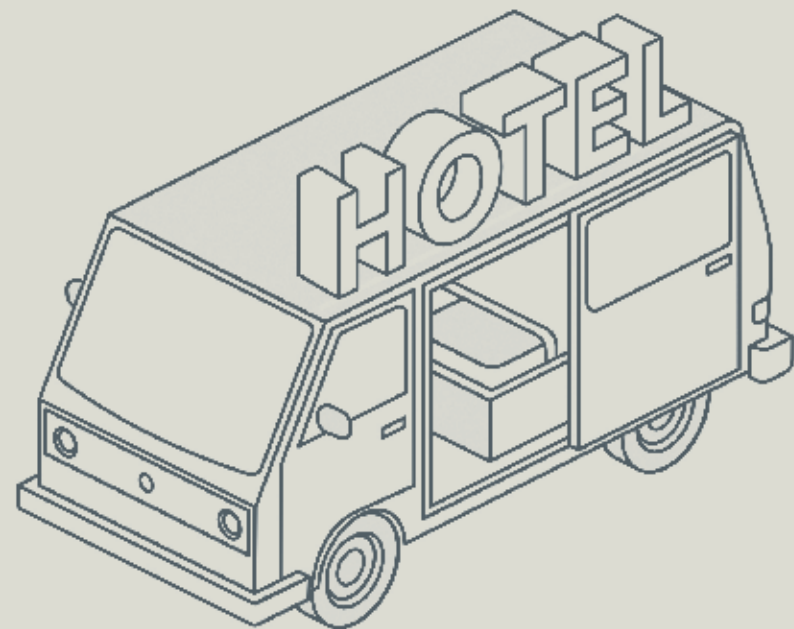
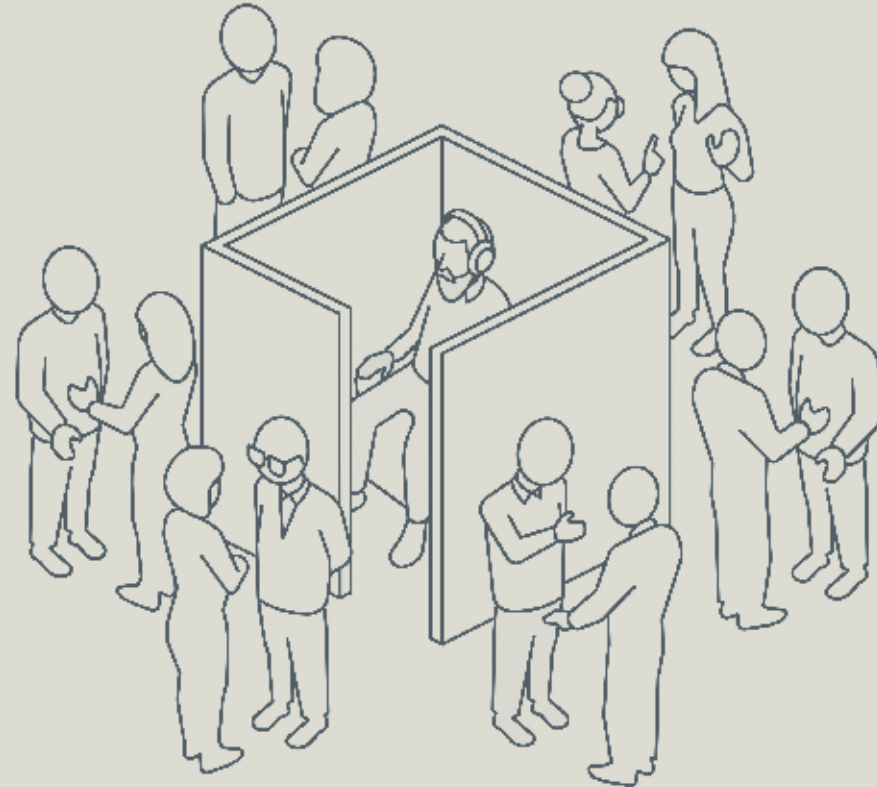
DIGITAL NOMADS TOOLKIT

Illustrations Simon Flöter

01

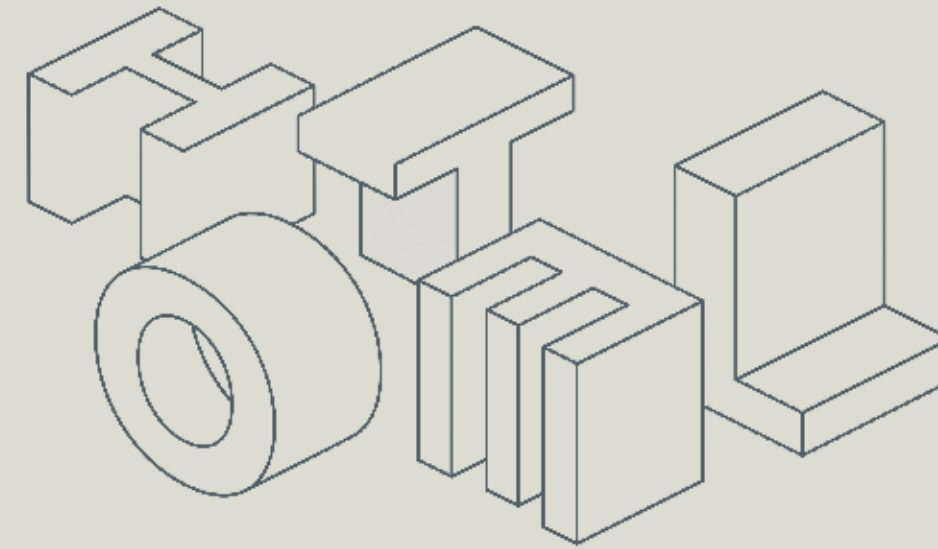
ENSURE POINTS OF PRIVACY

Not all nomads are networking gurus and social media stars. Designers can foster more rounded and diverse guest communities by offsetting open and transparent interstitial zones and shared functional volumes with privacy-inclined quiet spaces that allow room for self-definition.



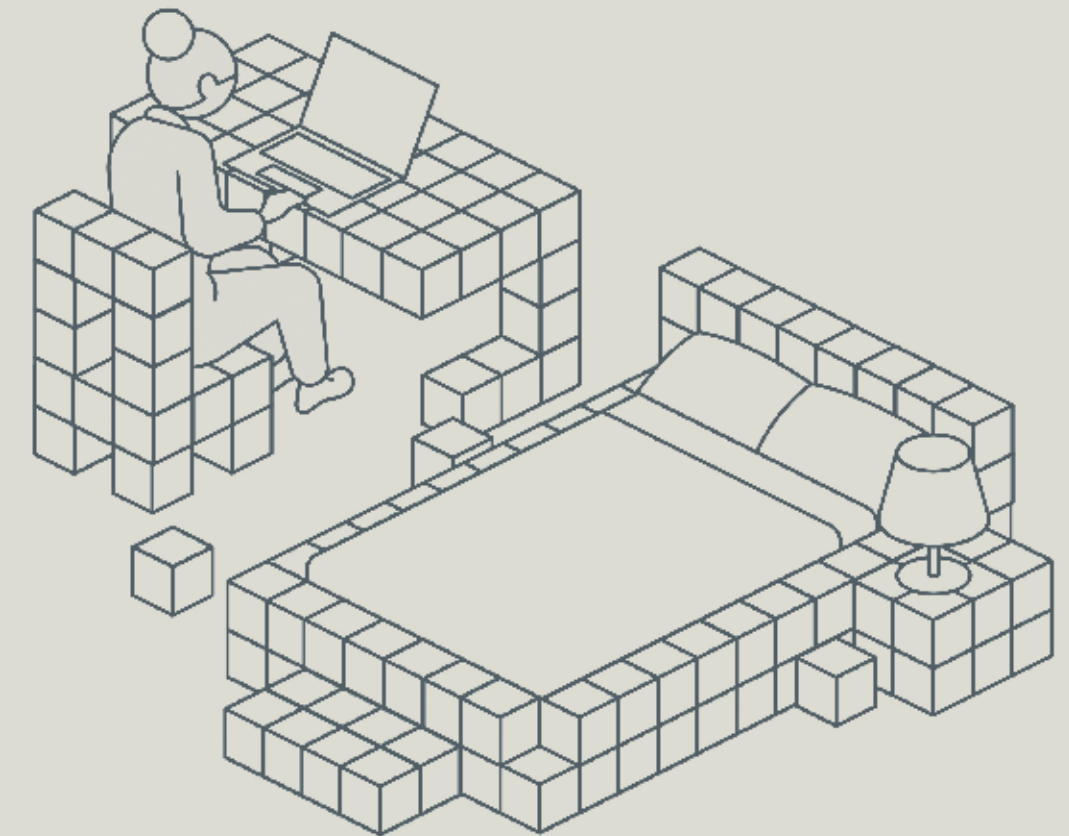
02

EMBRACE TRANSIENCE Channelling nomadic values of movement and impermanence means designing for continuously updated programmes and fine-tuned adjustments of form, but so too experiences that extend beyond a hotel's four walls.



04

HIGHLIGHT FREEDOM OF USE Digital nomads desire freedom of choice above all, from the country they live in to the height of their desk. Multifunctional interior elements play to a demographic that seeks increasing amounts of purpose and adaptable performance from hotel spaces.



03

CONSIDER DISPERSAL

A hotel is no longer a single all-containing entity; dispersing this form and sending it to meet nomads in the field will be the next major step for any brand with sights set on the market. But designing for individual elements that form part of a circuit means being agile across disciplines, and creating experiences that encourage individual journeys between the pieces.