

want to work with for the long haul," said Mari. "Hospitality projects take a long time. For Morgans, we worked with [Andrée] Putman for two years before the opening. It was similar to Marcel [Wanders's] team — he had never done a large hospitality project. It was a lot of back and forth. Their ideas were incredible but we really needed to guide them through

the property's locale. As a senior employee at Morgans, the company credited with the creation of the concept, Mari's perspective on the genre is significant. Although she thinks the fundamental concepts of boutique haven't changed much since the first Morgans Hotel (in fact, the team took care to change almost none of Putman's original design in its

recent revamp), Mari knows that travelers are more aware of their surroundings today than they were 20 years ago. They're less accepting of a run-of-the-mill experience and are not easily pleased or fooled.

"The core values of what a boutique hotel is are still the values that drive us everyday," she said. "There are more people now interested in the concept and want to play in the sandbox. People want a unique, inviting, dynamic experience. Design is one aspect that makes a hotel boutique, but it's everything. A boutique hotel is a unique destination. It's a way for a traveler to find a unique way to experience a destination. It's the antithesis to the cookie cutter. A boutique hotel has to be relevant to its destination, to its locale. I think that's one of the most important parts of the definition for us as a company."

Next up for Mari is the Ames Hotel in Boston, the first Morgans property in the historic New England city. The Ames, set to open late this fall, will sport a design from the Rockwell Group — another design industry giant — with the working theme of "Benjamin Franklin meets a supermodel."

"I think that Boston is ready for us," said Mari.

"I guess they have a few boutique hotels, but Boston hasn't been a huge market for that segment. The originators are arriving and I think we'll bring something vibrant to the city."

Further down the horizon for Morgans is the Mondrian SoHo, being designed by Benjamin Noriega Ortiz and set to open in the summer of 2010.

"This is now the third property we're doing with him," said Mari. "We love his work but we also love him. It's not always about having the next new designer, it's also about developing a rapport."

Mari considers herself lucky to have developed relationships with some phenomenally talented people in design. Per the BD issue theme, she disclosed one of her own female heroes:

"ANDRÉE PUTMAN. SHE'S INCREDIBLE IN WHAT SHE'S DONE IN HER LIFETIME, WHAT SHE'S DONE FOR WOMEN IN DESIGN...THE LAUNDRY LIST GOES ON AND ON. SHE IS SOMEONE I'VE ADMIRER FOR YEARS BOTH PROFESSIONALLY AND PERSONALLY. SHE HAS LIVED SUCH AN EXTRAORDINARY LIFE AND HAS BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN THE WORLD OF DESIGN. I CAN'T HELP BUT SEE HER AS A HERO." BD

Left: Renovated lobby at Morgans Hotel in NYC, featuring moving art installation by French company Trafik; Bottom Right: Lobby at the Mondrian South Beach; Center: The 4th edition of Morgans compilation music CD.



the process of what makes sense in a hospitality environment."

Mari and the design team arrived at the choice of Marcel Wanders for the Mondrian South Beach after careful deliberation. The company had originally spoken with Wanders about doing the Mondrian Los Angeles, but decided to go with Benjamin Noriega Ortiz for that project. Ortiz' concepts worked better in L.A. while Wanders' ideas simply suited Miami — a city that would embrace an imaginative design like his.

For Mari, that's what the process of designing a boutique hotel is all about — finding the right personality to tell the story of

