Grand Hotel:
Redesigning Modern Life

Waldorf-Astoria, New York
postcard, c.1931

TEACHER’S STUDY GUIDE
SPRING 2013
Contents

Program Information and Goals................................................................................................... 3
Background to the Exhibition ....................................................................................................... 4
Preparation for the Exhibition: Classroom Discussions and Activities
  1. What’s a Hotel Anyway? ........................................................................................................... 5
  2. Hotel by Design ................................................................................................................... 6
     Designed Objects ................................................................................................................ 7
  3. Location, Location, Location ................................................................................................ 8
     Hotel Events and Social Spaces ......................................................................................... 9
  4. Who Says So? ....................................................................................................................... 10
     Topics for Debate (primary students) .............................................................................. 11
     Topics for Debate (secondary students) ........................................................................... 12
Resources.................................................................................................................................... 13

Guest room, citizenM, Amsterdam
A Loft Suite at The Hotel, Lucerne
Grand Hotel: Redesigning Modern Life brings the world of the hotel into the environment of an art gallery. Hotels can evoke everything from the glamorous dream of Hollywood movies to a gritty inner-city reality. But whether we travel the globe staying in elegant boutique hotels, vacation at mega-resorts on far-flung beaches, go on family road trips overnighting in roadside motels or amble past the almost invisible little hotel in our neighbourhood, hotels are an inescapable part of our contemporary world. The exhibition Grand Hotel leads the viewer through the gamut of the hotel experience, providing a rich history of social and cultural change. Large-scale architectural models, dynamic designs, videos, photographs and visually innovative technological displays invite us to examine the roles that hotels play in our lives.

DEAR TEACHER:

This guide will assist you in preparing for your tour of the exhibition Grand Hotel: Redesigning Modern Life. It also provides follow-up activities to facilitate discussion after your Gallery visit. Engaging in the suggested activities before and after your visit will reinforce ideas generated by the tour and build continuity between the Gallery experience and your ongoing work in the classroom. Most activities require few materials and can be adapted easily to the age, grade level and needs of your students.

The tour of Grand Hotel: Redesigning Modern Life has three main goals:
• To consider the hotel within geographical, historical and social contexts
• To introduce students to the hotel as a site of cultural and social exchange
• To explore the design factors and architectural elements of the hotel experience
THE EXHIBITION:
Grand Hotel: Redesigning Modern Life

The influential 1932 Hollywood film *Grand Hotel* was the inspiration for the exhibition’s title. The exhibition’s four main themes—travel, design, the social and culture—consider the roles of travel and design in the development of the hotel, as well as the hotel’s important role as a site of social interaction. Together the themes tell the collective story of the hotel experience. The exhibition is presented using visually exciting, technologically innovative displays, videos and photographs as well as architectural models and interactive screens.

*Grand Hotel: Redesigning Modern Life* provides a look at the idea of the hotel in its multiple roles. From utilitarian trucker motel to Hollywood glamour palace, the hotel undoubtedly plays a significant part in contemporary life. Whether visiting a hotel for purposes of tourism, business travel, family vacation, food and drink, employment or simply walking through the lobby, the hotel is deeply embedded in our lives. Each hotel exists in a local context but is bound to a vast network of travel and movement that extends globally.

Initially a purely functional structure – a modest inn for weary travellers unfortunate enough to be caught away from home - the hotel has evolved into a worldwide cultural phenomenon. As larger purpose-built structures were constructed to include lobbies, ballrooms and restaurants, the hotel became a place where people across the social classes could meet and socialize, possibly for the first time in history. The hotel became a place where women could be seen in public, responding and contributing to changing gender roles. Hollywood movies such as *Grand Hotel* portrayed hotel glamour for all classes to aspire to and participate in. As international flights became cheaper, adventure tourism encouraged the growth of hotels in the most remote corners of the planet.

The hotel developed as a place not only for temporary habitation, but for the richness of creativity and art. In the nineteenth century, writers and musicians such as Somerset Maugham, Gustav Mahler, Johannes Brahms and Joseph Conrad congregated and created at hotels in Singapore, Vienna and Paris, making these venues famous for their high-profile guests as well as for their art. This idea of the hotel as cultural incubator persisted into the twentieth century when new generations of musicians and writers, including Allen Ginsberg, Bob Dylan, Joni Mitchell and Leonard Cohen, began congregating in New York, Los Angeles and other hubs and popularizing a new kind of hotel - modern, inexpensive, and egalitarian.

Today as tourism increases rapidly on a global scale, destination resorts all over the world are being re-imagined to house intrepid explorers and holidaymakers. Architecture is adapted to local design principles and materials to create an “authentic” experience reflecting the surrounding culture. Architects create unique and memorable spaces, and designers fashion a certain look, producing objects to capture the specificity of the place. Cutlery, furnishings and sneakers can be purchased to keep the hotel experience alive in our memory.

*Grand Hotel: Redesigning Modern Life* is organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery and curated by Jennifer M. Volland, guest curator, Bruce Grenville, senior curator, and Stephanie Rebick, assistant curator.
PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY: What’s a Hotel Anyway?

Objective:
Students consider the purposes of hotels and the roles that they play, and create a sketch of an idea for their dream hotel.

Materials:
- pencils and paper
- large sheets of white paper and pencil crayons

Process:
1. Discussion: What is the purpose of a hotel? Discuss various possibilities, including:
   - Residential
   - City visiting
   - Nature tourism
   - Family seaside holidays
   - Luxury indulgence for royalty and the super-rich
   - Place of employment
   - Meeting place
2. Ask students to choose examples of a hotel they would want to stay in. Arrange the students in small groups with others who make the same choice.
3. What would their hotel look like from the outside? Grand and castle-like? Bright and colourful and modern? Dark and elegant and mysterious? Where would it be and how would it fit into the surrounding area – alone in a forest or close to other buildings?
4. Have students make a list of all the things they would like to have in the hotel of their choosing: e.g., candy machine in every room, hot pink carpets, resident kittens, lobby full of video games, swimming pools, horse stables...
5. Have students use pencil crayons to make a sketch of an important element in “their hotel” to promote the idea to the rest of the class.
6. Have students present ideas to the class, describing their sketches.

Conclusion:
- Which hotels would students like to visit
- Are any of these hotels practical, or should they all stay in the realm of the imagination?
PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY: Hotel by Design

Objective:
Students look at some of the items that have been designed specifically for hotels and design an item of their own.

Background:
- Design has become an important part of the idea of the hotel. Everything is designed with purpose, to create the concept that the hotel is trying to promote. Sometimes the design is purely for the comfort and look inside the hotel.
- The Michelberger Hotel in Berlin has its own in-house graphic design team, making it clear that graphic design is an integral element of the hotel’s overall concept. Wallpaper, cosmetics labels, water bottles, T-shirts, business cards, event posters, rubber stamps, the hotel’s website and even a matchbox containing a miniature hotel room are all part of the clearly articulated design; many items are available for purchase in the hotel store.

Materials:
- photocopies of Designed Objects (next page)
- images of different types of hotels (see images on previous page)

Process:
1. Hand out photocopies of Designed Objects (next page)
2. Ask students what makes these objects particular or different or easily identifiable.
3. Why does the item represent that particular hotel? What makes it memorable? What connects it to one particular hotel? How do these objects reflect an idea that the hotel might be creating? In what way?
4. Divide students into small groups. Give each group a picture of a type of hotel (see previous page for some examples). One group has a very fancy hotel, another a camper hotel, another a motel. Have each group think of and design an object to represent that particular hotel.
5. If practical, create the item. For instance, if students are designing a pencil, they could paint it, scratch into it, write on it. If not practical – e.g., perhaps their idea is a chair – they can plan it, draw it and write detailed notes describing the size, colours, materials, etc.
6. Have each group share their item with the class, without telling the class what type of hotel it was designed for. Based on the design, ask the class to guess the type of hotel. What makes them think that?

Conclusion:
- Did the items represent the hotels accurately? How?
- Would students want these items to take home with them? Why or why not?
- Are the items practical? Could they actually be used/given out/sold by the hotels? Why or why not?
Designed Objects

Richard Hutten, Love Hotel, Tokyo, 2010

Andrée Putman, black and white tiles and mirror, Morgans Hotel, New York

Philipe Starck and Eugeni Quitllet, Lou Read Chair, 2011, Royal Monceau Hotel, Paris

Arne Jacobsen Cutlery, 1957, SAS Royal Hotel, Copenhagen. Georg Jensen Designer

Black/gold Tee, Michelberger Hotel, Berlin

Converse x Ace CT Bosey, 2010, Ace Hotel, Seattle, Portland and New York
Objective:
Students look at their neighbourhood, consider what type of hotel would be a good fit and design a poster for an event that will take place in it.

Background:
Hotels can fill many roles depending on the location and needs of the area. A hotel might:
- function as a cultural incubator where artists, musicians and writers gather, create and perform,
- serve as a meeting point for rock climbers, beachcombers or surfers,
- be purpose-built (e.g., as a ski-resort),
- be built in a particular neighbourhood as a gathering place for locals in the bar, café or restaurant.

Materials:
- pencils and paper
- large sheets of paper or card, and paints or markers
- copies of Hotel Events and Social Spaces (next page)

Process:
1. Discuss the idea that hotels are built in carefully chosen locations for carefully considered reasons.
2. Ask students: If you had to put a hotel in your neighbourhood, where would it be? Near the school or library? At the edge of a lake or by the beach? Next to the main shops? Next door to your house? Why?
3. What is particular in your neighbourhood that could take place in the hotel? Would people appreciate a place for musicians to jam? Neighbourhood cook-ins? Space for cultural group activities? A reading room? A video games arcade? An outdoor skating rink?
4. Hand out copies of the images on the following page. Discuss the types of activities or events pictured and the types of spaces for meeting inside hotels. Would these spaces be appropriate for the events students have discussed, or would they need different kinds of spaces? If so, what would the spaces look like?
5. Have students choose an activity important to their concept of hotel and neighbourhood and create a poster to advertise an event that will take place.
6. Have students sketch out their design and then use large sheets of paper or card, and paints or markers, to create their poster.
7. Display and discuss.

Conclusion:
- Which events would students like to attend?
- Could these really happen or are they impractical? How or why?
- Could any of the events take place in a different venue? Where? How?
Hotel Events

Mission Inn Festival of Lights, Riverside
Poster for the Michelberger Mystery Music Festival
Carnival (The Ambassador Hotel), 2005

Hotel Social Spaces

Waldorf Astoria Cafe, New York, 1935
Ace Hotel, New York, 2010
Glacier Point Ski Hut, Yosemite National Park, 2012
Michelberger Hotel, Berlin
PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY: Who Says So?

Objective:
Students discuss and debate various hotel-related rules and issues.

Background:
All hotels have sets of rules that might seem arbitrary or unnecessarily restrictive. Students are encouraged to think through some of these ideas and try to come to some conclusions as to which rules make sense and which ones don’t.

Materials:
• copies of the images below
• pencils and paper

Process:
1. Ask students to think of some school rules. Why do we have them? What would happen if there weren’t any rules?
2. Show students the images below. What kind of rules would the hotels have in place for guests? Would different sets of rules be appropriate for each of these structures? How? What?
3. Have students work in pairs to come up with five rules for each hotel. Discuss.
4. Divide the class into small groups and give each group one of the Topics for Debate (next pages). Ask half of each group to formulate arguments in favour of the topic, and half against. After group discussion, have each student prepare a short talk on their subject. Younger students can prepare three points, older students a two minute talk.
5. Have students debate their topic in front of the class.

Conclusion:
Ask students which rules make sense and which ones don’t. Why or why not?
Topics for Debate
(Primary students)

Pets should always be allowed in hotel rooms.

Children under 16 should not be allowed in hotels.

If you break something in a hotel – whether a glass or a TV – you should have to pay for a new one.

You should only be allowed to eat food in the hotel room that you order from the hotel restaurant.

You shouldn’t be allowed to have friends visit you in your hotel room.

If someone working in the hotel is rude to you, you shouldn’t have to pay for your room.

If you have a bad meal at the hotel restaurant they should give you a free room for a night.
Topics for Debate
(secondary students)

In Canada, you have to be nineteen years of age to rent a hotel room. You should be allowed to rent a room at age sixteen.

Most hotels limit the number of guests in each room to four. There shouldn’t be a limit to the number of guests sleeping in your room.

If you are under the legal drinking age, you should be allowed to be in the bar with family or friends but not be allowed to order alcohol.

If there are breakages in your hotel room, you shouldn’t have to pay for them – you pay a lot for the room anyway.

Hotels should provide free food and drinks to be delivered to your room.
Resources


*Grand Hotel* microsite:
Features a research blog with contributions by a diverse range of writers.
http://projects.vanartgallery.bc.ca/publications/Hotel/home/
Grand Hotel: Redesigning Modern Life

Presenting Sponsor
THE KEG®
STEAKHOUSE & BAR

Supporting Sponsor

Generous support provided by

Mark McCain and Caro MacDonald/Eye and I

Vancouver Art Gallery School Programs Supporters:
Financial Partner

RBC Foundation®

Corporate and Foundation Partners

Moffat Family Fund
diamond FOUNDATION

With additional support from

Jake and Judy Kerr
Andrea Thomas-Hill and Brian Hill