

HOTELS by DESIGN

*A guide
to the most
beautifully
designed
hotels in the
world*

HOUSE
& GARDEN

ALPINE INNOVATION

A raft of hip, new or refurbished hotels in the Alps is shaking up the area's conservative look with modern interiors aimed at a more design-conscious traveller. **Kate Quill** surveys the scene

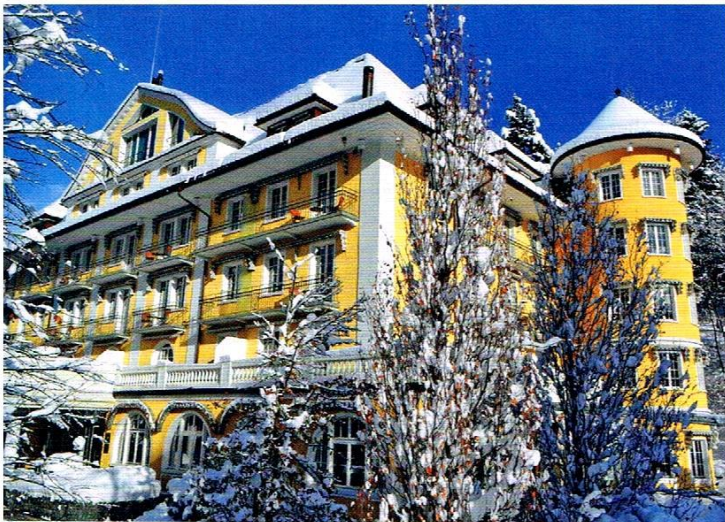
Something exciting is happening in the Alps, and it doesn't involve snowboards. A wave of luxury resort hotels is quietly reinventing Alpine interior design, which, for too long, has erred on the stuffy side.

Le Grand Bellevue in Gstaad is a case in point. This 57-room hotel, built in 1912, has had an extensive refurbishment under its new owner, Daniel Koetser. The typical Gstaad style – bloated, conservative and ostentatious – has been replaced by a young, lean, urban look.

Daniel and his wife, Davia, an interior designer, have retained the building's fine original features, such as its parquet floors and vaulted ceilings, but brought the interiors into the twenty-first century with a mischievous touch. Pistachio-green walls rub shoulders with rose pinks, mauves, and whimsically patterned wallpapers from House of Hackney. There is the odd signature splash of Hermès orange on the cornicing, or covering an occasional chair. In the sitting room, chairs hang from the ceiling in what appear to be giant birdcages, while oversize Anglepoise lights act as standard lamps. Above the art-nouveau staircase, a Murano-glass chandelier hangs at varied lengths, creating an impression of falling snowflakes.

The Koetsers, who are Swiss, wanted to create a different kind of experience in the area, aimed at a well-travelled, younger generation who don't want to stay in the same kind of hotels their parents would choose. 'We love Gstaad for its traditions and age-old institutions, but feel there's room for innovation and a dash of sassiness,' says Daniel.

Tied into that is an awareness that more people are catching on to >



ABOVE, Le Grand Bellevue in Gstaad has been given a young, urban look, with bold colour combinations, glamorous Murano-glass chandeliers, House of Hackney wallpaper and oversize Anglepoise lamps. BELOW The newly opened W Verbier is self-consciously modern in style, with the brand's signature slick look characterising the bar and restaurant, and Alpine wood lifted by flashes of scarlet in the bedrooms

