Neal Prince is an American architect and interior designer who played an essential role in creating a new type of luxury hotel responsive to a glamorous age of international air travel ushered in by the birth of the jet plane. From the 1960s to the 1980s, Mr. Prince designed the interiors of more than 135 Inter-Continental hotels—one of the most revered brands of luxury hotels, with hundreds of locations in more than 60 countries worldwide.

Inspired by the destinations where the planes landed, Prince and his team criss-crossed the globe in their attempts to bring the best of local craftsmanship, materials, and design into each signature project. *Interior Design* magazine published an article in 1961 entitled "Around the World with IHC" stating, "Hannover, Beirut, Amman, Karachi, New Dehli, Bangkok, Hong Kong, Auckland, Pago Pago, Mexico City. It may sound like the exotic locales of a James Bond movie, but in reality it is the itinerary of Neal Prince, for a period of six weeks last June and July."

Mr. Prince and his staff worked with local artisans; graphic, product, lighting, and textile designers; as well as architects to create unique environments that were destinations in themselves. Mr. Prince explains, "Each hotel's native designs became our trademark and branding..." His influence and understanding of branding techniques was visible in hotel murals and matchbooks, sofas and stir sticks, banquet rooms and bedspreads, all of which were informed by the spirit of a particular locale.

Mr. Prince's thinking about design and his strong, consistent vision can be seen in the seven hotel interiors featured here: the Phoenicia Inter-Continental in Beirut, Lebanon (1961); Frankfurt Intercontinental, Germany (1963); Intercontinental Genève, Switzerland (1964); Siam Inter-Continental in Thailand (1966); Tahara'a Inter-Continental, Tahiti (1968); Inter-Continental Barclay in New York City (1978); and Willard Inter-Continental in Washington, D.C. (1986). For Mr. Prince, the best part of his nearly half a century career in design was "being able to absorb the world."

Curator: Sarah Falls, Director of the Library, New York School of Interior Design
Exhibition Design: Perry Hu
Interpretive Texts: Denise Rompilla
Special thanks to Arie de Zanger and Carol M. Highsmith for providing photographs for the exhibition
This exhibition is sponsored in part by InterContinental Hotels & Resorts and Farrow & Ball.

InterContinental Hotels & Resorts

Farrow & Ball
Craftsmen in Paint and Paper

Designing the Luxury Hotel

Neal Prince

and the

Inter-Continental Hotel Brand

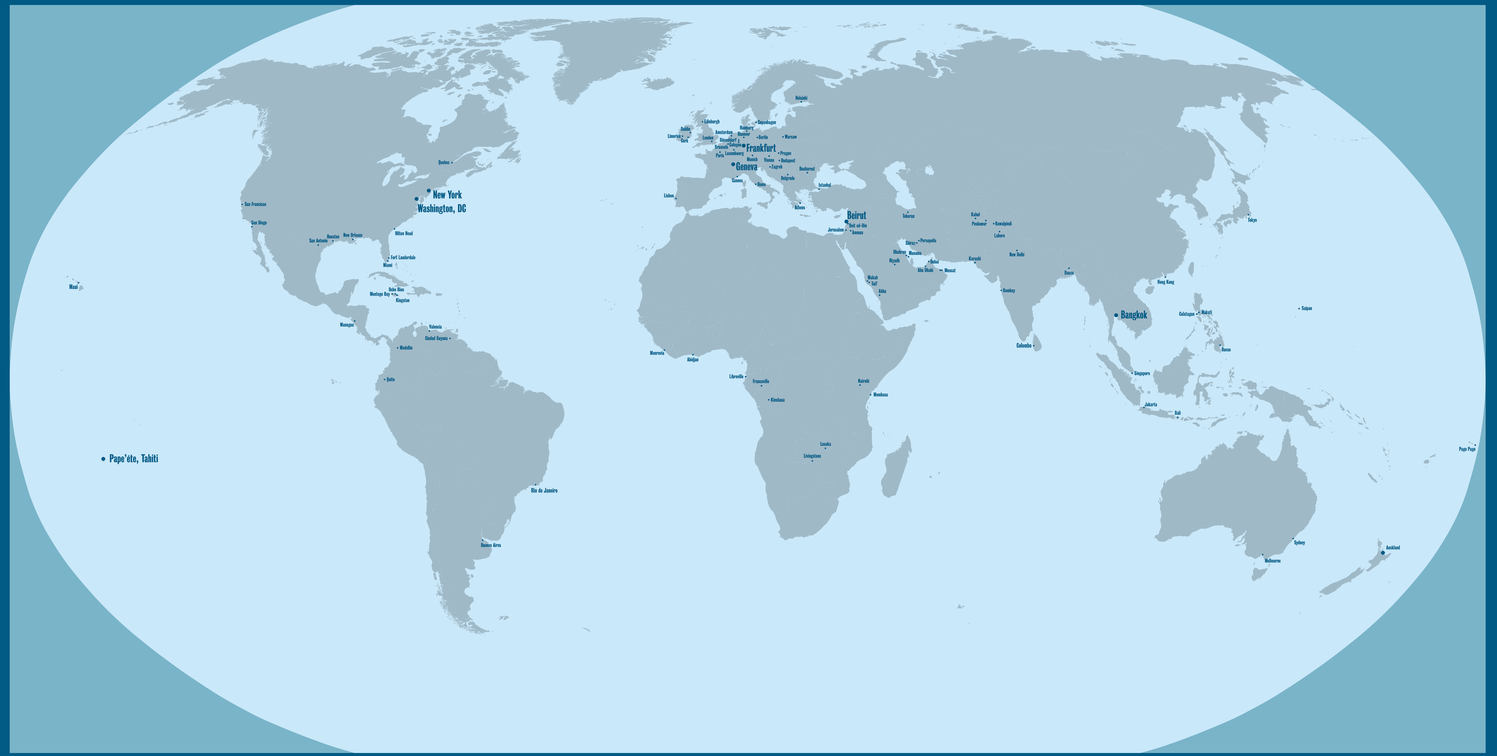
Inter-Continental Hotels and Resorts

The Inter-Continental Hotels & Resorts—the first international hotel brand—was founded in 1946 by Juan T. Trippe, chairman and founder of Pan American World Airways. Trippe had taken a small aviation company operating with flights between Florida and the Caribbean and turned it into a multimillion dollar enterprise, dominating the market in Latin America and offering the first flights across the Pacific to Honolulu. As the airline continued to expand its network, Trippe realized the potential of combining his business with accommodations for a growing number of passengers traveling by air. The first Inter-Continental hotel opened in Belém, Brazil in 1946, and subsequent hotels were quickly established along the Latin American air routes.

With the invention of the jet engine, Pan Am was able to offer its first transatlantic jet flight to Europe in 1958—a flight from New York to Paris. Pan-Am had an ambitious program of hotel building near each new destination, extending the glamour and modern convenience of mid-century air travel to luxurious yet efficient accommodations. Enlisting architects with an advanced modernist vocabulary to build their hotels, Pan-Am created a model where luxury translated into elegant forms and a sophisticated use of building materials. The placement of the hotels, often within sightlines of notable landmarks or perched to take in sweeping vistas, heightened the excitement and drama of modern travel.

But perhaps the most striking feature of the Inter-Continental Hotels was the uniqueness of its interiors. Picking up on the colors and textures of their surroundings, echoing indigenous forms and patterns in their decorative elements, sourcing local materials and local craftsman, the interior spaces catered to more than the perfunctory needs of the traveler. The environments created by Neil Prince and his associates were poetic: about the journey of the imagination that accompanies any voyage, tapping into the freedom and pleasures of traveling, its specificity of place, and the thrill of first encounters.

Phoenicia Inter-Continental, Beirut, Lebanon, 1961
Ducor Inter-Continental, Monrovia, Liberia, 1962
Hotel Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia, 1962
Southern Cross Inter-Continental, Melbourne, Australia, 1962
Dublin Inter-Continental, Dublin, Ireland, 1963
Cork Inter-Continental, Cork, Ireland, 1963
Limerick Inter-Continental, Limerick, Ireland, 1963
Frankfurt Inter-Continental, Frankfurt, Germany, 1963
Ivoire Inter-Continental, Abidjan, Ivory Coast, 1963
Singapura Inter-Continental, Singapore, 1963
Mandarin, Hong Kong, 1963
Inter-Continental Jordan, Amman, Jordan, 1964
Inter-Continental Wien, Vienna, Austria, 1964
Inter-Continental Genève, Geneva, Switzerland, 1964
Inter-Continental Jerusalem, Jerusalem, 1964
Karachi Inter-Continental, Karachi, Pakistan, 1964
Esplanade Inter-Continental, Zagreb, Yugoslavia, 1964
Inter-Continental Hannover, Hannover, Germany, 1965
Oberoi Inter-Continental, New Delhi, India, 1965
Pago Pago Inter-Continental, Pago Pago, American Samoa, 1965
Siam Inter-Continental, Bangkok, Thailand, 1966
Inter-Continental Dacca, Dacca, Bangladesh, 1966
Bali Beach, Sanur, Bali, Indonesia, 1965
Continental, Accra, Ghana, 1967
Ambassador Inter-Continental, Accra, Ghana, 1967
Inter-Continental Quito, Quito, Ecuador, 1967
Inter-Continental Lahore, Lahore, Pakistan, 1967
Inter-Continental Rawalpindi, Rawalpindi, Pakistan, 1967
Inter-Continental Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand, 1968
Inter-Continental Lusaka, Lusaka, Zambia, 1968
Musi-o-Tunya Inter-Continental, Livingstone, Zambia, 1968
Tahara'a Inter-Continental, Pape'ete, Tahiti, French Polynesia, 1968
Inter-Continental Düsseldorf, Düsseldorf, Germany, 1969
Inter-Continental Manila, Makati, Philippines, 1969
Inter-Continental Paris, Paris, France, 1969
Bristol Kempinski, Berlin, Germany, 1969
Inter-Continental Managua, Managua, Nicaragua, 1969
Inter-Continental Nairobi, Nairobi, Kenya, 1969
Inter-Continental Kabul, Kabul, Afghanistan, 1969
Duna Inter-Continental, Budapest, Hungary, 1969
Inter-Continental Medellín, Medellín, Colombia, 1970
Vier Jahreszeiten Kempinski, Munich, Germany, 1970
Inter-Continental Cali, Cali, Colombia, 1971
Inter-Continental Teheran, Teheran, Iran, 1971
Okura Inter-Continental Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 1971
Inter-Continental Kinshasa, Kinshasa, Zaire, 1971
Cyrus Inter-Continental, Shiraz, Iran, 1971
Darius Inter-Continental, Persepolis, Iran, 1971
Portman Inter-Continental, London, United Kingdom, 1971
Inter-Continental Cologne, Cologne, Germany, 1971
Inter-Continental Valencia, Valencia, Venezuela, 1971
Inter-Continental Guyana, Ciudad Guyana, Venezuela, 1971
Inter-Continental Bucharest, Bucharest, Romania, 1971
Inter-Continental Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland, 1972
Keio Plaza Inter-Continental, Tokyo, Japan, 1972
Inter-Continental Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany, 1972
Taj Mahal Inter-Continental, Bombay, India, 1972
Lee Gardens Forum, Hong Kong, 1972
Okoume Palace Inter-Continental, Libreville, Gabon, 1972
Ceylon Inter-Continental, Colombo, Sri Lanka, 1973
Munich Ponta Forum, Munich, Germany, 1973
Mark Hopkins Inter-Continental, San Francisco, California USA, 1973
Forsana Inter-Continental, Hong Kong, 1974
Inter-Continental Prague, Prague, Czech Republic, 1974
Borobodur Inter-Continental, Jakarta, Indonesia, 1974
Rose Hall Inter-Continental Hotel/Country Club, Montego Bay, Jamaica, 1974
Inter-Continental Rio, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1974
Emir du Liban, Beit-ed-Din, Lebanon, 1974
Inter-Continental Dubai, Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 1975
Inter-Continental Ocho Rios, Ocho Rios, Jamaica, 1975
Inter-Continental London, London, United Kingdom, 1975
Riyadh Inter-Continental, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 1975
Makkah Inter-Continental, Makkah, Saudi Arabia, 1975
Inter-Continental Zagreb, Zagreb, Croatia, 1975
Khyber Inter-Continental, Peshawar, Pakistan, 1975
Victoria Inter-Continental, Warsaw, Poland, 1976
Inter-Continental Maui, Maui, Hawaii USA, 1976
Golf Forum Inter-Continental, Abidjan, Ivory Coast, 1976
Inter-Continental Istanbul, Istanbul, Turkey, 1976
Saipan Beach Inter-Continental Inn, Saipan, Marianas, 1976
Muscat Inter-Continental, Muscat, Oman, 1977
Inter-Continental Kingston, Kingston, Jamaica, 1977
Ritz Carlton, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, 1977
Le Vendôme, Beirut, Lebanon, 1977
Davao Insular Inter-Continental Inn, Davao, Philippines, 1977
Punta Bakarto Inter-Continental, Cebutapes, Philippines, 1977
Massarah Inter-Continental, Taif, Saudi Arabia, 1977
Montfleury Inter-Continental, Cannes, France, 1977
Inter-Continental New York, New York, New York, USA, 1978
Four Ambassadors Inter-Continental, Miami, Florida, USA, 1978
Inter-Continental Berlin, Berlin, Germany, 1978
Ritz Inter-Continental Lisbon, Lisbon, Portugal, 1979
Inter-Continental Beograd, Belgrade, Serbia, 1979
Regency Inter-Continental Bahrain, Manama, Bahrain, 1980
Abu Dhabi Inter-Continental, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, 1980
Bonaventure Inter-Continental Hotel & Spa, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, USA, 1981
1981Plaza Inter-Continental, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1981
St. Anthony Inter-Continental, San Antonio, Texas, USA, 1981
Al Ain Inter-Continental, Al Ain, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, 1981
Pavilion Inter-Continental Singapore, Singapore, 1982
Athenaeum Inter-Continental Athens, Athens, Greece, 1982
Britannia Inter-Continental London, London, United Kingdom, 1982
May Fair Inter-Continental, London, United Kingdom, 1982
American, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 1982
Brussels Europa, Brussels, Belgium, 1982
Le Grand Hotel Inter-Continental, Paris, France, 1982
Prince des Galles, Paris, France, 1982
Maurice Inter-Continental, Paris, France, 1982
Lotti, Paris, France, 1982
Paris Penta, Paris, France, 1982
Carlton Inter-Continental, Cannes, France, 1982
George Forum/Inter-Continental, Edinburgh, Scotland, United Kingdom, 1982
De La Ville Forum Inter-Continental, Rome, Italy, 1982
D'Angleterre Inter-Continental, Copenhagen, Denmark, 1982
Dhahran Aljoushi, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, 1982
Victoria, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 1982
Mount Royal, London, United Kingdom, 1982
Piccadilly, London, United Kingdom, 1982
Inter-Continental New Orleans, New Orleans, Louisiana, USA, 1983
Inter-Continental Houston, Houston, Texas, USA, 1984
Inter-Continental San Diego, San Diego, California, USA, 1984
Nairobi Safari Club, Nairobi, Kenya, 1984
Inter-Continental Luxembourg, Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, 1985
Abha Inter-Continental, Abha, Saudi Arabia, 1985
Inter-Continental Hilton Head, Hilton Head, South Carolina, USA, 1985
Inter-Continental Sydney, Sydney, Australia, 1985
Loconi Palace Inter-Continental, Franceville, Gabon, 1985
Inter-Continental Mombasa, Mombasa, Kenya, 1985
Al Bustan Palace Inter-Continental, Muscat, Oman, 1985
Inter-Continental Miami, Miami, Florida, USA, 1986
Willard Inter-Continental, Washington, D.C. USA, 1986



Neal Prince

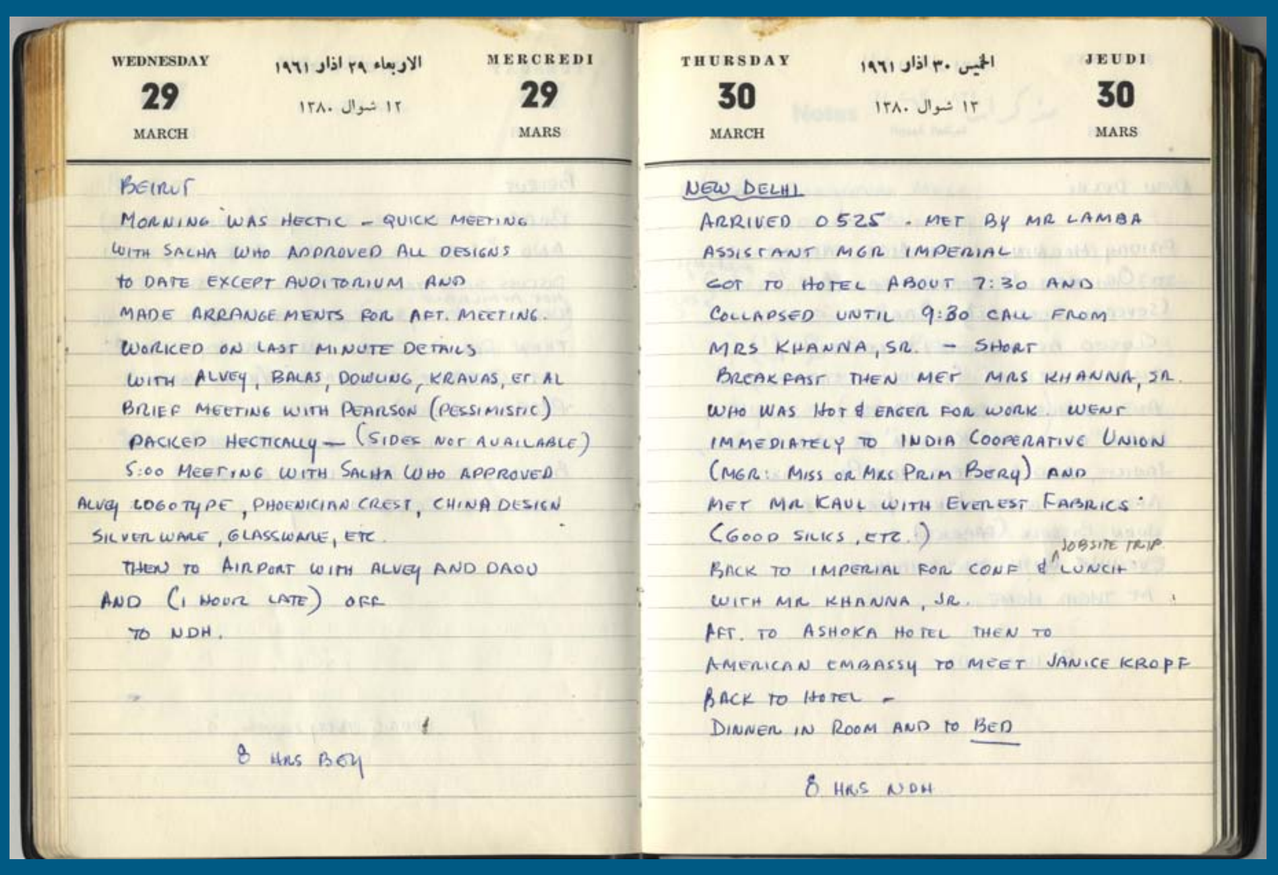
Neil Adair Prince (b. 1921) was born in Corsicana, Texas to a family involved in the oil and gas industry. Graduating from Rice University in 1943 with a degree in architectural engineering, he was drafted in World War II, where he served in the 39th Army Corps of Engineers until 1946. After working both in architecture and theatre—as a playwright, director, and set designer—he landed in New York, where he worked for architectural firms specializing in healthcare and hospitality design.

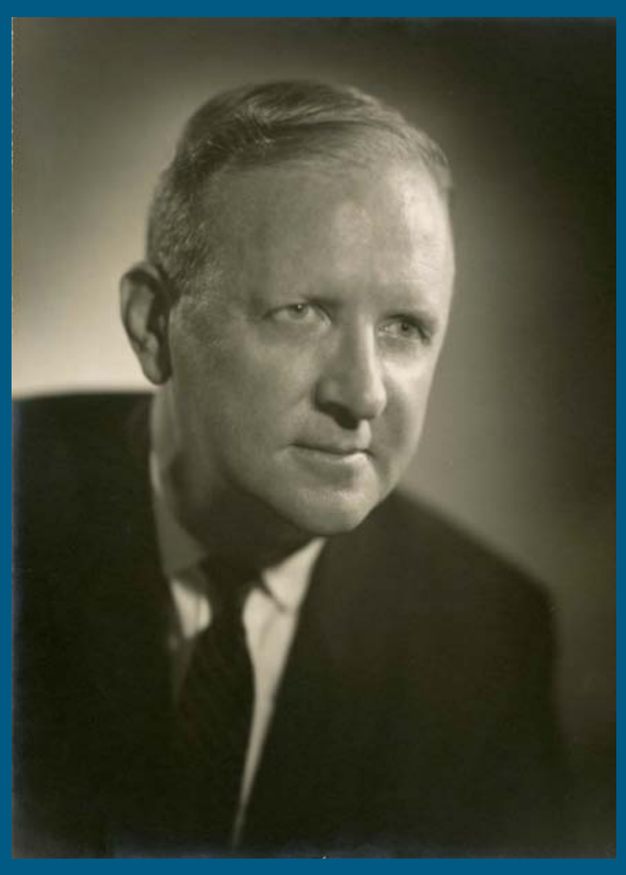
In 1958, Prince made a fateful career move to the architectural firm of William M. Ballard. Ballard had recently won a contract to design the interior of Pan-Am's Phoenicia Inter-Continental Hotel in Beirut, and assigned Prince to accompany the hotel's renowned architect, Edward Durrell Stone, to Beirut to plan out the interiors. At the Phoenicia, Prince would pioneer what would become his signature approach to interior design: marrying local culture, materials and the work of artisans to create interiors evocative of the color, climate, and vernacular traditions of each foreign destination, housed within the sleek modern sensibility of the Inter-Continental hotel's architectural design. Prince would begin the design process with a "walk through" that included walking the streets of the given city to get a feel for the culture and local businesses.

In 1961, Prince was hired to work full time as the Director of Interior and Graphic Design in Pan-Am's Hotel Development Services Division. Over the course of nearly 25 years, Prince would go on to lead the team responsible for the interior design and branding of more than 135 Inter-Continental hotels. He has received numerous awards, including *Institutions Magazine* award for outstanding Interior Designs for his work on Intercontinental Genève, in Switzerland and the Siam Inter-Continental in Bangkok, Thailand.

Winnie Winkle, ca. 1965: Mr. Prince is featured as a character in this cartoon during the construction of the Pago-Pago Inter-Continental in American Samoa.

Neal Prince passport pages, ca. mid-1960s





Journal, March 29 and 30th, 1961: from Beirut to New Delhi
It was not uncommon for Prince to spend as little as a day in a location before flying off to the next one, with half a dozen simultaneous projects or more concurrently in progress. In his words: "I lived on a plane for 25 years."

Inter-Continental Wien

Ducor Inter-Continental, Monrovia

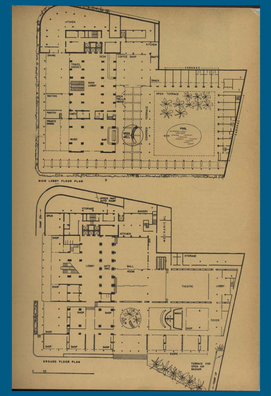
Inter-Continental Wien

Hotel Indonesia

Oberoi Inter-Continental, New Delhi

Inter-Continental Medellin

Phoenicia Inter-Continental, Beirut, Lebanon

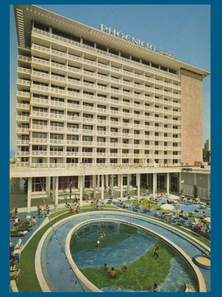


Inter-Continental negotiated a deal to build the Phoenicia, and brought in leading American architect Eduard Durell Stone to complete the design with Joseph Salerno, an architect who had worked on Inter-Continental's Curacao hotel in Brazil. The interiors were contracted to the New York architectural firm of William M. Ballard, where Neal Prince had worked since 1957. Because of his experience working on hotels, and a modest remodel project he did for an Inter-Continental hotel in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Prince was sent by Ballard to Beirut to work on the interiors and to represent Stone in matters of interior layouts and finishes.

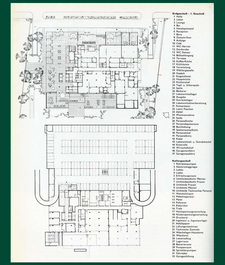
The Phoenicia Inter-Continental Hotel, completed in 1961, was the first InterContinental venture outside of Latin America. Its stunning Mediterranean setting, and the cosmopolitan nature of the city, inspired Stone to create a sophisticated design that combined elements of high modernism with Mughal and Muslim architecture. Stone designed two separate towers faced with stone, set within a larger rectangular base with a two story wrap-around colonnade set right on the water. Projecting balconies featured delicate pattern work, a common decorative motif of Beirut. The dazzling light of the region played across the facade's patterned and recessed surfaces, with the white of the buildings contrasted with the deep blue of the sea.

Prince was similarly inspired by the natural beauty and rich cultural heritage of this cosmopolitan city. His stand-out designs focused on the hotel's bar and the pool area. Sous le Mer, the hotel's bar, was decorated in shimmering blue and turquoise square tiles, and provided underwater glimpses of the hotel's swimming pool (and diving patrons) through rectangular glass panels edged in brass frames. When Prince thought the area devoted to the pool was too small for a luxury resort, he tackled the problem through design: he created undulating waves of blue, green, and white tile that flowed across the terrace into the swimming pool, that, when viewed from above, made the oval pool seem to ripple out into the courtyard and appear larger than it actually was.

Beirut was the first project where Prince applied his philosophy of design tied to location. Paisley fabrics, inspired by the arabesques of Islamic decorative arts and Arabic script, were used as wall coverings. For the hotel's coffee shop, which featured a two-story wall of glass windows that opened onto the Mediterranean, he used sheer panels overlaid with gold paisley patterns that echoed the lacey grillwork of the building's architecture. Like Islamic screens, the panels both mediated direct sunlight and cast intricate shadow patterns on the interior. In the case of the furnishings, Prince went directly to the *souk*, the city's bazaar, to have local fabricators make samples of chairs as possible models for the hotel. When he learned that the fabricators would be unable to produce chairs on the scale required for a commercial enterprise, Prince traveled with a small local company to Germany to purchase the equipment needed for mass production. This company would become Daou et Fils, a major furniture manufacturer in the Middle East.



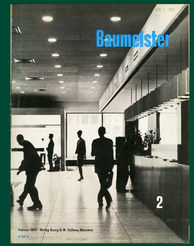
Frankfurt Intercontinental, Germany

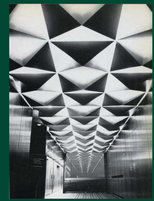


The Frankfurt Intercontinental Hotel was built in 1963 on the site of the former park facing the promenade known as the Nizza, a four-acre Mediterranean garden that runs alongside the river Main. At the time of the hotel's construction, Frankfurt was becoming a major international city for banking, but with few options in the way of accommodations for business travelers. For its first hotel on the Continent, Pan-Am opted for a bold statement that would reflect the company's new international outlook. A slim rectangular block with ends that terminate in a v-shape like the prow of a ship, the Frankfurt Intercontinental floated above the water like a modern cruise liner. Light and transparency were afforded by continuous horizontal bands of windows that wrapped around the building's exterior. Airy in feeling, its appearance belies the fact that at its opening, the Intercontinental became and Europe's largest hotel. It was built by the German partnership of Apel and Beckert, the same architects who had been commissioned to design the new Oper Frankfurt, an arts building complex.

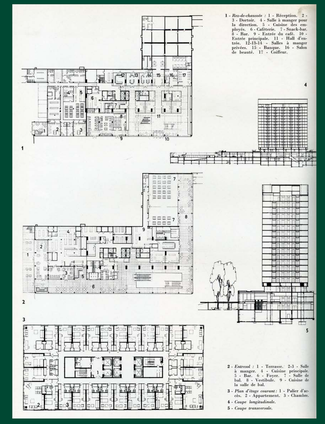
The interior design echoed the sophistication of the building's facade. A wide glass-enclosed lobby, running the full-length of the building, provided clear views of the bustling arrivals and departures of the hotel's international clientele. Structural rectangular piers were playfully echoed by decorative vertical stacks of alternating wood and glass hexagons, while other functional elements, like the shops, were encased in rectangular wood boxes with bulls-eye display windows. A circular fire-pit, unexpectedly tucked into a quieter area of the lobby and ringed by Saarinen black leather lounge chairs, encouraged polyglot conversation. The warm wall coverings and flooring of the hotel's restaurants and lounges contrasted with the walls of windows, as well as a 21st story open terrace, that provided stunning views of the river Main and the Frankfurt Cathedral. The public spaces featured the latest in modern furnishings, such as Saarinen tables and Knoll chairs, spherical hanging lights by such companies as Lightolier, sculptured grids fabricated from Oregon pine which served as room dividers, and hanging ceilings of plywood pyramids and gilt rings. Photographic murals of city landmarks, blown-up, cropped, and rendered in a punchy, black-and-white graphic style, lined the corridors leading to the guest rooms, while more than 1,000 pieces of original artwork by young German artists, all selected by Prince and his team, decorated the actual suites.

Sleek modern touches suited to the hotel's mostly business clientele were offset by theatrical nods to Frankfurt's cultural landscape. Prince employed Hein Heckroth, a German set and costume designer for the German national ballet who had moved to England in the 1940s to work on such dance-related films as *The Red Shoes*, to create handmade tapestries depicting characters from that movie, as well as costume and scenic watercolors for a production of *Le Nozze de Figaro*, and a set of costumed doll figures from *Don Carlo*. The more informal coffee shop also featured wall-to-wall images enlarged from German woodcuts of peasants dancing. Heckroth's designs for *The Red Shoes* would eventually enter the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York.





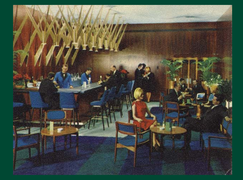
Intercontinental Genève, Switzerland



The Intercontinental Genève, opened in 1964, and followed the mid-century architectural model of a glass-sheathed horizontal podium supporting a slim tower. The façade had a classical feel that was enlivened by the checkerboard pattern formed by the opened or closed position of the windows' curtains. Ariana Park and the Palace of Nations, the former headquarters of the League of Nations that became the home to the United Nations Geneva in 1946, was within walking distance. The hotel became a favorite destination for visiting diplomats and their retinue.

For the Intercontinental, Genève, under the leadership of Prince, the Department of Interior and Graphic Design would create some of his most dramatic interiors. Conscious of the international dignitaries who would make up the clientele, they designed luxurious and stately conference rooms complete with state-of-the-art interpretation equipment for multilingual off-site meetings of international organizations. The largest of these conference rooms was enveloped in warm wood paneling on the floors and ceiling, accented with rectangular and square patterns of brass trim, and top and side-lit by geometric fixtures spaced at regular intervals, creating an elegant and streamlined interior linked to the Art Deco Palace of Nations.

In the dining spaces, Prince tried to use design elements that reflected Geneva's diverse, multinational population and its history as a major center for international diplomacy. For Les Continents Restaurant, where diners could feast on their choice of Tahitian boula boula, Chilean crevettes á la diable, and a wealth of other creations, exotic and familiar, Prince created room dividers with murals featuring each of the five continents– five instead of seven, because as a famous Pan-Am ad from the 1960s went, polar caps were the only places it didn't fly. In the Carnival Bar and Lounge, he came up with the whimsical motif of the merry-go-round because it reminded him of the way that Geneva "picked up different cultures, different people…" This theme continued in the Café Le Voltaire where the combination of burgundies, roses, and soft whites in the canopy's draping, the chairs' upholstery, the tablecloths, and curtains, combined with the diffused light emanating from the cluster of bulbs under the center of the canopy, transformed the space into the interior of a jewel-box.



Siam Inter-Continental, Bangkok, Thailand

The Siam Inter-Continental, in Bangkok, Thailand, and the Tahara'a Inter-Continental, in Pape'ete, Tahiti, were two hotels built by Pan Am, in 1966 and 1968 respectively, that signaled the rise of the luxury resort hotel in exotic, far-flung locales serviced by Pan Am's global fleet.

Even though tourism was in its infancy in Thailand, the Pan Am round-the-world service stopped in Bangkok every day in both directions, and Inter-Continental recognized an opportunity. The hotel built by architect Joseph Salerno, a pyramidal-shaped building flanked by two wings, was informed by the exoticism of Bangkok's Grand Palace complex. Thailand was known the world over for its fabrics, particularly silks. Its cottage industry of hand-woven silk had been revitalized by the American architect and designer Jim Thompson, who founded the Thai Silk Company in 1948. Thompson's fabrics were featured in *Vogue* and *Time*, and were used to make royal Thai costumes in the classic 1951 musical *The King and I*. Even before coming to Bangkok, Prince had admired

Thompson's designs, and had seen images of Thompson's "House on the Klong," a complex of six traditional Thai-style houses that were purchased from several owners and brought to Bangkok from various parts of Thailand.

While silks were impractical for the heavily trafficked spaces of a hotel, Prince's color palette for the Siam Inter-Continental was inspired by the bright jewel tones and dramatic color combinations that Thompson had invented for Thai silk. Equally important were Prince's "walk-arounds" through Bangkok, where he picked up "the local color and feelings," and the luxuriant setting of the hotel on the site of the Royal Gardens. Prince also looked to the beauty of the temples and their fine craftsmanship to design the richly carved and painted surfaces of the Siam's interior. For the hotel bar, the design team worked with local artisans to produce intricately carved wooden screens that acted as room dividers, with dragon-headed *nagas* (snakes) taken from temple architecture. Wall fabrics were chosen in rich jewel tones threaded with gold. Together with carpets patterned after the ornate exteriors of ceremonial Thai buildings, the sum total of the interiors was evocative of the wealthy and exotic kingdom of Siam.

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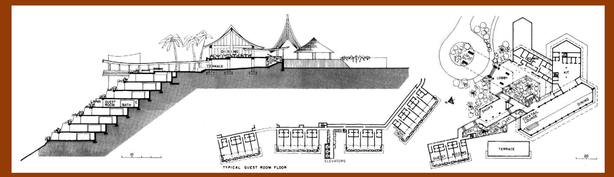
Tahara'a Inter-Continental, Pape'éte, Tahiti, French Polynesia

In December 1968, the Tahara'a Inter-Continental opened in Pape'éte, Tahiti. The architectural firm Wimberly, Whisenand, Allison, and Tong created an "upside down" building where the lobby and restaurants were on the top floor and the guest rooms were on the floors below. The hotel was dramatically perched on a cliff above one of Tahiti's famed black sand beaches, with descending tiers of rooms spread out below the ridge of the hill and balcony trellises draped in bougainvillea. Each room offered its own little slice of paradise in its picture-postcard views of crystalline blue waters and soaring emerald peaks.

When Prince was designing the Tahara'a, he was catering to an American fantasy of the South Pacific, formed by movies like *Blue Hawaii* and the tiki bars of the 1960s. He took his cues from the ocean, working with a palette of turquoise, dark blue, midnight blue, and sea green for the guest rooms and for the accents of the outdoor pool area—everything from the poolside umbrellas and lounge charirs to the towels. In the Captain Cook Restaurant (named after the legendary English explorer who visited Tahiti), bright striped fabrics were hung from floor to ceiling in the double-height bar and lounge, with chandeliers shaped like nautical lanterns and a vintage siren plucked from a ship. In the more casual indoor and outdoor dining spaces, oversized carved tikis, walls of volcanic rock, hanging lamps fashioned from puffer fish, garlands of draped conch shells, driftwood, nautical rigging, and bamboo and wicker seating helped modern castaways settle into the relaxing rhythms of island life. Ironically, these "native" elements, including a 25 foot tiki that stood in front of the hotel's magnificent thatched-roofed building, had to be outsourced to Oceanic Arts in Whittier, California due to a scarcity of craftsmen—the locals had been lured away by the French atomic energy industry.



Willard Inter-Continental, Washington, D.C.

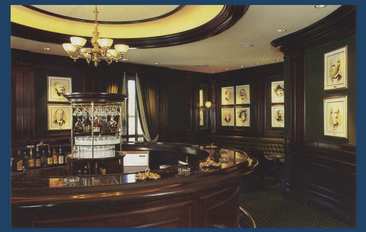
The Willard Inter-Continental has a long and storied history, dating back to 1816 when a row of two-story houses was first built on the corner of 14th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue and transformed into a hotel. In 1901, Joseph E. Willard built a Beaux-Arts "sky-scraper" at that site, soaring 160 feet high. He hired the architect Henry Janeway Hardenbergh, who was already well-known for designing New York's Waldorf- Astoria Hotel. American presidents have stayed and dined at the Willard, and Martin Luther King Jr's famous *I Have a Dream* speech was penned there days before the march on Washington. The hotel's interiors were as grand as their guests, featuring 35 kinds of marble quarried in Europe, red rugs laid upon mosaic floors, scagiola columns, gilt-colored cornices, crystal chandeliers, and other elaborate details that announced the sensual exuberance of the Victorian period.

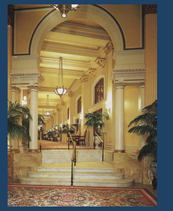
After a period of steep economic and urban decline in 1960s Washington, D.C., the building was in a terrible state of disrepair. The hotel was officially closed in 1968, and was slated for demolition, but in early 1974, the National Trust for Historic Preservation stepped in. On June 12, 1978, ownership of the Willard passed to the U.S. Government through the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation (PADC), which had been formed to clean up the neighborhood.

Shortly thereafter, InterContinental was contracted to manage the hotel, and Prince's team planned an extensive restoration of the grand public spaces and hotel rooms. . For his final project, Prince hired Sarah Tomerlin Lee of Tom Lee, Ltd. to restore the glamor and sumptuousness of the lobby, Peacock Alley, the Crystal and Willard Rooms, the Ladies Lounge, the Robin Bar, and the oval suites including the Presidential. Lee was well

known for her ability to marry historical interiors with modern interpretations of traditional styles for an updated aesthetic.

Prince and his department at Inter-Continental worked in close consultation with Lee to meticulously research the original condition of the hotel, salvaging pieces of original woodwork and plaster to create molds that could be used in the restoration process, and scraping through as much as 16 layers of paint to arrive at the original color of the walls. Ironically, what they found through historical research was that the original palette was too harsh for modern tastes, and had to be softened. Scraps of fabric from the original furnishings were used to fabricate plush Victorian reproductions for rooms and seating areas. Balconies and bulls-eye windows were reconstructed to capitalize on the hotel's arresting views. Tin ceiling tiles that once adorned the lobby with state seals were reproduced by set designers from the Metropolitan Opera. Lee spent three years on the Willard project, not only restoring the historical features, but also modernizing the guest rooms in a French style that complemented the surrounding architecture. The refurbishment brought the hotel back to life and helped InterContinental brand the Willard as an important historical American hotel.





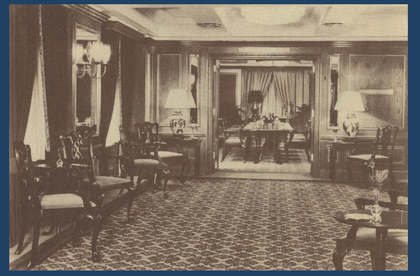
Inter-Continental New York Barclay

By 1978, Inter-Continental had acquired hotels in Europe, South America, the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and the Pacific—everywhere except three locations in North America. Most of the Inter-continental Hotels were new constructions by local architectural firms, but designed from top to bottom by Inter-Continental's Department of Interior and Graphic Design. However, in the 1970s, the Inter-Continental team also worked on a number of important renovations of two legendary hotels : the Continental in Paris, and the Marks Hopkins in San Francisco. At 48th Street east of Park Avenue, The Barclay Hotel, a grand luxury hotel from another era that now found itself lodged between glass and steel skyscrapers, was purchased by Inter-Continental and identified for a third significant restoration and refurbishing.

The Barclay had been built in 1926 by Cross and Cross as hotel rooms and living accommodations for New York's elite. The neo-Federal style building featured Colonial furnishings and interiors. The original designer for the Barclay, W. & J. Sloane, was swept up in a Colonial Revival that reached its peak in the 1920s, selected patriotic motifs, such as the American eagle and stars as design elements for rug and wall coverings and ceiling ornamentation. Rooms and public spaces were decorated with chintz, old prints, screens, Duncan Phyfe and Chippendale furniture, tasteful appointments meant to evoke, according to an early advertisement for the hotel, America's "most gracious age." A Tiffany skylight in the hotel's lobby, sober and refined in keeping with this Colonial Revival's philosophy of restraint, was later joined in the 1940s with what was for some an incongruous addition, a lavish bronze aviary filled with exotic birds. The aviary remained a notable attraction long after the hotel began to decline.

Prince and his design team planned a return to the classical American elegance that had defined the Barclay when it first opened. Original details, like the patriotic elements of the pilasters and cornices in the lobby, were tastefully restored. For the interiors, they designed rooms with wall coverings, carpets, and simple but high-quality furnishings with an emphasis on craftsmanship. The King's Restaurant was redecorated keeping with the Colonial virtues of the original design and renamed the Barclay Restaurant. In guest rooms and public spaces, fine leather sofas, wool carpeting, Oriental screens, and chinoiserie lamps created simple yet homey environments where the color palette was dominated by reds, browns, whites, and blues. In one of the more significant changes dictated by the business-oriented clientele, the Manhattan Club, a private club on the third floor, was divided into a series of board rooms. Designed by Trisha Wilson of Wilson Associates, the rooms were named for established New York families, and graced with inset paintings that evoked historical American time periods.

Although not part of the original 1920s décor, the hotel was reluctant to part with the lobby birdcage because it had evolved into a popular meeting spot. It was replaced by a new, more extravagant, 14-foot bronze and mirrored model designed by team member William Embury. The birdcage, which became home to nine tropical birds, featured prominently in an advertising campaign to make the Barclay Hotel "an island at the heart of the world's most exciting island." Prince and his design envisioned the Barclay as the new, chic place to rendezvous in Manhattan, and successfully marketed the tagline, "Meet me at the Birdcage."



In 1986, Joseph Grusczak (NYSID, Class of 1956) was hired by the general manager of the Barclay to renovate guest rooms and create a new Presidential Suite that would go on to house dignitaries and celebrities from all over the world.

The Design Team

The creation of the first-class luxury hotel was a team effort, and the recognition of the rise and importance of the creative team made Neal Prince a leader in design. In the 1978 publication, *Interiors: Second Book of Hotels* by Henry End, the author devotes an entire chapter to the importance of the design team. He writes: "If the complex hotel of today is to be successful, it will require the teamwork of many disciplines... [the] interior designer's responsibility is [not] restricted to the interiors."

From the time of his appointment in January 1961 as Director of the Department of Interior and Graphic Design, Prince began to assemble a team to build a distinctive brand identity for each new hotel project. Bringing in people like Kenneth Smith, an interior designer from Ballard Designs, and graphic designer Charles Alvey, from Donald Deskey Associates, the creative team not only tackled the usual furnishings and floor coverings, but all elements of the hotels' graphics, from logos to uniforms, china, crystal, stationery, menus and rack folders. Richard (Dick) Simpson, an expert in packaging design, was hired from Deskey by Charles Alvey to work on menus and brochures. Australian interior designer William (Bill) Embury was hired to work on hotels "down under" and would eventually redesign the bird cage at the Barclay. Irene D'Alessio, who was Prince's secretary and the department's all around "girl Friday" was also a student at the New York School of Interior Design at the suggestion of Prince, who also convinced the company to pay her tuition.

James Fox, Director of Technical Services for Inter-Continental, Richard (Dick) Simpson and Neal Prince, as Simpson receives a service award lapel pin, ca. 1968

Prince, Simpson and Alvey, along with other members of the New York office, traveled around the world to the sites of proposed hotels and were encouraged to roam, jotting down associations and making sketches and photographs of local architectural details, obtaining samples of fabrics, and studying local artisanal traditions. Location shaped the aesthetic philosophy of everything from the script of the Inter-Continental Hotel's logo to the silhouette of a poolside lounge, and members of the team had to work harmoniously to convey that vision. The team traveled so extensively, that D'Alessio recalled not meeting Prince for three months after she was hired as his assistant.

Prince hired Arie de Zanger, many of whose photographs grace this exhibition, to document the hotels for brochures and advertising. Additionally, Syd Mead, who would go on to design sets for such motion pictures as *Blade Runner* and *Aliens*, created dozens of hyper-realist renderings of the interiors of Inter-Continental hotels.

Prince was able to recognize when the talents of other designers could achieve the desired effect and help his team complete the enormous tasks involved in both initial design work and renovation projects. The team worked with Joseph Grusczak (NYSID Class of 1956) of Grusczak Associates on a number of hotels throughout Europe and the Middle East. Sara Tomerlin Lee of Tom Lee, Ltd., lovingly restored the Willard Inter-Continental in Washington, D.C., while Trisha Wilson of Wilson Associates converted the third floor of the Inter-Continental Barclay from a private club to a suite of stately meeting rooms. Dale and Pat Keller of Dale Keller and Associates, worked with Prince on a number of projects throughout Asia and Middle East, including hotels in Jakarta, Athens and Karachi.

Designing the Luxury
Neal Prince
and the
Inter-Continental

Neal Prince is an American architect and interior designer who played an essential role in creating a new type of luxury hotel responsive to a glamorous age of international air travel ushered in by the birth of the jet plane. From the 1960s to the 1980s, Mr. Prince designed the interiors of more than 135 Inter-Continental hotels—one of the most revered brands of luxury hotels, with hundreds of locations in more than 60 countries worldwide.

Inspired by the destinations where the planes landed, Prince and his team criss-crossed the globe in their attempts to bring the best of local craftsmanship, materials, and design into each signature project. *Interior Design* magazine published an article in 1961 entitled "Around the World with IHC" stating, "Hannover, Beirut, Amman, Karachi, New Dehli, Bangkok, Hong Kong, Auckland, Pago Pago, Mexico City. It may sound like the exotic locales of a James Bond movie, but in reality it is the itinerary of Neal Prince, for a period of six weeks last June and July."

Mr. Prince and his staff worked with local artisans; graphic, product, lighting, and textile designers; as well as architects to create unique environments that were destinations in themselves. Mr. Prince explains, "Each hotel's native designs became our trademark and branding..." His influence and understanding of branding techniques was visible in hotel murals and matchbooks, sofas and stir sticks, banquet rooms and bedspreads, all of which were informed by the spirit of a particular locale.

Mr. Prince's thinking about design and his strong, consistent vision can be seen in the seven hotel interiors featured here: the Phoenicia Inter-Continental in Beirut, Lebanon (1961); Frankfurt Intercontinental, Germany (1963); Intercontinental Genève, Switzerland (1964); Siam Inter-Continental in Thailand (1966); Tahara'a Inter-Continental, Tahiti (1968); Inter-Continental Barclay in New York City (1978); and Willard Inter-Continental in Washington, D.C. (1986). For Mr. Prince, the best part of his nearly half a century career in design was "being able to absorb the world."

Curator: Sarah Falls, Director of the Library, New York School of Interior Design
Exhibition Design: Perry Ho
Interpretive Texts: Denise Rompilla
Special thanks to Arie de Zanger and Carol M. Highsmith for providing photographs for the exhibition
This exhibition is sponsored in part by InterContinental Hotels & Resorts and Farrow & Ball.

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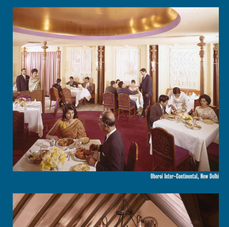
Inter-Continental Wien



Oberoi Inter-Continental, New Delhi

Hotel Indonesia

Inter-Continental Medellin

Winnie Winkle, ca. 1965: Mr. Prince is featured as a character in this cartoon during the construction of the Papa-Papa Inter-Continental in American Samoa.

Neal Prince passport pages, ca. mid-1960s

Journal, March 23 and 28th, 1961: from Beirut to New Delhi
It was not uncommon for Prince to spend as little as a day in a location before flying off to the next one, with half a dozen simultaneous projects or more concurrently in progress. In his words: "I lived on a plane for 25 years."

Neal Prince

Neil Adair Prince (b. 1921) was born in Corsicana, Texas to a family involved in the oil and gas industry. Graduating from Rice University in 1943 with a degree in architectural engineering, he was drafted in World War II, where he served in the 39th Army Corps of Engineers until 1946. After working both in architecture and theatre – as a playwright, director, and set designer — he landed in New York, where he worked for architectural firms specializing in healthcare and hospitality design.

In 1958, Prince made a fateful career move to the architectural firm of William Ballard. Ballard had recently won a contract to design the interior of Pan-Am's Phoenecia Inter-Continental Hotel in Beirut, and assigned Prince to accompany the hotel's renowned architect, Edward Durrell Stone, to Beirut to plan out the interiors. At the Phoenicia, Prince would pioneer what would become his signature approach to interior design: marrying local culture, materials and the work of artisans to create interiors evocative of the color, climate, and vernacular traditions of each foreign destination, housed within the sleek modern sensibility of the Inter-Continental hotel's architectural design. Prince would begin the design process with a "walk through" that included walking the streets of the given city got a feel for the culture and local businesses.

In 1961, Prince was hired to work full time as the Director of Interior and Graphic Design in Pan-Am's Hotel Development Services Division. Over the course of nearly 25 years, Prince would go on to lead the team responsible for the interior design and branding of more than 135 Inter-Continental hotels, one of the most revered brands of luxury hotels, with hundreds of locations in over 60 countries worldwide. He has received numerous awards, including Institutions Magazine award for outstanding Interior Designs of the Hotel Inter-Continental Geneve, Geneva, Switzerland and the Hotel Siam Inter-Continental Bangkok, Thailand.

Inter-Continental Wien

Decor Inter-Continental, Maerwia

Inter-Continental Wien

Oberoi Inter-Continental, New Delhi

Hotel Indonesia

Inter-Continental Medellin

Winnie Winkle, ca. 1955: Mr. Prince was featured as a character in this cartoon during the construction of the Pago-Pago Inter-Continental in American Samoa.

Real Prince passport pages, ca. mid-1960s

Journal, March 29 and 30th, 1961: from Beirut to New Delhi
"It was not uncommon for Prince to spend as little as a day in a location before flying off to the next one, with half a dozen simultaneous projects or more concurrently in progress, in his words: "I lived on a plane for 25 years."

Siam Inter-Continental, Bangkok, Thailand

The Siam Inter-Continental, in Bangkok, Thailand, and the Tahara'a Inter-Continental, in Pape'éte, Tahiti, were two hotels built by Pan Am, in 1966 and 1968 respectively, that signaled the rise of the luxury resort hotel in exotic, far-flung locales serviced by Pan Am's global fleet.

Even though tourism was in its infancy in Thailand, the Pan Am round-the-world service stopped in Bangkok every day in both directions, and Inter-Continental recognized an opportunity. The hotel built by architect Joseph Salerno, a pyramidal-shaped building flanked by two wings, was informed by the exoticism of Bangkok's Grand Palace complex. Thailand was known the world over for its fabrics, particularly silks. Its cottage industry of hand-woven silk had been revitalized by the American architect and designer Jim Thompson, who founded the Thai Silk Company in 1948. Thompson's fabrics were featured in Vogue and Time, and were used to make royal Thai costumes in the classic 1951 musical The King and I. Even before coming to Bangkok, Prince had admired Thompson's designs, and had seen images of Thompson's "House on the Klong," a complex of six traditional Thai-style houses that were purchased from several owners and brought to Bangkok from various parts of Thailand.

While silks were impractical for the heavily trafficked spaces of a hotel, Prince's color palette for the Siam Inter-Continental was inspired by the bright jewel tones and dramatic color combinations that Thompson had invented for Thai silk. Equally important were Prince's "walk-arounds" through Bangkok, where he picked up "the local color and feelings," and the luxuriant setting of the hotel on the site of the Royal Gardens. Prince also looked to the beauty of the temples and their fine craftsmanship to design the richly carved and painted surfaces of the Siam's interior. For the hotel bar, the design team worked with local artisans to produce intricately carved wooden screens that acted as room dividers, with dragon-headed nagas (snakes) taken from temple architecture. Wall fabrics were chosen in rich jewel tones threaded with gold. Together with carpets patterned after the ornate exteriors of ceremonial Thai buildings, the sum total of the interiors was evocative of the wealthy and exotic kingdom of Siam.

Tahara'a Inter-Continental, Pape'éte, Tahiti, F

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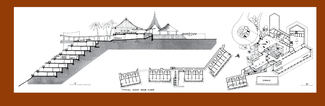
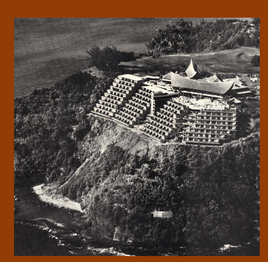




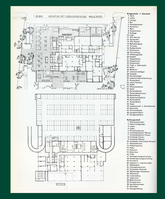
al Genève, Switzerland

ntercontinental Genève, opened in 1964, and followed the mid-century
tectural model of a glass-sheathed horizontal podium supporting a slim
. The façade had a classical feel that was enlivened by the checkerboard
rn formed by the opened or closed position of the windows' curtains.
a Park and the Palace of Nations, the former headquarters of the League of
ns that became the home to the United Nations Geneva in 1946, was within
g distance. The hotel became a favorite destination for visiting diplomats
heir retinue.

or the Intercontinental, Genève, under the leadership of Prince, the
rtment of Interior and Graphic Design would create some of his most
atic interiors. Conscious of the international dignitaries who would
up the clientele, they designed luxurious and stately conference rooms
lete with state-of-the-art interpretation equipment for multilingual off-site
ngs of international organizations. The largest of these conference rooms
nveloped in warm wood panelling on the floors and ceiling, accented with
ngular and square patterns of brass trim, and top and side-lit by geometric
es spaced at regular intervals, creating an elegant and streamlined interior
to the Art Deco Palace of Nations.

n the dining spaces, Prince tried to use design elements that reflected
va's diverse, multinational population and its history as a major center for
national diplomacy. For Les Continents Restaurant, where diners could feast
eir choice of Tahitian boula boula, Chilean crevettes à la diable, and a wealth
er creations, exotic and familiar, Prince created room dividers with murals
ring each of the five continents– five instead of seven, because as a famous
An ad from the 1960s went, polar caps were the only places it didn't fly. In
arrival Bar and Lounge, he came up with the whimsical motif of the merry-
ound because it reminded him of the way that Geneva "picked up different
cultures, different people..." This theme continued in the Café Le Voltaire where the combination of burgundies, roses, and soft whites in the canopy's draping, the chairs' upholstery, the tablecloths, and curtains, combined with the diffused light emanating from the cluster of bulbs under the center of the canopy, transformed the space into the interior of a jewel-box.

Frankfurt Intercontinental, Germany



The Frankfurt Intercontinental Hotel was built in 1963 on the site of the former park facing the promenade known as the Nizza, a four-acre Mediterranean garden that runs alongside the river Main. At the time of the hotel's construction, Frankfurt was becoming a major international city for banking, but with few options in the way of accommodations for business travelers. For its first hotel on the Continent, Pan-Am opted for a bold statement that would reflect the company's new international outlook. A slim rectangular block with ends that terminate in a v-shape like the prow of a ship, the Frankfurt Intercontinental floated above the water like a modern cruise liner. Light and transparency were afforded by continuous horizontal bands of windows that wrapped around the building's exterior. Airy in feeling, its appearance belies the fact that at its opening, the Intercontinental became and Europe's largest hotel. It was built by the German partnership of Apel and Beckert, the same architects who had been commissioned to design the new Oper Frankfurt, an arts building complex.

The interior design echoed the sophistication of the building's facade. A wide glass-enclosed lobby, running the full-length of the building, provided clear views of the bustling arrivals and departures of the hotel's international clientele. Structural rectangular piers were playfully echoed by decorative vertical stacks of alternating wood and glass hexagons, while other functional elements, like the shops, were encased in rectangular wood boxes with bulls-eye display windows. A circular fire-pit, unexpectedly tucked into a quieter area of the lobby and ringed by Saarinen black leather lounge chairs, encouraged polyglot conversation. The warm wall coverings and flooring of the hotel's restaurants and lounges contrasted with the walls of windows, as well as a 21st story open terrace, that provided stunning views of the river Main and the Frankfurt Cathedral. The public spaces featured the latest in modern furnishings, such as Saarinen tables and Knoll chairs, spherical hanging lights by such companies as Lightolier, sculptured grids fabricated from Oregon pine which served as room dividers, and hanging ceilings of plywood pyramids and gilt rings. Photographic murals of city landmarks, blown-up, cropped, and rendered in a punchy, black-and-white graphic style, lined the corridors leading to the guest rooms, while more than 1,000 pieces of original artwork by young German artists, all selected by Prince and his team, decorated the actual suites.

Sleek modern touches suited to the hotel's mostly business clientele were offset by theatrical nods to Frankfurt's cultural landscape. Prince employed Hein Heckroth, a German set and costume designer for the German national ballet who had moved to England in the 1940s to work on such dance-related films as *The Red Shoes*, to create handmade tapestries depicting characters from that movie, as well as costume and scenic watercolors for a production of *Le Nozze de Figaro*, and a set of costumed doll figures from *Don Carlo*. The more informal coffee shop also featured wall-to-wall images enlarged from German woodcuts of peasants dancing. Heckroth's designs for *The Red Shoes* would eventually enter the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

The Design Team

The creation of the first-class luxury hotel was a team effort, and the recognition of the rise and importance of the creative team made Neal Prince a leader in design. In the 1978 publication, *Interiors: Second Book of Hotels* by Henry End, the author devotes an entire chapter to the importance of the design team. He writes: "If the complex hotel of today is to be successful, it will require the teamwork of many disciplines... [the] interior designer's responsibility is [not] restricted to the interiors."

From the time of his appointment in January 1961 as Director of the Department of Interior and Graphic Design, Prince began to assemble a team to build a distinctive brand identity for each new hotel project. Bringing in people like Kenneth Smith, an interior designer from Ballard Designs, and graphic designer Charles Alvey, from Donald Deskey Associates, the creative team not only tackled the usual furnishings and floor coverings, but all elements of the hotels' graphics, from logos to uniforms, china, crystal, stationery, menus and rack folders. Richard (Dick) Simpson, an expert in packaging design, was hired from Deskey by Charles Alvey to work on menus and brochures. Australian interior designer William (Bill) Embury was hired to work on hotels "down under" and would eventually redesign the bird cage at the Barclay. Irene D'Alessio, who was Prince's secretary and the department's all around "girl Friday" was also a student at the New York School of Interior Design at the suggestion of Prince, who also convinced the company to pay her tuition.

James Fox, Director of Technical Services for Inter-Continental, Richard (Dick) Simpson and Neal Prince, as Simpson receives a service award (spot pix, ca. 1968)

Prince, Simpson and Alvey, along with other members of the New York office, traveled around the world to the sites of proposed hotels and were encouraged to roam, jotting down associations and making sketches and photographs of local architectural details, obtaining samples of fabrics, and studying local artisanal traditions. Location shaped the aesthetic philosophy of everything from the script of the Inter-Continental Hotel's logo to the silhouette of a poolside lounge, and members of the team had to work harmoniously to convey that vision. The team traveled so extensively, that D'Alessio recalled not meeting Prince for three months after she was hired as his assistant.

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DEPARTMENT OF
INTERIOR AND GRAPHIC DESIGN

Prince was able to recognize when the talents of other designers could achieve the desired effect and help his team complete the enormous tasks involved in both initial design work and renovation projects. The team worked with Joseph Grusczak (NYSID Class of 1956) of Grusczak Associates on a number of hotels throughout Europe and the Middle East. Sara Tomerlin Lee of Tom Lee, Ltd., lovingly restored the Willard Inter-Continental in Washington, D.C., while Trisha Wilson of Wilson Associates converted the third floor of the Inter-Continental Barclay from a private club to a suite of stately meeting rooms. Dale and Pat Keller of Dale Keller and Associates, worked with Prince on a number of projects throughout Asia and Middle East, including hotels in Jakarta, Athens and Karachi.