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on the rise

the trendspotting issue

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A neon city map graces the wall at COO's entrance



Bunkbeds line a COO guestroom

→ Social Living

Community is at the center of many current ideas in retail, office, and hospitality. Co-working spaces (partly thanks to WeWork) are all the rage, as are retail spaces meant to serve as a kind of vendor neighborhood, while lobbies are increasingly the hubs of the communities they call home. Co-living is the next wave in this ever-evolving desire for social interaction in a tech-crazed world—take WeLive from WeWork, which is apartment living with communal spaces, and Roam, which offers its inherently transient members a collection of unique living spaces around the world (an old palace in Madrid, the longest-running hotel in Miami), filled with various hangout/work areas (kitchen, lounge, fitness room, and events space). Members can stay for an extended period of time, and Roam fosters connections between them and the local community.

As more good looking hostels emerge, a few are fostering guest connections through social media. “Millennials have changed the travel landscape in a massive way,” says Colin Seah, founder of Singapore firm Ministry of Design. “Traveling is no longer a passive vacation but a meaningful getaway where active experience trumps passive consumption.” Enter COO, the city-state’s first “sociatel” brand, which Seah designed and says is all about social spaces, socializing, and social media, both digitally and physically. The brand uses COO Connect, a matchmaking tool that allows guests to be linked with like-minded travelers, where through a personalized profile, they can chat with other guests and make travel or dinner plans. Design-wise, Seah says “there is a lot going on, from

the Tiong Bahru-inspired graphics to the neon city map, and the tongue-in-cheek house rules and entry portal screens.”

Similarly, Grupo Habita is bringing co-living to its new hostel, the Hollander in Chicago, creating what the Mexican hotel company calls a Social Stay. “We socialize virtually,” says co-founder Carlos Couturier. “We thought of a way of socially reconnecting people in a less virtual way—through hospitality. Kind of the way Uber does it via transportation, [we are] linking social media to a physical experience. You share your daily life, you share a car, you share a room.” Guests who book a bed in one of eight shared rooms (12 private ones are also available) can provide their social media handles so their profile appears when others are booking for the same dates. “You know who will be staying there before you check in,” Couturier says.

Design is also a key factor. “You stay among people who enjoy the same aesthetic you do,” adds Couturier, who worked with French firms Ciguë and Delordinaire to transform a landmark building—a former warehouse—into the 66-bed property (which debuted along with next-door neighbor the Robey, Grupo Habita’s newest hotel). Maintaining its industrial feel, wood transport container-inspired custom bunkbeds made of plywood and metal frames, surrounded by wooden benches and lockers, give an indoor camping feel, he adds. Delordinaire’s founder and partner Adrian Hunfalvay says the highlight is a central 27-foot-long oak wood and steel table in the lobby, which also houses the café and bike shop. “Rather than decorate the space with images of Chicago’s industrial past, we wanted to make this table as a reminder that this is a city that knows how to build,” Hunfalvay says.



Roam's Ubud, Bali location



Metal and plywood-framed bunkbeds at the Hollander

COO photos by EDWARD HENDRICKS

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