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THE MOMENT

# Asked & Answered | Stamberg Aferiat Architecture

DESIGN, TRAVEL | By MARI BROOKSHIRE | NOVEMBER 4, 2011



The Saguaro hotel in Scottsdale, Ariz.

*Tim Street Porter*

With the opening of the **Saguaro hotel** in Scottsdale, Ariz., a collaboration between **Joie de Vivre Hotels** and the **Sydell Group**, a vibrant design has just blown into “the West’s most western town.” Standing out from Scottsdale’s archetypal gamut of beiges and whites, the Saguaro is a brightly hued haven, with nods to the native flora. The hotel was intended to be about Scottsdale, and, flanked by Old Town and the Civic Center Mall, it very much is, while still managing to look and feel like an oasis. The Moment sat down

with the architects, Peter Stamberg and Paul Aferiat of **Stamberg Aferiat Architecture**, to talk about transforming the Old West into something more luminous and inviting.

## Was this your first time working out West?

*Peter Stamberg:* Yes. A friend said, “This is an idea that was just waiting to happen: Peter and Paul come to the desert.” It’s the time for it.

**You have worked mostly on residences and smaller commercial properties, and this is your first hotel. Why the leap?**

*Paul Aferiat:* The President of the Sydell Group came to us and basically said, “Guys, your color sense would be so appreciated out in the middle of the desert.”

*Stamberg:* The hotel project was put together on a very modest budget on the hope of doing something very cool.

**You guys seem to work unsparingly or boldly in color. How did that bode for a city like Scottsdale?**

*Stamberg:* One of the big challenges was going to be color in Scottsdale. It is written in the building code that everything you do has to be natural and about the nature of the desert. That is why everything there is beige and sand color. That’s when we went to the planning department and said we would like to use 12 different colors and we would like them to be based on Arizona wildflowers, and here are the 12 wildflowers.

*Aferiat:* Something about the hotel feeling grounded and authentic to its context, and what better way to make you feel connected than to use the context of the beauty of the landscape?

*Stamberg:* And the reason we chose 12 colors is that the hotel is in six different wings and the rooms are in clusters, and the longest is 12 rooms.

**Did the setting provide an ideal opportunity?**

*Aferiat:* It was an extraordinary learning curve in the best possible way. Other southwestern design doesn’t have a balance of color, it was entire facades of salmon and turquoise. The colors of the Saguaro make it seem more lush, healthy, cooling and comforting. The wildflowers inspired an entire palette for a hotel.

**What were the goals you had in mind for the property?**

*Stamberg:* One of the main goals with the hotel was to make it feel like it belongs there and is right.

*Aferiat:* Our idea was to begin to articulate the masses through the addition of color on the outside of the building. Sort of a spectral color range, but one of the things that came out of our meeting with Sydell was the idea of the building feeling grounded in its place. It had been entirely white.

**Did you succeed?**

*Aferiat:* It was a huge leap to bring this amount of color to one building. What we are really good at is the balance of white against color. So, with the addition of color you’re never overstimulated. You’re stimulated just enough.

**The rooms and lobby really complement the exterior. Are you also responsible for this aesthetic?**

*Stamberg:* We work in Newtonian color theory, we like the colors to be complementary to each other without oversaturation. We’re always looking to create light. Once we started with one color, we just moved around the spectrum and kept going. Every room is different.

*Aferiat:* You can sort of pass through the property as a civic, welcoming gesture, almost as an internal street. It is very important for this hotel to do everything in its power to draw in and include everyone.

*Stamberg:* We also have custom-made blankets for each room.

**Who are your main influences?**

*Aferiat:* Painters. We are friendly with several painters and architects, like Luis Barrigán, Ricardo Legorreta, David Hockney.

**Did you have fun?**

*Stamberg:* Oh, yes.

*Aferiat:* The use of color allowed for a grand transformation in a relatively modest investment. We enlivened the building.