

Exiled on Main Street

The World of Avi Brosh



Mick Jagger? Small thinker: He sees a tiny, old red door and wants it painted black. Avi Brosh? Big thinker: he sees a 12-story hotel near LAX that was designed by mid-century architect Welton Beckett, gets it painted black, dubs it the Custom Hotel and transforms it into one of the best places to spend the night in the city.

Part fun house and part travelers' rest, the Custom Hotel is the latest offering from Brosh's Palisades Development Group (PDG), opening this month [editor's note: The soft opening was on October 15]. Full of pleasant discoveries from the minute guests walk through the front doors, they are greeted by beats provided by the DJ in the lobby. With a fire pit, a heated pool with stadium seating and tapas, as well as a bar that even Little Bo Peep could love — it looks like a meadow and the bar stools are modeled after sheep — the hotel has surprises on every floor. One of them is the price — even a two-bedroom

suite is less than bottle service. [editor's note: That two bedroom suite will cost \$239 in 2008, and will be a little less for the remaining months of this year].

Although it's unlikely guests will see a bespectacled Brosh at the meadow bar, if they do they should let the dyed-in-the-wool contrarian sit on the sole black stool. "I'm one of those guys who doesn't like to be told what to do," says Brosh. "I like to *not* do what the establishment is doing: It brings with it the opportunity to be unique, stand out and create your own path. For me, that's more interesting and fun."

Growing up in the Garden State, Brosh always thought the grass was greener where other teens feared to tread and headed into New York City whenever he could. Now 42 years old, the then prep school kid was drawn to the post-Studio 54, new wave nightclubs of Manhattan and the art of Keith Haring and Jean-Michel

Basquiat. These two painters who never seemed to go north of Canal had crazy amounts of street cred and found a way to bridge the gap between the grittiness of downtown and the sophistication of uptown.

To this day, it's this meshing of uptown and downtown that signifies the work of Brosh's PDG. But each mating of the bourgeoisie with bohemian is a little different. Take the Palihouse West Hollywood, which is slated to open late this month. It's the first of four Palihouse-branded hotels in the city and is complete with a courtyard brasserie, an espresso bar and a lobby living room lounge. Available for stays of 14 days or longer, it finds a way to put "home" in hotel, unlike the Custom, which comes closer to putting the "ho" in ... well, you know where this is going.

"Compared to Palihouse? Custom is like the party girl. Party girls are fun to hang out with

for a night or two, but you wouldn't want to live with them," explains Brosh. "Palihouse is about having a serious relationship. Custom is about having a fling."

These hotels are new for PDG and Brosh, who arrived in Los Angeles in 1987 after graduating from Boston University and got his first job in property development. Five years later he joined The Braemar Group, a prominent real estate development company where he would later become partner before starting PDG in 1998, where he initially concentrated on residential and mixed-use projects.

"The Palisades Group made urban living look appealing to residents before we started having all these conversations about the need for increased density," says Alissa Walker, an LA-based design and architecture writer. "Avi Brosh's residential projects in Santa Monica were massively popular because the design was basically saying to people, 'Hey, it's cooler to live in this building because it's not just a stucco box, we really care how it looks.' And now he's moved on to other neighborhoods that need similar help."

Brosh doesn't draw a distinction between his work and professional life. They're interconnected, he says, and that's one of the reasons he can regularly put in long hours. Another reason? A commute that can be completed in an elevator. He lives with his wife and two kids in a large penthouse of the building that houses PDG's headquarters on Santa Monica's Main Street. Even when he's working a lot, it's easy for him to take a short break and put some quality time in with his children. Similarly, he can go in for a quick meeting in about the same time it would take him to dial into a conference call.

That said, being a successful professional and family guy has its costs, and nowhere is that more obvious than on the golf course. His handicap has doubled from an impressive four over par to not-too-shabby eight, according to his friend, Jeremy Zimmer, a founding partner of the United Talent Agency, who has known Brosh for about 15 years.

Whether Brosh is on the links or in the office, Zimmer says he's still the same guy. "He's very even tempered: he never gets hysterical," says Zimmer. "He's generally very positive and even when things are not going particularly well, he has a sense that he'll be [able] to figure it out and put it together."

Wherever, whenever — it's good to have Avi Brosh in the neighborhood.

Find out more at www.palisadesdevgroup.com

"I like to *not* do what the establishment is doing: it brings with it the opportunity to be unique, stand out and create your own path. For me, that's more interesting and fun."
— Avi Brosh

944life

• Writing | Stephen Krantz

944.com/stephenkrantz

• Photography | Colesia Vasilata

944.com/colesia

• Read More

944.com/habitat