

QT

HotelsAB/ROY

Location: New York
Completion date: 2005

South African architect Lindy Roy, head of New York-based ROY, has designed some extremely radical hotel concepts including the Okavango Delta Spa, involving a range of free-floating and fixed structures in the Botswana swampland, and Wind River Lodge, an extreme heli-ski hotel in Alaska. Either of these projects would merit a place in any compendium of revolutionary hotel design. Unfortunately, as happens with so many younger architects, few of her designs have been realised, with projects plagued with delays or cancellations that are beyond her control. However, 2003 saw the opening of her first permanent structure, the Vitra design showroom in New York's meat-packing district, right next door to Soho House. It's hard to imagine a more high-profile debut. Hotelier André Balazs,



Above and opposite: **Hotel QT, New York.** The cedar-clad lobby features a small pool and views into the adjoining bar. QT may be a budget hotel, but it's flowing with NY-style confidence

himself something of a radical, brought ROY on board to help with a hotel project that would definitely see the light of day. Even though it's a budget hotel, QT became the talk of Manhattan and made the precious *Condé Nast Traveller* 'Hot List' before it was even fully open.

Having opened the Mercer in New York and revitalised the Raleigh in South Beach, Miami, André Balazs now rivals Ian Schrager in his ability to create well-designed and much-talked-about hotels that provide a haven for celebs and trendsetters. He has moved into the middle market with his Standard chain, and further towards cheap-chic with QT, which he has jokingly referred to as 'sub-Standard'. It's not. Converted from an office block just off Times Square, it's a no-frills hotel with small rooms (ranging from 17 to 25 square metres), but it's brimming with youthful media and fashion cognoscenti who are looking for style on a low budget. Part of the lure is the combination of location and price (doubles start at just \$125, with 25 per cent discount for under-25s), but its quirkiness will mean that it should become loved, and not just useful. As the name implies, it's knowingly but humorously cool. As well as telling the world it's a 'cutie', it draws its name from *On the QT* (i.e. 'on the quiet'), the witty, salacious gossip magazine from the 1950s and 1960s that gloried in headlines such as 'The plot to make lesbianism smart' and 'Did the Reds flip Frances Farmer?' For the uninitiated, a collage of its sensational stories forms part of the hotel décor.

The design may not compare with the startling innovation of ROY's unrealised hotels, but it still has a few appealing little shockers up its sleeve. A small swimming pool sits in the middle of the lobby. Along one side, the wall includes the glazed bottle display of the lobby bar that is situated in an adjoining room, so swimmers can look beyond the edge of the water and see straight into the bar, while drinkers can get glimpses of the water-show. For those who would rather have a closer inspection of the pool antics, one side of the pool also has a terrace of seats. A nightly DJ adds to the full-on, see-and-be-seen atmosphere, and the pool has

OCCUPANCY BY MORE
THAN 61 PERSONS
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SMALL SIGNAGE ON WALL
IN CORNER OF ROOM



Hotel name	QT
Address	125 West 45th Street, New York, NY 10036, USA
Telephone	+1 212 354 2323
Website	www.hotelqt.com
Design style	Budget hotel mixes New York confidence with Scandinavian style
No. of rooms	140 rooms
Bars and restaurants	Lobby bar
Spa facilities	Lobby pool; gym with steam room and sauna
Clientele	Young, hip bunk-bed lovers

underwater speakers. Throughout the hotel, the colours are light and the design seems to be Scandinavian-influenced: bleached woods, stone, white linen and pinks help to evoke a natural, airy atmosphere in the restricted spaces. The lobby is clad with light cedar, and the bar has cork stools along with pink banquettes covered with mohair and leather.

Upstairs, another element that has got NY scenesters chattering is the bunks and platform beds. One of the family rooms has a small bed suspended by poles above a queen-size bed. Others have four bunk beds, providing a retro trip for friends who grew up with too many siblings in small houses. Details such as white Egyptian-cotton

bed linen, unusual lights, flat-screen televisions, high-speed internet access points and mini-refrigerators help ensure that QT doesn't feel like a hostel. In order to maximise space, all the furniture except for a small table and chair is built-in, with the bed plinth providing storage space and extending to form flat bedside surfaces.

There have been shortcuts, of course, such as a check-in kiosk instead of a reception and no room service. The mini-fridge is empty – if guests want to extend the party after the pool area's gone quiet, they have to purchase their tippie of choice from the kiosk. Still, it's a small price to pay.



Above: **Hotel QT, New York.** Light colours and incorporated furniture are used to make the most of the small rooms



Above: **Hotel QT, New York.** The bar, also clad with cedar wood, has high-backed banquettes and an open, communal feel that has proved a hit with New Yorkers



Left: **Hotel QT, New York.** One of the hotel's talking points has been the family rooms, featuring single beds suspended over doubles, while there are also bunk-bed options

Below: **Hotel QT, New York.** Low cost, high style. André Balazs and Lindy Roy's attention to detail should ensure that QT proves to be more than a passing fad

