

SPACE

INTERNATIONAL HOTEL DESIGN

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BARBARA BISCHOFF, SCHOLARSHIP DIRECTOR, NEWH UK CHAPTER

As a previous beneficiary of the NEWH student scholarship she now champions, Barbara Bischoff discusses her new role as Scholarship Director (NEWH UK Chapter) and her own colourful journey into hospitality design with SPACE Editor, Emma Kennedy



Could you tell us a little about your formative years and what sparked your interest in interior design?

As a child, I had the opportunity to travel to different places with my family. These opened my eyes to the vibrant, different cultures and ways of living. I was fascinated by how each city expressed its own unique character through art, architecture, and design. I decided to study communications first, where I was taught the power of visual communication and storytelling. It was then that I made the definitive decision to pursue my passion for interior design as a profession. With a background in set design, art direction, and interior design, my path became an unconventional mix of creative perspectives resulting in a unique visual storyteller.

Why hospitality design?

Hospitality is all about creating a memorable experience by blending creativity with functionality, cultural understanding, and storytelling. Because of my background in communications and design, I fell in love with the awe-inspiring spaces within hospitality, and the sense of place that transports you from one place to another while evoking emotions and creating lasting memories.

I understand you come from a multi-cultural background, how has this influenced your work as a designer?

Being born in Venezuela – a country that has been influenced by several different cultures – allowed me to appreciate a mix of different backgrounds and stories – further inspired by my own family's German and Italian heritage. I saw the multitude of ways people expressed themselves creatively, and when I moved to Los Angeles, it felt like I was entering a new world filled with possibilities. Suddenly, all my passion for design became tangible. Here, I had the opportunity to study Interior Architecture, and work at industry giants such as HBA, Wilson Associates, and HOK. This combination of experiences shaped my design approach, allowing me to create spaces that are culturally rich and innovative, with a sense of place and a strong narrative.

What was your introduction to NEWH?

My NEWH story began during my student years at the UCLA/Cal Poly program. One day, I noticed a flyer about a NEWH scholarship on my faculty advisor door. Intrigued, I decided to apply for the scholarship during my master's program. To my surprise, I was selected, and recipient of the largest scholarship award offered that year, covering a significant portion of my tuition fees. This incredible opportunity, open to international students like me, opened the door to the world of hospitality and introduced me to a network of remarkable people within the industry. It was a turning point in my design journey.

Have you benefited from professional mentors as a student or in your career as a designer and if so, has this inspired your involvement in NEWH?

Throughout my studies and professional career, I've had the opportunity to learn from mentors who have shaped my skills as a designer. However, it's the combination of my communication background and my desire to give back after being a scholarship recipient, that truly inspired me to become more involved with NEWH. NEWH is a remarkable organisation. Not only does it offer incredible opportunities to students, but it also emphasises the importance of networking and fostering connections. Having lived in both Los Angeles and London, I've come to understand that while it may be geographically separated, NEWH transcends borders and functions as a global family.

What does the role involve and what are you currently focused on?

Our goal is to develop a network within the UK's universities that provide careers and opportunities in the hospitality sector, through networking, connections and financial support to finish their education. We understand the importance of closing the gap between the university and the professional world. Students can often perceive the industry as distant and intimidating. Through these initiatives, we showcase student talent and give them the tools they need to enter the hospitality world. This year is particularly exciting. In addition to our established Design Scholarship, we're continuing our popular portfolio review event for the second year in a run, and most importantly, we're launching for the first time the Hotel Management Scholarship.



NEWH, UK Chapter Portfolio review

Volunteering alongside a full-time day job isn't easy. What drives you be so involved?

I love what I do by designing experiences. With NEWH we are empowering students to pursue the same passion. NEWH provided me with a scholarship that launched my design journey, and I want to help give students the same opportunity. It's about nurturing the next generation of hospitality design storytellers.

Is there a crossover between your two roles?

NEWH is an organisation dedicated to fostering connections across the global hospitality industry. Both my design and NEWH roles allow me to cultivate a network of individuals, from students and universities, to hoteliers, designers, suppliers, and media. These connections not only enrich my design role by keeping me knowledgeable of industry trends,

markets and talent, but also helps NEWH to better serve its mission. Ultimately, this collaborative bond benefits everyone involved, strengthening the hospitality industry as a whole.

What would you say to encourage someone to join NEWH?

NEWH is a remarkable organization. It offers a welcoming and supportive network that connects you with exceptional people across the entire hospitality industry. Becoming a member isn't just about getting to know these inspiring individuals; it's also about allowing them to get to know you and your talents. NEWH provides a platform for professional development, equipping you with the tools you need to advance your career. It also offers valuable recognition for your work, helping you gain visibility within the industry.

And when time and commitments allow, what is your ideal way of spending downtime?

I do love art. I find endless inspiration in museums, theatres, films and simply walking the streets of London. Exploring a new restaurant or bar is another favourite pastime - I love experiencing the design elements as a user myself inside a hospitality space. And of course, no Venezuelan's downtime is complete without dancing! It's a fantastic way to celebrate joy among friends and family.

For details on joining the UK chapter, please contact Mel Wetherbridge at mel.newh@yahoo.com

NEWH, THE WORLD'S BIGGEST ORGANISATION FOR NETWORKING IN THE INTERNATIONAL HOSPITALITY DESIGN INDUSTRY, HAS CHAPTERS AROUND THE WORLD. TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT US, AND TO JOIN YOUR LOCAL CHAPTER, LOOK US UP ON SOCIAL MEDIA OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE.

newh.org



LIZZIE BROWN

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As a recent graduate from High Point University in North Carolina, USA, Lizzie is incredibly excited to start her career in the hospitality design industry. With an interest in sport and a 'try to leave a positive impact anywhere that she goes' ethos, Lizzie started her college journey studying exercise science with the ambition to become a physical therapist, before soon realising that her true calling lay in a more creative field. "I love how interior design blends together the importance of how the body works with function and beauty," she says. "I recently came across a letter from freshman year of high school to myself and it said that I hoped I would become an architect, and I am so blessed and excited that that dream is becoming a reality."

Selected project (pictured):

The project that pushed Lizzie the most during her studies, both creatively and technically, was a military health and wellness centre, which she completed for senior year.

NEWH is an international not-for-profit organisation with 29 chapters across the United States, Canada, and Europe. Bringing together professionals from all facets of the hospitality industry, NEWH provides opportunities for education, professional development, and networking. To date, it has awarded more than seven million USD in scholarships that provide promising interior design and architecture students opportunities to pursue careers in the hospitality industry.

How has the NEWH scholarship benefited you so far?

Winning the 2024 NEWH Leadership scholarship has been one of the biggest blessings both financially and mentally. Adding an extra year of schooling with no scholarship so that I could pursue my dream career and passion was a scary step. I wasn't sure that I would be able to do it, but I was investing in something so important to me. Student loans are difficult to take on post-grad, but the scholarship has helped to alleviate some of that weight. I cannot express how thankful I am, and I look forward to pushing myself so that one day I can return the favour to an aspiring designer. At the leadership convention, I gained invaluable knowledge, pushed myself out of my comfort zone, and made the most wonderful connections. I was overwhelmed with the support of the NEWH community, and it has left a lasting impact on me. This is truly one of the best organisations and I wish everyone could feel the gratitude that I do towards each one of you!

Tell us about your dream design project

Health and wellness as well as sustainability are very important to me. I would love to design a community

centre that focuses on promoting a healthy lifestyle. It could have areas for both mental and physical health benefits. It would have an outdoor area where plants could be grown and then used in a kitchen where patrons could come and learn how to cook well-balanced meals using food that they had grown. One of the key components of this design would be sourcing either recycled materials or materials with a long lifespan, as well as considering energy resourcefulness in the function. This centre could benefit a community and bring people together to learn and grow together while thinking about the environmental footprint. I think that it would be a challenging project, but also very rewarding.

What is the most enjoyable aspect of hospitality design for you?

Hospitality design is unique in its combination of being commercial yet also lending space to think outside of the box. I appreciate it from all of the different levels – whether it is designing a brand standard hotel or a boutique hotel with full creative freedom. Hotels impact many people, and I think that it is cool to design on such a large scale. It is fast paced, and it leaves many opportunities to push your design skills to align with timeline or budget.

Which designers or creatives have most inspired you on your career path?

Antoni Gaudi is one of the most inspirational architects for me. I did extensive research on the design of Casa Mila in Barcelona and was lucky enough to experience it in person. I find all his work to be interesting, beautiful and thought-provoking. He pushed the limits of what people thought to be acceptable in design and left his mark. It is designers like him that make me want to think outside of the box and to stray from what is considered the norm.

