

## PROFILES



**BEN**

Ben Pundole, courtesy of EDITION Hotels.

# PUNDOLE

Making EDITION Hotels entirely plastic-free.

By Eliza Jordan

For nearly two decades, Ben Pundole has been working on boutique hotel strategies with Ian Schrager. Now, as the vice president of brand experience at EDITION Hotels, he is responsible for understanding Schrager's taste and translating that vision through food and beverage outlets, nightlife activations, cultural events, brand partnerships, wellness programs, and more.

In the next 18 months, EDITION is expanding on its four locations and opening seven more—in Barcelona, Shanghai, Bangkok, New York (Times Square), Los Angeles (West Hollywood), Bodrum, and Abu Dhabi. The brand is also growing its efforts to be more sustainable, partnering with Project 0 to become entirely plastic-free.

*Whitewall* spoke with Pundole about this bold move, its importance in the hotel industry, and what is most exciting for him in hospitality today.

**WHITEWALL:** Tell us a bit about your goal to be plastic-free and working with companies like Project 0 and Lonely Whale.

**BEN PUNDOLE:** We have a responsibility. I realized what an enormous plastic polluter the hospitality industry is and decided I would try and do something about it.

So a new initiative of ours is to be plastic-free, which is to eliminate all one-use plastic products in our hotels by the end of this year. We have already eliminated straws, and the minibars are plastic-free. We have replaced our plastic beachwear with non-single-use plastic beachwear. We are looking for solutions for keyless entries so there will be no more plastic key cards. We are looking for a solution for the shampoo bottles that will either be using only recycled plastic or taking plastic from the ocean to make our shampoo bottles.

Project 0 is raising awareness and funds for water conservation



The New York EDITION, photo by Nikolas Koenig, courtesy of EDITION Hotels.

projects—oceans, groves, lakes, and water conservation projects around the world. We also work very closely with Lonely Whale, who has great resources, researchers, and scientists, and they compile information and they give it away. Between Lonely Whale and Project Zero, we're happy.

**WW:** Are there any other sustainable projects you're inspired by?

**BP:** I just read about how plastic is being used to build affordable housing in Mexico, because it's a natural insulator and it lasts for hundreds of years. There is this big move to make affordable housing out of plastic, and I would really like to make a hotel out of plastic. I think that would say a lot.

I also read about this guy in Panama who built a castle on the island of Bocas del Toro out of recycled plastic bottles. I think it was about 140,000 plastic bottles. It's really about education, as well as habit.

**WW:** What's an example of education and habit that EDITION is committed to?

**BP:** Not only are we compiling a list of plastic alternate vendors that we are sharing with other companies, we are creating a film on the impacts of single-use plastics in the hotel industry on the environment. Hopefully, it can be shown on orientation or on-boarding. And we are sending a steel "stay plastic-free" water bottle to every single member of EDITION staff in the next week. So, it's all about education, encouragement, and inspiration. There's no point shaming people into anything. No one wants to do anything out of guilt. People want to join an inspiring movement. That's our aim.

**WW:** The hospitality industry has changed so drastically over the years. What is the most exciting thing about it today?

**BP:** It didn't change at all for hundreds of years, and then 30 years ago, it changed more than you can ever have imagined. Today, as we stand, this idea of transformative hospitality is the future. The way people expect a great room product, they expect great food and beverage, they expect great nightlife and bars, they expect great programming and events. But now what the guest expects is to also have created a community and also to know they have done some good for either themselves, their community or their environment. So, this whole idea of transformative hospitality is really exciting for me.

I love it. I love what's happening. We are lucky humans.



Portrait by Lea Schleiffer.

# SACHA ZERBIB

What it means to start a collection for a public art space in 2018.

By Katy Donoghue

Art adviser Sacha Zerbib was approached a few years ago with a dream opportunity. He was asked to help build a collection from the ground up, with the goal of eventually exhibiting it within a public space in Austin, Texas.

Creating the mission for a collection (which now includes work by artists like Kerstin Brätsch, Gordon Cheung, Günther Förg, Noémie Goudal, Carmen Herrera, Sanya Kantarovsky, Imi Knoebel, Glenn Ligon, Stanley Whitney, and Wolfgang Tillmans) from scratch with his client, Zerbib began to think about what it means to be a public space showing contemporary art today. If you could build the ideal

museum of today, what would that look like? How would the location of Austin affect that mission and future public programming? What kind of site should be built to offer a site of reflection and engagement for visitors?

*Whitewall* spoke with Zerbib in Paris, where he's run his firm CaAC & Co Art Advisory since 2008, about what it means to collect with a vision to serve the community.

**WHITEWALL:** A collector comes to you with a dream of creating a collection for a public space. Where do you start?

**SACHA ZERBIB:** You're not asking yourself the same question as when you're asked to build a private collection. You're not talking to just an individual; you're trying to reach a greater audience and something more universal. You become more careful in a sense that you become more responsible—not only for the pieces that you choose, but also for what they incarnate, what they mean, what they symbolize, and for the content that they bring and convey.

It's an approach that is more socially and historically oriented than a private collection. It will have an impact on people's minds, and therefore you want not only the best possible works you can find, but also the ones that convey a feeling for the 20th century.

**WW:** How are you thinking about what it means to exhibit art in the 21st century?

**SZ:** I believe in seeing art and exhibiting art—the physicality of it. Today, we just need a computer to access a lot of information, so I think the purpose and the nature of a museum has shifted. It has to engage. It has to be singular in how the vision of the collection is shown. It has more of a political or social impact and a space for thinking and reflection, rather than a touristic place.

**WW:** How does the location of Austin impact the decisions you are making?

**SZ:** Being from Paris, I had to get familiar with Austin and its mentality, what it wants to express as a community. Austin is a place that mixes the old and new, the past and the future. Austin has been inspiring in that sense. The challenge for me has been to keep a balance between what I know speaks to the most in the greatest possible way, and still have something that belongs to outsiders. We're trying to have a strong focus on the second part of the 20th century—what the greatest issues and debates in art were and pushing that to the next generation.

**WW:** Are there any models you're looking at?

**SZ:** I've always been a very big fan of the Whitney and the way they've always managed to reincarnate themselves into a new space. A museum is not only there to entertain, but to teach and to make people see the world they're living in. One of the missions of museums is to bring ideas together. If it doesn't exist in art, then it doesn't exist in society. And Dia:Beacon is one of my favorite museums because of the location and effort you have to make to go there. It's like a sacred space, somehow spiritual, and only devoted to art. It's a bit far away, but once you're there, you experience one of the most amazing feelings that art can provide.

That's one of the things I want to be able to achieve—a certain feeling when you're there, and when you leave you're still thinking about what you've seen.

**WW:** Many museums today are correcting the gaps in their collection, adding work from female artists, artists of color, looking at a more international scope, et cetera. With that in mind, what is your approach to acquiring works?

**SZ:** I'm always, as an adviser, looking at today's most relevant concepts in art, linking those concepts with the history of art and even recent history. A fantastic piece, even of the Renaissance, can converse with today's artists.

I've always liked to put into perspective different times, different cultures, different origins, different geographies, different genders. It's like pieces of conversation rather than things we might have missed, so that the audience has enough resources to think on their own.