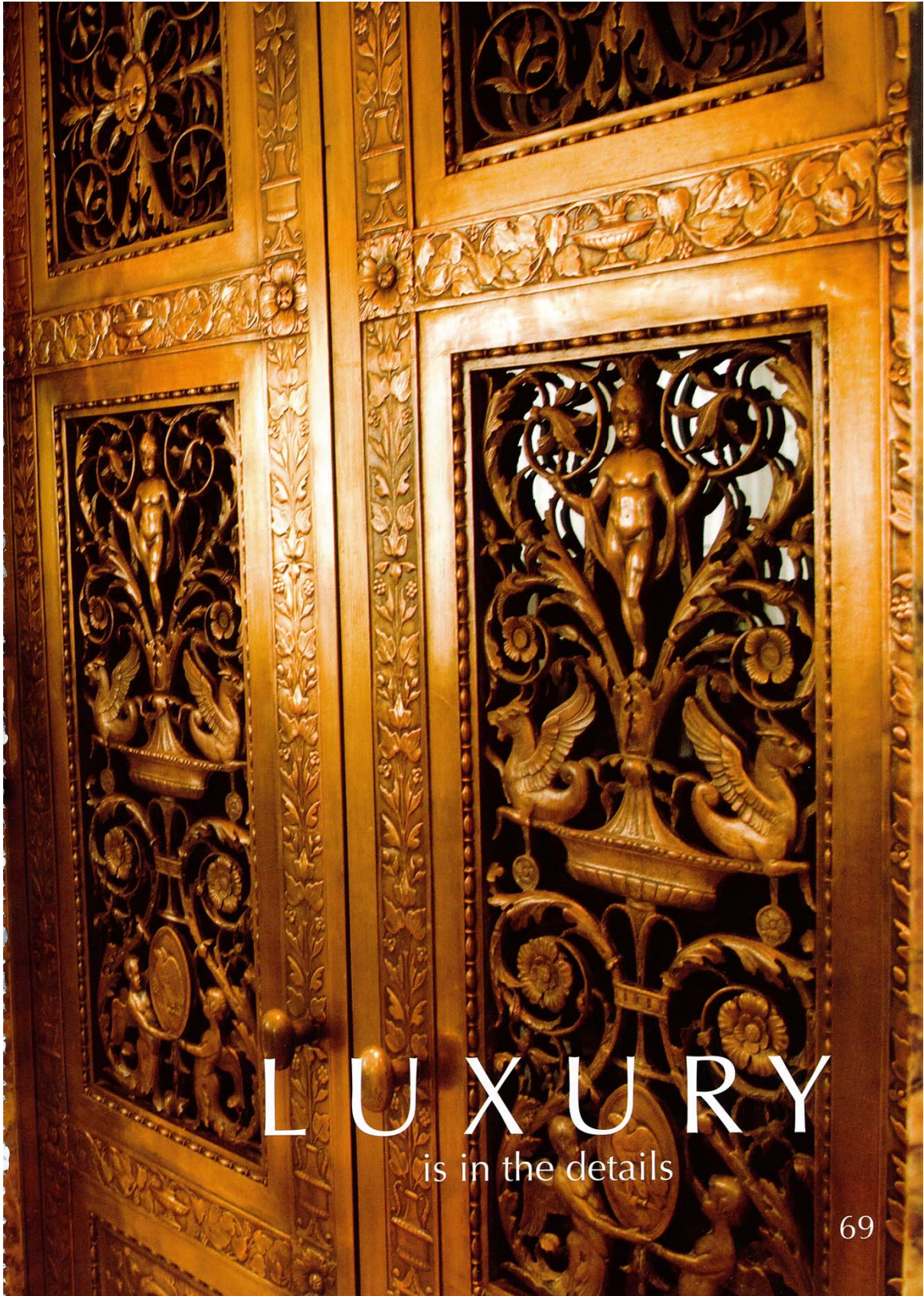




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LUXURY
is in the details



HOTEL REVIEW





— MONTREAL —

THE ST. JAMES

In the 2nd issue of KA, an interesting question was posed to me. “Why don’t we do a best of Montreal section in the magazine?” Actually, a best of any city section was more what was suggested. At first I said no, the whole best of anything was way too much based on who was paying for this title that I did not wish to subject the readers of KA to this sort of thing. It wasn’t after much thought that I decided why not, why create a magazine for the sake of self censorship. The difference in the KA best of City list was that it was based on which businesses we truly believed was the best in their respective fields. I don’t feel that we need to define what best is, we know when something is the best at what they do there is just no denying this fact that they are the best at what they are doing. Even if we do not like to admit it we know that shoe maker is the best, that restaurant has the best Thai food, that store carries the best lines, or like the hotel in the following review — that hotel is simply the best, period.

What makes a hotel the best? This question was one that quite a few people actually asked me, and at first I wasn’t sure if it was just a random question until it was asked a few times over. In my humble opinion to be the best at anything you have to have integrity. To be the best isn’t about the things that are publicized, i.e. doing it to get credit but it is the things that you do knowing that the chances of even the recipient of this attention to detail will not even notice. To be truly luxurious is to do this over and over with perfection and this becomes your mission doing the things that the recipient will not even know was done for them but you are left with that clear feeling of being taken care of.

That was the answer that I would give for the best which in this case happens to be the Le St. James Hotel, but even after this poetic explanation I still had raised eyebrows, translated : “You are an artist and a poet, but really, what does it all mean the best of this and the best of that? How can you say one ho-





LE LIVING

tel is better than the other when they all have beds and food? Isn't it just a bit too much when reflected against a backdrop of seeming doom and despair?"

My answer, it is exactly because of this backdrop of doom and despair that we need things that are as luxurious as Le St. James and why we need things to be positive and filled with light and it is this reason why KA chose to do a full review on such a place with the hopes that it will, if for a moment, give us the pause we all need to see and think of more than doom and gloom, and possibly we might just see a way out of it all. If this is not the result then at least the images are amazing.

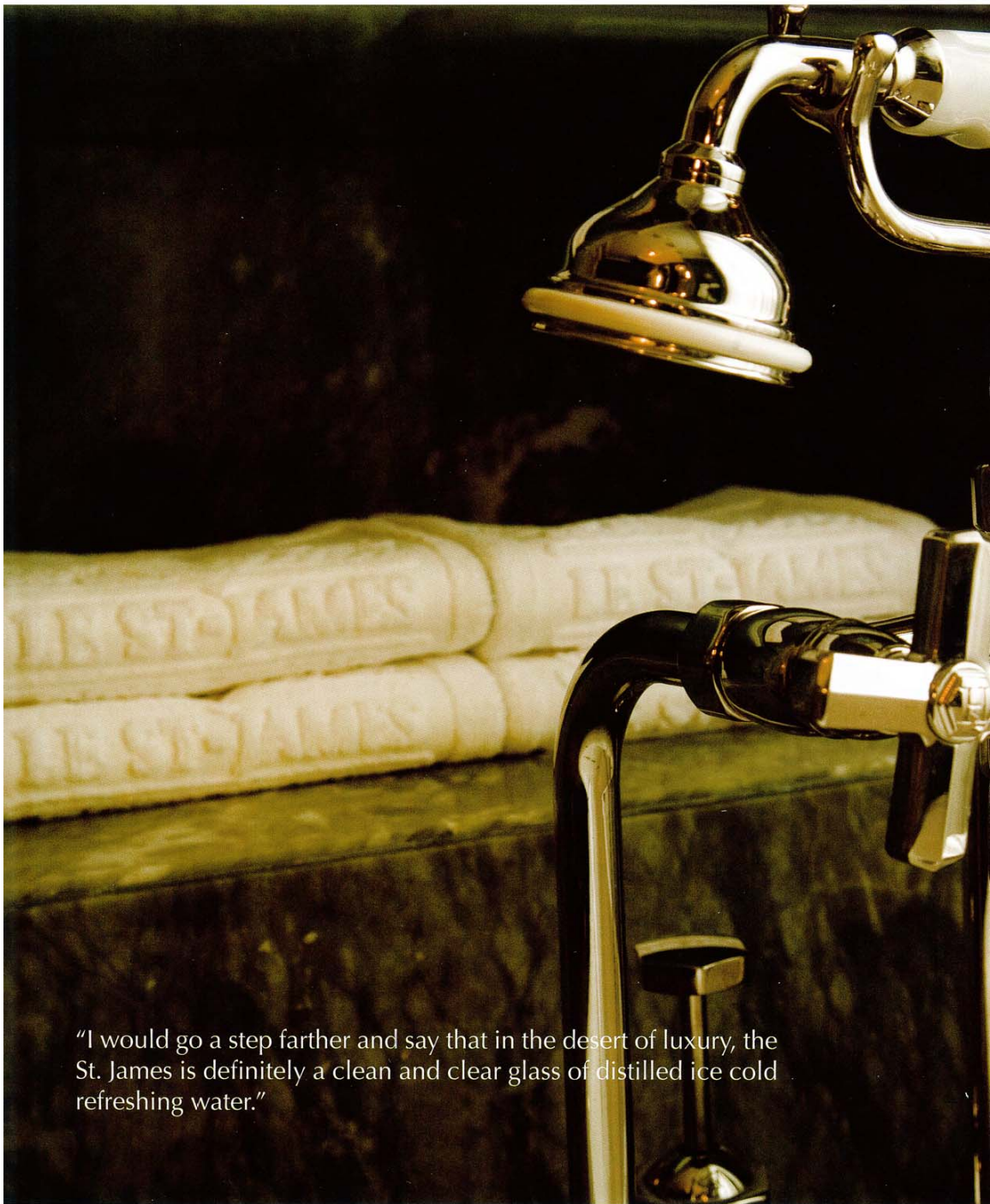
My visit to Le St. James started with something that if you told me the minute before I did it, I would tell you "never in a million years!" But here I was, five minutes into being at this temple of luxury, and I asked for a smaller room. I just couldn't do it! I wanted to do it, but I just couldn't. It wasn't that the room with perfectly polished floors and baby grand piano sparkling in the sunshine wasn't a temptation it was just that I knew that with the beauty of such a space as my constant backdrop all chances of being grounded would be out the sun filled window.

So I chose the Versace room instead. This is a room that though smaller than the aforementioned penthouse was, nonetheless not any less spectacular in the way you were left with a feeling of not being in a home or a hotel but in a perfect hybrid of the best of both worlds.

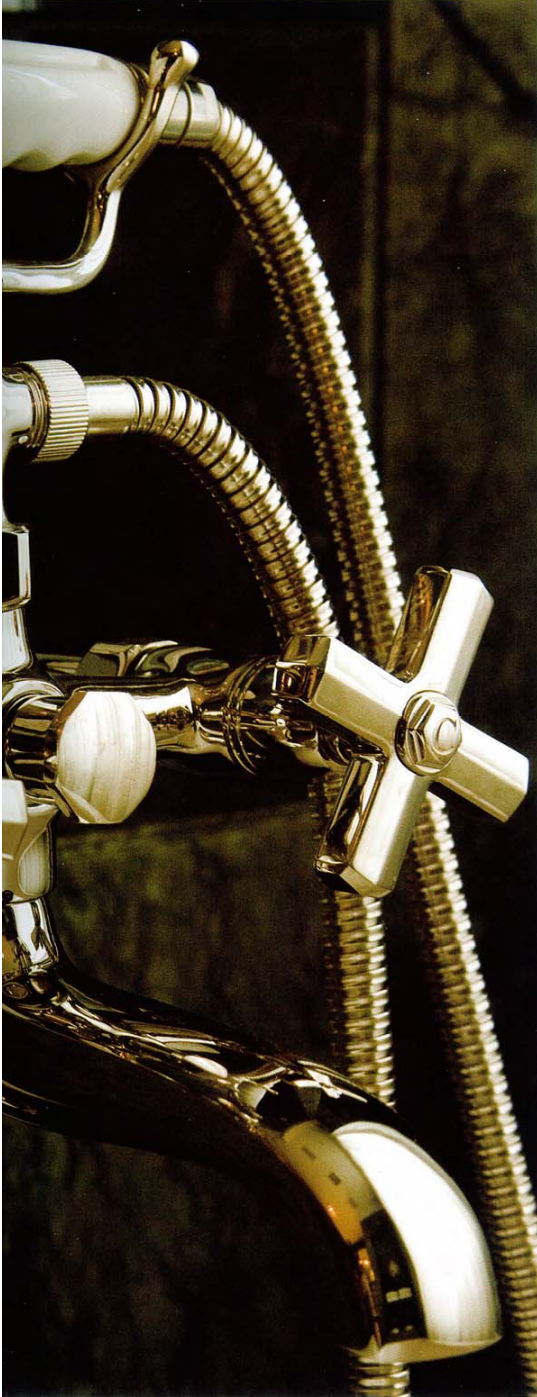
This is when it hit me: luxury is truly in the details. Luxury is the little things, but first, the big things have to be done: the rooms, the linens (300 count Egyptian Cotton), perfect service...all that sort of expected things. Then what about the details? What were the things that Le St. James did, that were small and that we cannot see just in passing? This was my quest to discover in the next 5 days stay there.

The following is my journey into the details of the St. James Hotel, a sort of journey into a world of attention to details. The new General Manager (17 months at the Hotel) Olivier Bottois at first seemed to be an imposing figure straight out of the books of Grand Hotel Managers, until his genuine smile made it clear that you are very welcome to be staying at the St. James. That both he and his staff actually enjoy having you there and taking care of you. Everything I asked for even to asking that the candles that were in the restaurant were brought to my room in the same beautiful glass containers, was met with the same response "Certainly Mr. Allwood". Imagine 5 days eating only 5 to 7 course meals, made on the spot for a lactose intolerant vegetarian, perfect service each and every evening, and not one dish repeated.





"I would go a step farther and say that in the desert of luxury, the St. James is definitely a clean and clear glass of distilled ice cold refreshing water."



LE SPA

Then my trip to the Spa continued the journey into details, the Spa is small by today's spa standards but the hotel has taken what could be considered by most to have been a handicap and made it into the ultimate luxury and attention to details. The whole spa is yours during your visit there. Below is the summary of the visit by my editor, she was blown away by the service and the spa treatment.

SPA Treatment : Silhouette

"As the elevator brought me downstairs, my masseuse was there waiting to greet me with her beautiful smile. She escorted me to my private room where both sauna and steam bath awaited me...mmmm. What I loved so much was the feeling that the spa is all yours – that nobody was there before you, and nobody will be there after. All the candles are perfectly lit, and seems like they were just lit for the first time. You are left feeling that the experience is yours, and yours alone. The private room has everything you need, from bathrobes, slippers, water bottles, shower caps, classical music, private closet with lock and key for you to keep...and of course, mens and ladies shaving accessories! Just in case one forgot to take care of that before they arrived at "Le Spa". They thought of everything, really...But one thing, which is the most irreplaceable, was the care and comfort I felt in the hands that treated me at Le Spa."

The strangest thing, was that at the end of my stay at the St. James, I realized that even with the most luxury of places, even with millions of dollars poured into say the Spa, if at the end the hands touching you are not pleasant or positive, or the person greeting you at the entrance does not have a pleasant disposition, then there is no luxury. Then what really is luxury? To answer, I will borrow a quote from an interview I had with the owner of the St. James himself: "When you are in a desert, even a drop of water is more luxurious than the diamonds and pearls around your neck."

I would go a step farther and say that in the desert of luxury, the St. James is definitely a clean and clear glass of distilled ice cold refreshing water. Plus they virtually provide anything within the law that the guest request. Below are 3 unique requests by guests:

- 1 - Imported water that is generally only used for medical and religious purposes and not sold to the general public, only for VVVVIP guests.
- 2 - Had a 5 Star / 5 Diamond restaurant deliver their tasting menu to a client's room, 1 service at a time.
- 3 - Re-opened an upscale department store after business hours for a client that forgot her shoes and needed a new pair for an event that same evening.

K

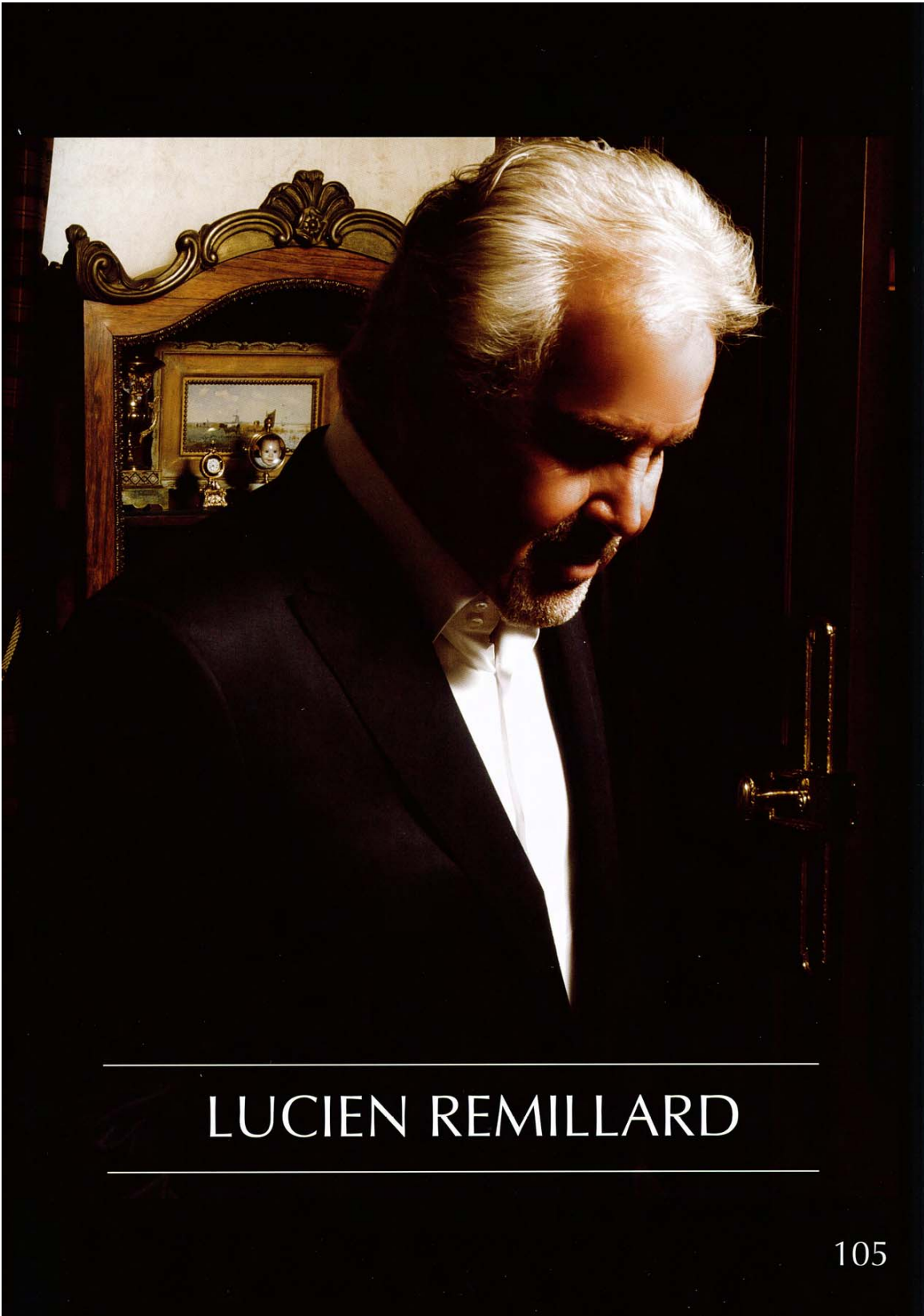
PROFILE

When we started to write this love issue, the following kept on cropping up time after time: architecture, travel, design and luxury... how we thought, could a single interview capture all of these elements while remaining as well in the theme of love? The answer wasn't long in coming, because as chance would have it, all those points were the driving force behind the man that created Le St. James. Architecture — try to find a more stunning example than the lovingly restored building that houses this gem of a hotel. Travel — if you are one of the many lucky travelers who happened to stay here, then you would have experienced design and luxury equal to the best in the world. Coupled with a quick wit and amazing hair, Lucien Remillard is definitely a man that KA loves to spend the afternoon with.

KA — How do you respond to a reality that seems to reject that the ultimate speed is doing the things right the first time even if on the surface it might seem to take longer, and how do you relate to the world that wishes to put things up overnight, when you chose to take three years to lovingly restore a building such as Le St-James?

LR — The chemistry needs to be there, I think that this is one of the most overlooked factors in creating anything, even something that seems to be “brick and stone” such as a building. The question of “chemistry” is still a vital one for me. Once this is achieved, then the building practically builds itself. I became a sort of protector so to speak, of what the building wished to be. Take Le St-James, sure I could have gone in, take the building and force it to be something other than what it is now, rip out the moldings, and just demolish the insides, but when you really listen to the building, you make the right decision. I did, and in doing so, I took the necessary time, which in most people's opinion back then, was too long, since I ended up busting the budget. But you know, it was all worth it. It's now time to renovate, it has been 7 years and I still work by gut feelings with this Hotel, and my gut tells me it's time to renovate; it's time to reach out to a new group of clients. Not to reject the existing clients, but just to include a new group of young clients that are much more educated and sophisticated than I ever was, at say, 23 years old. I am very inclusive when I work, I find it is much more fun to include others in what you are doing to create a sort of reality of play where the participants feel motivated to do their best. Not for the money or that sort of temporary reward, but for the reward of doing something that is out of convention. It was with this feeling that the XO was renovated. It is fun to see what is happening around the world, not just in your city, or for that matter your country. It's fun to bring that back to what you are doing, not to copy outright, but to be aware of the trends and sometimes this is even validation of the choices you are making.





LUCIEN REMILLARD

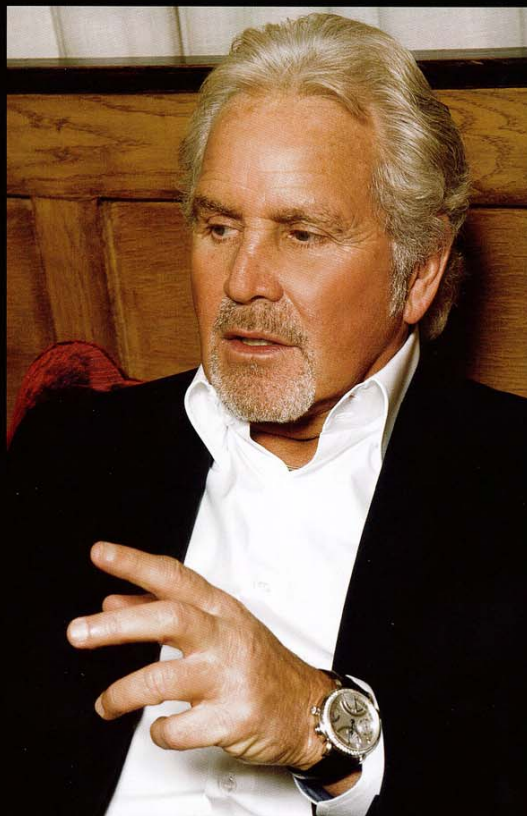
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KA — There is a belief that buildings are not dead things, that they actually have a spirit, they are living things once built growing from the essence of what happens in them. Did you feel this from the St-James building when you bought it?

LR — I did feel that this building had a spirit when I found it, I also felt it was neglected and was suffering. I wanted to put the spirit back into the building, and I definitely felt during the restoration period like I was putting the life back into the building. It was after I chose the name St-James that I discovered that there had been a



Hotel St-James in Montreal at the turn of the century, and that Hotel was very similar in context to the “new St-James” that gave me goose bumps, that sometimes things are in the “book”.

KA — When we look at the St-James it is more akin to a labor of love and not just a place of business. The rooms are all decorated differently and with an attention to detail rarely found in hotels. How much does love influence your business choices?

LR — The St-James is not a boutique hotel, it’s a palace. The guests feel this and they return to be in this. The beauty is that people that live in the city are also welcome into this experience and this is where the fun begins- it is much more interesting this way. I truly appreciate the people in Montreal that come here and enjoy it with such joy and pride. It makes me feel good inside, I created the St-James for me, yes this is true, I created what was a vision, I don’t think that it is possible to create from any other context. Imagine if an artist first created his art wondering what an imaginary audience first wanted. This, I think, would not be art, this would be commerce. I wanted to have the Hotel be created like art. One of



the most difficult thing to do in a Hotel is to keep the guest inside of it. The point of hotels (now), is to serve as a place where people stay while visiting other things in a city, and what I wished for with the St-James, was a place that became the destination as well, not just the stop over. The restaurant was a big part of this and this is why now we continue to push the mix in the pursuit of creating that special alchemy which keeps the guests here when they arrive. This starts, in my opinion, with the food and the service. Remarkably simple yes, but remarkably overlooked. I also am a big fan of fun, just creating fun for the people that come to the Hotel makes simple things, fun. I am lucky to be a public company without being a "public company", this is a good place to be. This creates a passion that is the main motivator for everyone at the Hotel. You feel it when you walk through the doors, when you eat at the restaurant, when you sleep in the beds, or when you come to the spa... passion that's it! That is the thread that joins everything together.

KA — What has driven you to create the life that you have created for yourself, and how do you keep at it after all these years?

LR — It is very important to play — it's never too late to do something in your life, the idea that you are too old for this or for that is not true. Are you breathing? Then you are not too old. There is no limit no matter how old you are. The age of the body is mostly determined by your mind. Now, I see that the young people, they get tired so fast. It is fashionable now to be bored, not to have passion, but you see, how not having passion robs you of your energy. I am at a stage now where I must show respect for my body, it's too bad that the things that are not good for you taste so good. It is as if the "poison is hidden in the honey", the bread is so good, but it needs to be in moderation. I cannot abuse myself, it's like I would be abusing someone I love. It's amazing that when you feel good, you look good. For me, it shows in my hair, when I do not eat properly I might as well wear a baseball cap the next day since I will not be able to have my hair respond to any grooming. For others, it can be bad skin etc. but the signs are always there.

KA — How important is charity to you?

LR — The most important thing is to give back to the society that you are in. I think it is also very important that your team sees you as you are not as what business dictates. Sometimes when you are in the business stress you forget that there are people living in realities that has nothing to do with the business game. Serving them (the homeless) their dinners, was such an amazing thing. The organizers wanted to get the press involved to give interviews, but you know what, that was not why I was there, I was there for me, not for profit. This was the essence of why I was doing this to connect with my humanity. I loved to talk to them, it was so funny-I remembered a few of these people were even aware of my stocks (at that time we were a public company) some people were trading cigarettes for coffee, it was incredible to be part of their world. Also, I think how children are abused, this for me is the greatest sin, but even greater still, is the fact that when you send money, 75% of it goes to places where it does nothing directly for the children. It's always a question of politics, even with the lives of the innocent. The protection of children and all causes related to this are definitely closest to my heart.

KA — What music do you listen to?

LR — The music I love is the blues- I love the message in this music. I love the stories and how they make me feel that I don't have to live the reality since someone has already lived it, and great blues gives you the outcome so strong that you know you don't have to go down that road. I find that when the artist is really good, he can create a sort of virtual reality around the listener.

KA — When are you the happiest and centered?

LR — When I get up in the morning I am happy. I feel that every day, we are given a day but you know what I realized lately, as we age we realize this more than when we are young, it's this: we are given a day, but one is also taken. We are always at the same point, we are always in the present. But everyday I am happy. I know how lucky I am to even have the choice of being happy, so I chose to be happy. This is the least I can do because I am very aware that there are a lot of people that do not even have the choice to be happy. When am I happiest? The funny thing is that it's when I am alone in my car driving home at the end of the day just listening to music and in motion. This feeling is magical for me, it is as if it isn't me that is moving but the scene around me. I love this 45 minute drive with music. I can understand clearly why many recording artists before releasing their music, insist on hearing it on a long drive first.

KA — Which City in the world is your favorite?

LR — I spent two weeks in Istanbul recently, and this place completely amazed me. I fell in love with the place. I was going there expecting something completely different from what I actually experienced. The food was amazing, and the flavors stayed with me for weeks after leaving there. Sometimes just a sound or a memory would be all that I needed to be fully immersed in the Istanbul again from right here in Montreal- magic don't you think?

KA — Why do you think the biggest "stars" in the world insist on

staying at the St. James; from Elton John to Bono?

LR — It's very interesting how people take the biggest luxury for granted and when you become famous like the stars, you come right back to this truest of luxury. Alone time: time to be by yourself. Even something as basic as sleeping in the same room becomes a longed for luxury, something that we take for granted. I remember when the Rolling Stones came to town, Mick Jagger wanted so much to have privacy, that he booked the whole hotel for himself. It was such a site to see him in his robe unshaven going from his room to the spa. All he craved was his alone time; his time to let his hair down so to speak, and to get to it - he had to rent the whole hotel. There was another time when Elton John was playing in Canada, and whether he was in Toronto or Vancouver he would jet back to Montreal to sleep in his bed. These are just a few in the many examples of how much it is the things that are simple that become the true luxury at the end of the day.

KA — How do you define "a life of luxury" and how do you live yours.?

LR — Take water for example, it doesn't really matter how much money you have or how big your diamonds are if you were two days in the desert, you would not be thinking of any of those things- but it is for sure that a glass of water would be the most luxurious thing you would have ever seen. I think in our rush for things, we need not overlook the simple things. I am not saying don't enjoy life, it is just that this enjoyment is often times too much without being aware of what the simple reality is. We cannot live in the past and remain sour, I think that being sour is the cause of most of the diseases in life, cancers etc. these are all there and they get triggered by unhappiness. Life is too short to be sour. We should try to learn when we are hurt and let the rest go, sometimes even when our trust is broken, there is still a bit of luck there if you look closely enough. It's like love, you can never give up, never. This is sad to give up on love.

KA — How do you believe luck has a factor in our success?

LR — I feel that in life no matter who you are, you need at least 25% of luck. Never forget your luck. In love we need luck more than in most things, to be in love with the right person requires a lot of luck. Someone once said that luck is when preparedness meets opportunity. I think that is quite close to the truth, but for me it is just simple: we need luck. In divorce, we need luck as well since this can be such a messy thing. I think that when in divorce, we see life differently. This force even sometimes makes us think that there will be no love for us, and that we are too old for love. But love is not a noun, it is a verb- we have to entertain love, we have to send it passion. Love is not passive. I truly feel that things are written in the book. Look at this interview, how many things had to align themselves for this moment to happen right now which also will create other perfect moments. It is sometimes hard to see the connections, but to take yourself out of it for just a moment-that is magic.

KA — Who is Lucien?

LR — Who am I?... I believe in love and in the presence of luck



It's interesting how people take the biggest luxury for granted : alone-time