



**Andi Pepper**

Founder  
Andi Pepper Interior Design  
New York

**Stephen B. Jacobs**

Founder and Principal  
Stephen B. Jacobs Group  
New York

This formidable design couple—partners in both business and life—had flourishing separate careers before joining forces in the design of the Gotham Hotel (now the Peninsula) in New York in 1982. Jacobs, who holds bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Pratt Institute, had started his own firm, while Pepper, educated at Moore College of the Arts and Drexel University, had worked on several hospitality projects, including the Claridge, Atlantic City’s first casino.

In the following years, Jacobs and Pepper developed a seamless rapport that put them at the forefront of the boutique hotel boom. Manhattan’s Library and Giraffe exemplified the boutique genre, both polished jewels of intimacy and style. They subsequently blazed another trail with the Gansevoort, set in a then-dubious New York neighborhood, the Meatpacking District, which seemed to resist change for many years. With the Gansevoort as its anchor, the area has become a world-class destination. They designed two others, in South Beach and Manhattan’s East Side, and there are whispers of another location currently in the air.

The duo points to the Gansevoort projects as career highlights.

“It put us at the vanguard of creating a brand,” says Jacobs. “We weren’t conscious of branding,” adds Pepper. “We just did things in our own style and appropriate to the [respective] neighborhoods—every aspect of the hotel, from the font to the uniforms. It just turned out to be a brand.”

Despite forays into other modes of architecture and design, the two have a special passion for hospitality. Pepper loves the originality of each project. “There are products to use—lighting or fabric or technology—that didn’t exist ten years ago.” And each one invites a brainstorming experience that she relishes. “For each hotel, we throw everything out the window and start from scratch. The thrill comes from the challenge of starting over each time.”

For Jacobs, it’s the details he cherishes—“being able to finish the hotel space down to the bathrobes and napkins. We do a lot of large-scale housing, and the hospitality projects have made all our other work better,” he says, adding, “more and more of our residential clients are hiring us for the specific reason of our hospitality experience. They want what I call ‘the veneer of hospitality.’”

*Clockwise from below: A guestroom at the Hotel Breakwater in South Beach, recently renovated by Pepper and Jacobs (photo by Ken Hayden); one of the bars at the multi-level, indoor-outdoor Rooftop at Gansevoort Park Avenue in New York (photo by Magda Biernat); a sitting area in one of the guestrooms at the Hotel Giraffe in New York; and the lobby of the Gansevoort Meatpacking in New York (photo by David Joseph).*

