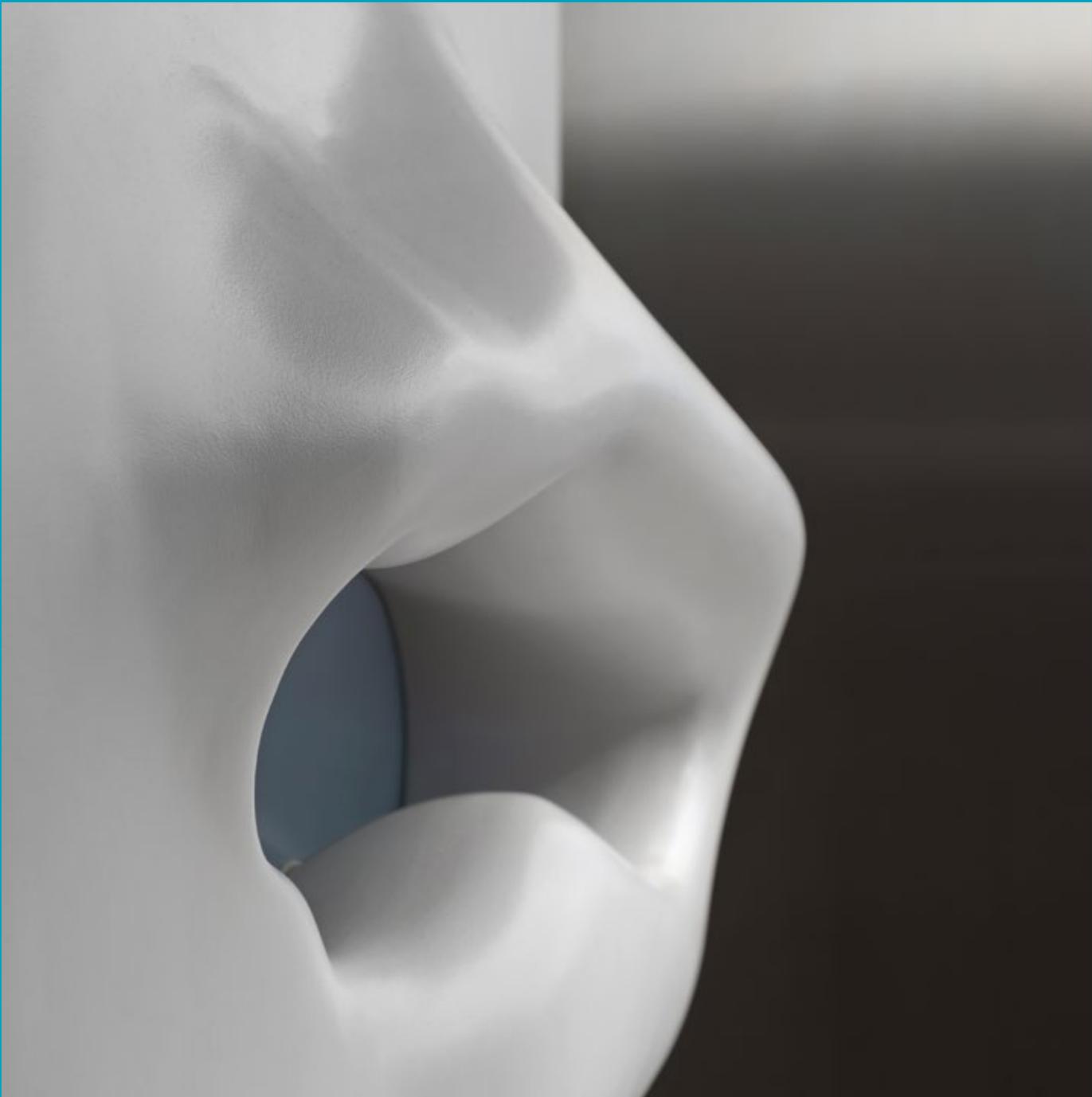


# FRAME

THE NEXT SPACE

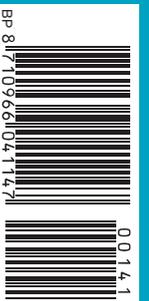
**Can design  
solve the  
housing crisis?**

Why flexible retail is the new pop-up shop  
Decoding the true value of 'third space'  
The renewed relevance of the members' club  
Why hotels should refocus on sleep  
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## How the members' club concept has found renewed relevance



Housed in the city's iconic Bradbury Building, the LA location of work-oriented members' club NeueHouse presents itself as the 'cultural home for creators, innovators and thought leaders'. DesignAgency was responsible for the interior.

A K-shaped recovery means that the wealthy will exit the pandemic not merely unharmed, but with ample extra liquidity and enthusiasm to spend; being unable to shop and travel freely really adds up when you're in the top tax bracket. That's great news for the luxury end of the hospitality market. What that wealthy clientele values in a hospitality offer will have undoubtedly been shaped by the trauma of recent events, however. The excitement of being able to access new experiences once again will be tempered by the need to build trust around those you're sharing it with. For members' clubs, that means their ability to engineer social serendipity within a bubble of siloed safety has never been more prescient.

Certainly, that rush to firm up the boundaries of our social circles is making the members' club concept attractive to a host of new players. Zero Bond, a new NYC-based club that opened last October, taps into a similar need to broaden horizons and friendship groups, but under the stewardship of a larger benevolent entity. 'Zero Bond is about knowing who is part of the community

around you and having space,' cofounder Scott Sartiano tells *Grazia*. 'Having space' is an interesting turn of phrase, because it highlights how the members' club sits in a unique position between the public and private realm, one not easily provided in other hospitality contexts. Indeed, Sartiano points to members' clubs being the perfect intermediary zone in a world where the established categories of home, work and entertainment are becoming increasingly blurred: 'Homes don't have amenities. People don't want casual offices or formal homes. We are in the middle, the benchmark for the "third space".'

The current power of that 'home-from-home' ethos – hospitality with a familial edge – is part of the reason that Soho House is mooted to still be happy pursuing an IPO in an otherwise unstable market. 'More and more companies and groups are very eager to explore and expand the membership concept,' said Gilda Perez-Alvarado, global CEO of JLL Hotels & Hospitality, when commenting on the move for *Skift*. 'It's all been fuelled by the pandemic and how that has

impacted how we live, work, and play. Maybe you travel to a certain city where there's an exclusive space you can stay that's giving you a more residential and very personal approach to service. That's the winning formula going forward. In other words, while any top-strata hospitality brand may be able to meet your demands, it's only the members' club that's going to make you feel taken care of... I mean, would you turn to your hotel for a Covid vaccination, as members of the £25,000-a-year Knightsbridge Circle in London have been?'

Suffice to say, all sorts of businesses will be looking at how they can add a (nonetheless friendly) veil of cliquiness to their offer moving forward. The most amenable strategy is often to bring together two brands with synergistic clientele and collateral. Photography museum Fotografiska, which has multiple international bases, recently announced a merger with work-oriented members' club NeueHouse, currently of New York and LA and soon also of Venice, California, and Miami. 'What we wanted to do is to provide this platform with

both brands to say if you make that decision to experience culture, you want to make that decision within an extraordinary creative community, around other people that really inspire you,' NeueHouse CEO Josh Wyatt tells *Fast Company*.

This intention is impacting all facets of the luxury sector. It can be read in Gleneagles' – arguably Scotland's most renowned and intransigent luxury hotel – decision to invest significant sums in opening members' clubs in both Edinburgh and London, or the fact that Harrods is creating a members-only 'shopping club' as a gateway to the wallets of Shanghai's elite, or the success of Rolls-Royce's owner-only Whisper club. It's an intention to build fewer but better relationships with brands and those that follow them, and to swap individualism and excess for something a little more purposeful and pastoral. As hotelier Andre Balazs said of his surprise decision to make LA's famed Chateau Marmont members-only last year: 'There is something to be said for knowing people. You can chat with them; you know where they have been.' **PM**

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