

## Famed French designer plans Seattle hotel to make you feel smarter and sexier

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Philippe Starck, world-renown French designer, was in Seattle last week to work on his plans for the SLS Hotel that will occupy part of the Fifth + Columbia high-rise that under construction downtown.

Starck said he is drawn to Seattle because people love both science and nature.

French designer Philippe Starck has a "bromance" with entrepreneur Sam Nazarian. Together they created the concept for SLS, a chain of luxury hotels that is coming to Seattle.

The renowned designer was in town last week to talk about his plan for the 184-room Seattle SLS, which will occupy 13 of the lower floors in the glassy, 44-story Fifth + Columbia office/hotel project that is under construction downtown. The more than \$400 million project is scheduled to be completed in 2017.

Starck is known for many things. In North America, he is perhaps best known for his collaboration about 15 years ago with **Target** (NYSE: TGT). Starck designed a line of household items for the company, ranging from a sleek tape dispenser to a toddler's plastic cup styled to look like a crystal goblet.

He also is "the trendsetter" of the designer hotel, said **University of Washington** architecture professor Ken Oshima. For Starck to design a project in Seattle "is quite notable," Oshima said. "I think it's huge."

Starck said hotel design "is never a matter of trends or aesthetic." Instead, it's about creating a place where people "will be at their best, will be uplifted, will be more sexy, more intelligent, more creative, more sparkling, more in love..."

He is happy, he said, if hotel guests return home and say, "Wow, I was just in a hotel. I have no idea of the style, but it gave me so much energy, so many ideas that I want to create [things] myself."

I interviewed Starck Thursday at ZGF Architects, which designed Fifth + Columbia and whose offices look down onto the project site. The modern tower is going up next to the Beaux arts-style sanctuary that belonged to the First United Methodist Church. Fifth + Columbia developer Daniels Real Estate bought the building several years ago from the congregation, which moved to Belltown.

Pointing to a model of the Fifth + Columbia high-rise, Starck said the building "is purely aerodynamic." Then he tapped the sanctuary's dome on the model.

"The most interesting thing is not the [high-rise]. It is not the church. It is the mix of both," Starck said, calling this symbolic of Seattle's reputation as a place with a futuristic outlook and a city that holds onto its history.

Seattle is "a city of science and city of nature," Starck said. During the workday, people here "create the future in science and on the weekend they hug trees."

Starck can relate. He strives to create smart designs while embracing nature as evidenced by where he and his wife Jasmine Starck live – in rustic cabins surrounded by nature. They're in Paris only three days a month and spend half their time traveling internationally and at their cabins in remote places. They live on a dune in Portugal, for instance, and on an island in a Venetian lagoon.

"I love intelligent people. Seattle is for me a real opportunity and a real pleasure," said Starck, who designs all SLS hotels in the United States. He created the SLS brand with Nazarian. SLS is "our vision, our baby. Nazarian is "a fantastic person. He's young, intelligent, fun. We love him."

That's clear from the SLS name. It stands for Sam Loves Starck, and Starck Loves Sam.

*Editor's note: A Q & A with Philippe Starck will run in the March 20 print edition of the Business Journal.*