

DESIGN

From a country hotel to a social distancing fix, Zahava Elenberg's imagination moves with the times.

Words **JANE ROCCA**



SARAH COLLINS



THE SEBEL YARRAWONGA AT SILVERWOODS

A new boutique luxury hotel is opening soon in Yarrowonga, giving us more reasons to holiday on the Murray River and think regionally when it comes to a getaway.

The 4.5-star hotel alongside Silverwoods golf course has undergone a \$48 million dollar makeover, with Melbourne architect and designer Zahava Elenberg behind the custom furniture that you'll find within the resort's 70 rooms and other public spaces.

The combination of hotel rooms, residential apartments and serviced apartments at The Sebel Yarrowonga all come fitted with contemporary modern design, while the resort itself includes a Sol Wellness Centre day spa, gymnasium, waterfront pool plus dining and conference facilities.

There'll be a range of food and beverage venues from a bistro to fine dining.

Elenberg, founder of the furniture and fit-out company Move-In and co-founder of Melbourne-based architecture and design practice Elenberg Fraser, worked alongside Cox Architecture to add to the modern feel within the hotel's interiors.

"People react emotionally to spaces, so when it comes a hotel fit-out like this, it's exciting to work with developers who want to spend the money and see the care throughout all the process and really take care of those spaces," says Elenberg, who is the daughter of gallerist Anna Schwarz.

"We also worked with local artisans and European ones to bring this project to life.

"But the weird thing is I haven't been there to see the hotel since we finished because COVID-19 kicked in and we can't travel there."

It was during the first Melbourne lockdown that Elenberg created a new design product KlikClax, in

Clicked into place

response by the pandemic and concern about how social distancing when we return to the office.

She took a trip down memory lane (think 1960s vintage polystyrene toy Play Plax Squares) when she came up with new build-it-yourself Perspex screen systems you can use in the home, at the office or in any communal spaces.

Elenberg used to play with the original toys in the '70s in her grandfather's house alongside his Featherstone furniture. Now she makes bright coloured Perspex space dividers as a playful nod to that era but gives them a modern makeover.

"We're also doing customised quotes for big offices that need to bring 200 people together

eventually," Elenberg says. "Psychologically it's interesting because it gives people a sense of their own space and ever since the '90s and the use of the open-plan office, we lost that sense of privacy. I think there's something nice about having your own cubicle and corner within the workplace. These are transparent and playful and envelope you in a space which is timely given our social distancing concern."

The mother of three, who also sits on the Melbourne Internal Film Festival board and loves rock climbing Mount Arapiles in the Grampians in her spare time, also works on student accommodation projects. She completed Journal's Leicester Street in Carlton in 2019, with another on Swanston Street, also in Carlton, set to open later this year or early 2021.

"Student accommodation is very different to creating 4.5-star hotel rooms but the principles remain the same. It's all about creating something that is welcoming, unique and functional," she says.

She's rolling with the punches that comes with the pandemic. "New social distancing laws create real challenges when it comes to building and design work but this is the new normal," she says.

"You can't throw 100 people on site and get things done in three days any more, you really have to plan with a new set of criteria. There's an element of patience, camaraderie and acceptance, which is quite nice. Everyone is in this together." ●



The KlikClax physical distancing partitions, above, designed by architect Zahava Elenberg, top left.