

Style and substance

Function, aesthetics, the passenger experience, and cultural and environmental sensitivity are equally important to Elskop Scholz

Based in New York City, Elskop Scholz is a multidisciplinary transportation design consultancy with a strong background in architecture and interior design. The company is perhaps best known in the rail industry for its stunning design of the Beijing to Lhasa Luxury Tourist Train. The route is long distance and the rolling stock conventional, but Elskop Scholz had to create an interior that was super stylish, incorporating luxurious suite accommodations – necessary to create a five-star experience for five-day trips across China.

The design project began in 2006 and was completed by Bombardier Sifang in Qingdao, China, in 2008. The train is currently being put through its paces with test runs by the China Railway Administration.

The firm is run by Inés Elskop and Christopher Scholz. For them, design success comes down to a combination of discipline and style. For rail projects, the company considers several points to be especially vital.

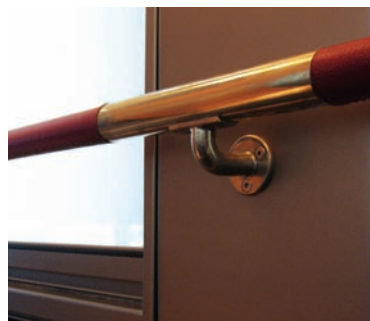
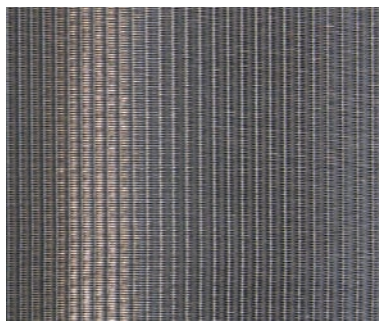
Flexibility

Firstly, Elskop Scholz always conducts a careful and exacting review of programme and function. "Today flexibility in design is all-important as ridership patterns change and consumers demand ever-more frequent product upgrades," says Scholz. "Convertibility is an absolute requirement because of inherent space restrictions competing for variable functions and uses throughout a rail journey. Long-distance and luxury applications require convertibility of furnishings while maintaining high standards of finish."

Style and innovation, particularly through materials, is also a major focus for the company, and is vital to creating an individual design. "Design is an increasingly necessary element in creating differentiation across all consumer sectors – including rail," says Elskop. "Product



MAIN IMAGE: The
Chinese Luxury
Tourist Train



that is singular and recognisable must have high design content in a world where the currency of image reigns."

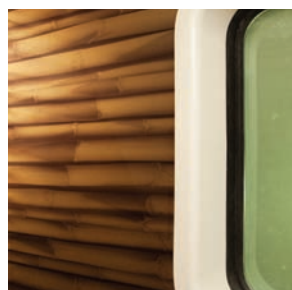
The company's knowledge of detailing, finishes and materials is garnered from 20 years of architectural design and construction experience. "This enables us to work with lightweight and high-tech materials that reduce weight, energy consumption and cost of operation but are still perceived as luxurious," says Scholz. "For example, sandwich technology combines high visual appeal with lightness, fire code compliance and longevity."

When it comes to lighting, the firm collaborates with lighting designers to develop the right strategies for each project. Scholz is particularly excited about the potential of LED technology, which he says can meet design requirements while also offering energy efficiency and a long lifetime, and therefore savings in replacement costs.

User experience

Another factor in design is the human experience, and at Elskop Scholz that means placing the user experience at the forefront of design solutions, and creating enhanced passenger experience and usability. "We understand that providing a singular passenger experience is the key to increased ridership and profitability," says Elskop. "Product that is detailed, thoughtful and has high design content will stand out in the marketplace."

Finally, cultural and environmental sensitivity is a major consideration for all designs developed at the company. As well as recognising the particulars of history, culture and geography inherent in each project, this entails maximising the efficiency of materials and energy systems. "Eco-responsibility and sustainability are very important considerations given the significant investment made in existing rolling stock," says Elskop. "Interior refurbishment enables modernisation and the inclusion of new comfort and safety features as well as a new look." ☒



Tangula