

Nigel Franklyn

The Spa Whisperer Nigel Franklyn shares his thoughts on holistic wellness and the spa world Writer Daniel Scheffler

“I am very hands-on,” says frequent traveller Franklyn, who has tackled the spa and wellness industry by aligning its components to make what he calls “a perfect, seamless and more profitable experience” (for both the receiver and giver). And the whisperer name comes from the film *The Horse Whisperer*. “It’s about a man who takes a beautiful and untamed horse and turns it into something more powerful and beautiful without a language, just with an energy and a belief.”

What seemed like a no-brainer came to Franklyn during a life-affirming spa experience in Georgia. “A wonderful therapist made me feel wanted, safe and loved, and I thought, ‘Wow! I need to be a part of this movement.’” Since then, Franklyn has worked with some of the best brands in the business and most exclusive spas and hotels – including the Four Seasons and Aman Resorts. All because of a simple belief that “wind chimes and water features don’t make a spa anymore”; people require more substance.

Franklyn was bitten by the travel bug early, his life in the UK followed by 20 years in California. He began as a model in the major capitals before transitioning to journalism and becoming a travel writer. Today he works with chemical-free skincare companies “because I feel like they have the same almost altruistic goal as I do” and that has evolved to working with the world’s best medical wellness clinics and products. “I enjoy working across the broader spectrum now, and the access to state-of-the-art machines with powerful, healthy results. But I will never lose my passion or commitment to chemical-free.”

Today a typical consultation with Franklyn focuses on spa size, products, treatments, therapists and overall vision. “I don’t go away and come back with a proposal; I work in real time,” says Franklyn. “We are in the business of creating business from emotion, and you can’t overthink emotion. If you over process thoughts, or get in your own way and do what looks right and not what feels right, you waste everyone’s time and homogenise the experience.”

“I have helped develop the world’s

top spas, including the George V in Paris and the Aman Resorts but working on that level, there’s a lot of bureaucracy which is difficult for someone like me who works in such an organic, unorthodox way,” he says. But clients are now more eager to get into this appointment given his years of experience. “They tend to roll with it and trust my instincts.” But the development and dramatic increase of business for clients, in



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both retail and treatments speaks for itself.

The “unorthodox” way Franklyn works comes without a specific plan or methodology. “I need to live the experience with the spa. I can’t just walk into a place and come up with business plans or ideas that aren’t relevant to the spa or demographic.” Franklyn describes spa developments as not as simple as some may think, that there is “always space between what your client wants and what is actually appropriate or even possible”.

“People have very specific visions and concepts, but often they don’t lend themselves to a purposeful experience.” After all, a beautifully designed spa is, as Franklyn says, “just a well-designed building.

But clarity and knowledge are what create movement. Spas, more than most spaces, need soul, energy and purpose.”

“I cannot tell you how many spas I have been in where it is very clear that the designer or architect was not a spa person. They are emotional places, and if the flow makes no sense, it has an effect on the general experience and our goals are harder to achieve,” he continues.

Franklyn officially lives in San Francisco but spends most of his time on the road serving his clients. They rave about him, often referring to a “reawakening” of therapists. Franklyn calls it “breathing life into spa and therapist. Different spaces and people require different attention. My job is to look for the gaps and fractures, and figure out how to remove or fix them, or simply just create something wonderful and meaningful.”

“Spas are very vulnerable, sensory spaces, so I keep the environments honest because I want guests to be able to surrender completely. My philosophy is that therapy lives in complete surrender,” says the Spa Whisperer. He believes surrender is “where the real work gets done”.

This philosophy is how he approaches 2016. “I’m looking at becoming more involved in the conception of spa and its products, working independently with larger spa consulting companies and speaking at conferences,” shares Franklyn.

“I am seeing a wonderful shift from well-being to healing – two very different things. Rivers run deep, and I think people are realising that they can look for something more sustainable and meaningful for their lives in spa experiences.” And with international awareness raised on what is available at spas, wellness centres and resorts, holistic healing and longevity are attainable. “We are no longer the stepchild of a hotel, stuck in the basement and offered as an amenity to upset guests,” he smiles.

The advice Franklyn gives spas and those in the industry is “do not look for perfection” because people want to connect on a human level, and exceed the physical limits they put on themselves. Perhaps this whisper is something you’ll remember after all. www.thespawhisperer.com