

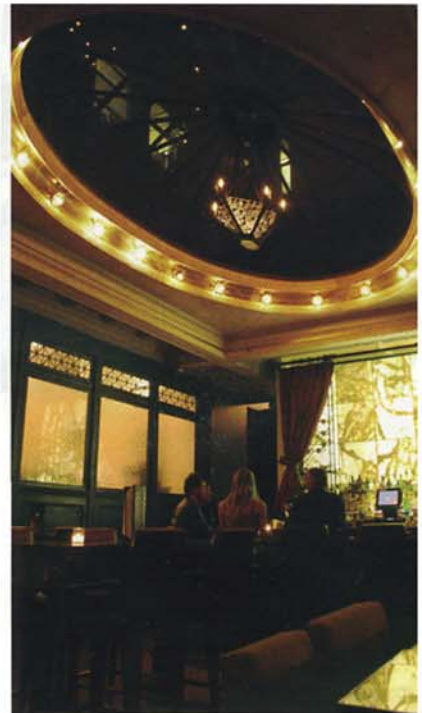
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The New Look

BOUQUET  
DESIGN



The Mansfield Hotel strikes a balance between modern New York and its original Beaux-Arts and Second-Empire style thanks to a recent renovation project.



NY boutique hotels have unique character

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boutique hotel," said Sandra Cardona, the Duane Street Hotel's project manager. "A lot of factors fell into place to make the hotel a boutique, including the scale of it at only six stories. And with it being next to a lot of boutique shops, a boutique hotel just seemed to mix better than a Marriott or a Hilton Garden Inn would."

Serving as the architect for the project was Gene Kaufman Associates, while Paul Vega carried out the interior design. Vega could not be reached for comment on the project as of press time, but both were tasked with integrating the unique character of Tribeca at the Duane Street Hotel.

"The mission of the Duane Street Hotel is to provide a unique refuge of timeless comfort, unrivaled service and incomparable courtesy that will create an unforgettable guest experience," pointed out Jeffrey Stagman, the general manager of the hotel, which is managed by Hersha Hospitality Management. "We have developed a hotel 'neighborhood' scale—a small, service-oriented hotel that will engender loyalty and long-term stays from our guests. The intimate environment provides a relaxed atmosphere that makes guests feel like the Duane Street Hotel is their home away from home."

In providing that feeling, the lobby is the first line of allure, as it integrates several different materials, according to Cardona, and evokes a warm ambiance with dark woods and a large, curved bronze wall that houses custom-designed seating. There are also benches and credenzas that dot the walkway to the elevator area.

Over at the reception area the front desk is made of wood with a stone countertop and overhead in the lobby, there are luminous, glowing ceiling panels made of Mylar fabric.

In the 40-seat restaurant, known as 'Beca,

wood dominates the design along with stone flooring and, again, the sweeping, curved, bronze wall that separates the lobby from the restaurant.

Regarding the guestrooms, Cardona said guests are greeted by eight-foot guestroom doors with steel-like painted finishes that "are very striking." Inside, local artwork is highlighted along with custom furniture. The primary color scheme involves yellows and light ash but the suites are a grayish lavender.

Overall, the guestrooms have a sophisticated, minimalist design with hardwood floors and slate and marble guest bathrooms that feature rain showerheads, clear shower panels and custom wood vanities with stone countertops.

Further uptown at the Mansfield Hotel on West 44th Street, Willow Hotels, which owns and operates the property, sought to restore

Hotels knew it wanted to take the boutique nature of it up a notch in all facets of hospitality.

"What we tried to do is incorporate great customer service and the character of the property into whatever we do," explained Jeff Harvey, vp and director of operations for New York-based Willow Hotels, which redesigned the hotel itself and kept it open during the \$4-million renovation. "But the boutique concept is a little coined now with even franchised brands doing boutique, so we try instead to be a good choice for our clients by adhering to what the property is all about. The Mansfield is an older asset, but clearly its got a niche unto itself."

Many original hotel details were kept intact during the project, including the hotel's oval staircases with their wrought iron balustrades, the terrazzo floors and the grand lobby's 16-foot ceiling, which is supported by columns and accented by bobesches.

But figuring out what to keep and what to redo wasn't clear cut, according to Harvey. "When we first bought the hotel, we saw that its last renovation really didn't take the property along the lines of its character," he said. "They instead introduced influences that at the time may have worked, but didn't really fit in terms of the initial impression of the building from the exterior or in the lobby. So we then tried to make it both aesthetically pleasing and modern with certain things guests expect and look for, especially in New York. So we reconditioned the hardwood floors and introduced fabrics that weren't flashy."

The guestrooms, which vary in scale, were made masculine in their design with a neutral color palette of ivory and beige that is



the boutique hotel while paying homage to its rich and storied past and reinforcing its classic New York feel. Furthermore, the hotel's original Beaux-Arts and Second-Empire styles were destined to be maintained as part of the 12-month restoration.

The 126-room Mansfield Hotel had technically always been a boutique hotel dating back to its original opening in 1904.

However, in acquiring it in 2004, Willow

accented by dark wood appointments and ebony-stained hardwood floors. Each guestroom also now has a gray suede headboard, 300-thread count linens, wooden blinds, a work desk with a trapezoid leather desk chair and a bay window with a black and ivory-striped velveteen window seat.

"During the last renovation, they tried to put in a window bench, so we tried to maintain that with the bay windows," Harvey pointed out, adding, "The one thing I felt good about was putting the essence of the property back into the rooms. We wanted modern conveniences, but not necessarily modern style. So I feel we ended up with a representative product that's much better than what we bought."

The same could easily be said for The Roxbury Motel roughly three hours north of New York City in the Catskill Mountains, where Masserson Properties originally bought a circa-1860s house with an adjoining strip motel that was built in the 1960s, but subsequently became a rundown welfare motel. Acquired in 2003, Masserson renovated the property itself and reopened it a year later to critical acclaim with 11 larger-than-average suites. Then in 2006, it broke ground on an expansion that would bring the Roxbury to 18 suites in 2007 and practically redefine the definition of boutique.

"The boutique trend has absolutely become cliché with the big chains jumping on it along with everybody else," asserted Gregory Henderson, the president of Roxbury, NY-based Masserson Properties, Inc. "Most, if not all of these chain boutique hotels, have a cool element in their common

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