

AWASH IN GLAMOUR

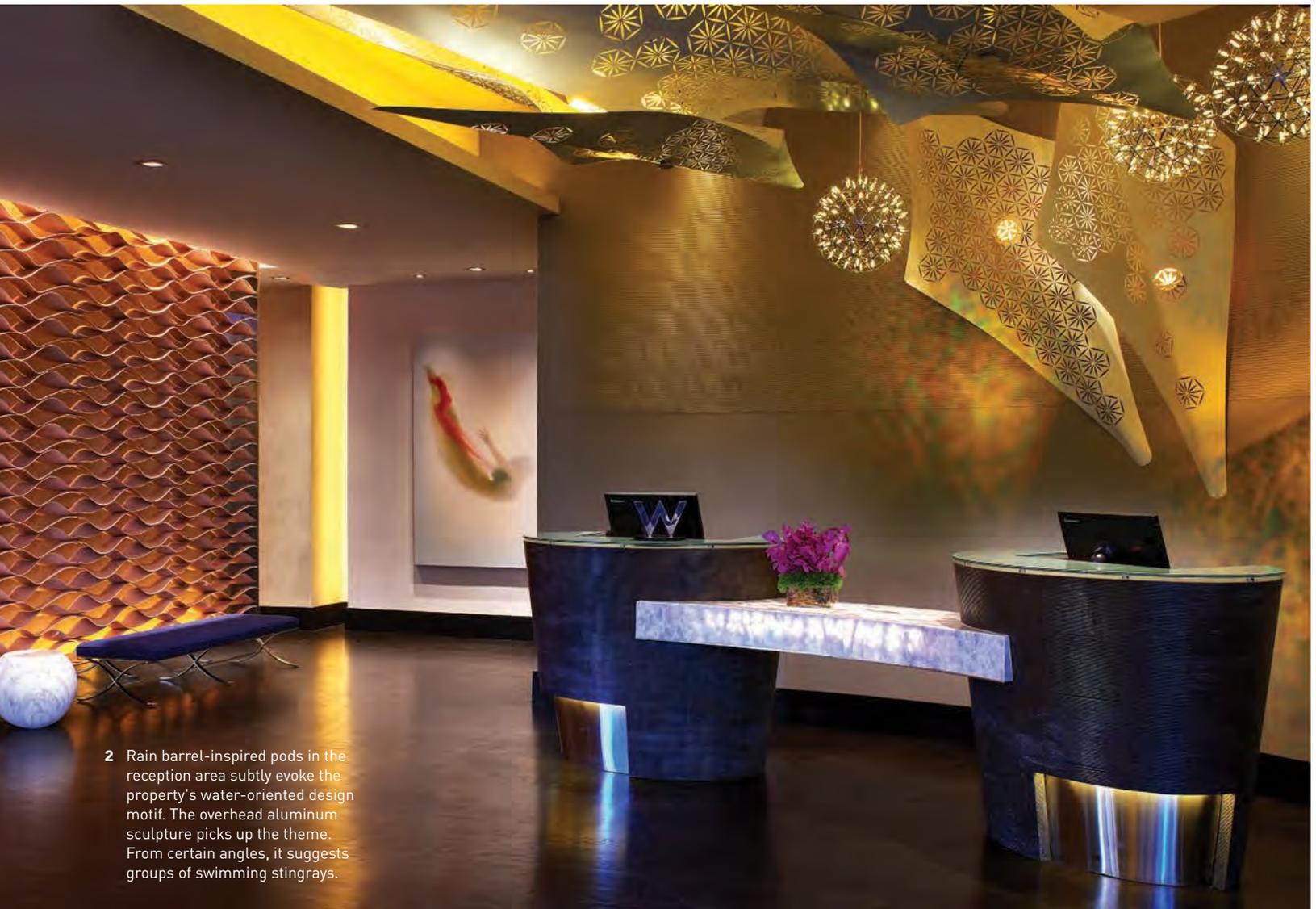
Dawson Design Associates opens the creative flood gates for the redo of the W Los Angeles-West Beverly Hills with a free-flow blend of watery references, mid-century modern touches and a shimmer of gold.

BY JENNY S. REISING

1 The screening room within the hotel's Extreme WOW suite makes private screenings a solid-gold experience, with its ceiling, tufted walls and sofa all in that color.



MARK SILVERSTEIN PHOTOGRAPHY



2 Rain barrel-inspired pods in the reception area subtly evoke the property's water-oriented design motif. The overhead aluminum sculpture picks up the theme. From certain angles, it suggests groups of swimming stingrays.

AFTER A BUSINESS DAY in LA or an ice age spent in the city's infamous gridlock, who wouldn't want to escape into an oasis? That's exactly the rationale behind Dawson Design Associates' (DDA's) recently completed renovation of the Living Room and guest rooms at the W Los Angeles-West Beverly Hills.

"Oases are often described as sensory experiences of light, sun and water, with their fountains and springs said to be inhabited by nymphs, water goddesses who are revered for their beauty and seductive personalities," says Andrea Dawson Sheehan, ceo and art director of Seattle-based DDA. "Our goal was to layer in the mythology of the oasis, by creating an engaging experience that's rich in both texture and ambiance, while also capturing an intrigue and illusion that's indicative of LA and Hollywood."

Those new experiences are layered into a series of bungalow-like spaces that Sheehan says are designed to give guests a taste of the Hollywood Hills, circa 1960. Instilling the hotel spaces with a mid-century feel was a natural. After all, some 50 years ago, the building housing it served as a dormitory (it's right by UCLA).

"We wanted the hotel to have a residential vibe, giving a nod to mid-century modern architecture," says Sheehan. "But then we dropped in elements that are unexpected, that make fashion and art statements unique to its market."

That dual-pronged approach is on prominent display in the newly re-energized 5,200-sq.-ft. Living Room—W's amped-up version of the traditional lobby—where existing structural features divide the long, linear, high-ceilinged space, making it difficult to see through it. DDA decided to work with the obstructed layout to create "a garden of earthly and unearthly delights," as Sheehan puts it.



ANDREA DAWSON SHEEHAN
DAWSON DESIGN ASSOCIATES

DAVID PHELPS PHOTOGRAPHY (RECEPTION AREA); COURTESY OF DAWSON DESIGN ASSOCIATES (SHEEHAN)

3 By day, the Oasis Room features white walls that give it a light and airy feel. But at night, the room takes on the nightclub vibe shown here, thanks to color-changing LEDs.



To that end, DDA crafted a series of private spaces in the Living Room resembling indoor cabanas. These interior hideaways can either be linked together or cordoned off with slatted glass and stainless-steel rolling doors for private parties. Those screens add intrigue for incoming guests who can glimpse a VIP-only party without actually being invited to it. The dark finishes of the previous design were replaced with white walls that give the Living Room a light, cerebral quality by day and a club feel by night, when colored LEDs programmed to the DJ's beats take over.

Two of the more subtle water-related features DDA created for the Living Room can be found at the entrance. At eye level is a pair of reception pods that were inspired by Moroccan rain barrels. Those stations feature stainless-steel recessed bases, a textured wood substrate with a liquid metal coating for the main body, a frosted-glass top and a quartzite slab connector shelf.

Overhead is a laser-etched, bent-aluminum sculpture that creates a stacked, layered canopy. "It looks like either a group of sting rays swimming through the ocean or a blanket strung through some trees, depending on the viewing angle and the lighting," Sheehan notes.

Further on in the space, DDA decked out the central Oasis Room with images of runway models projected onto a 12-ft water wall. Adding sparkle overhead is an LED chandelier comprised of 400 lily-shaped crystals.

Mid-century touches within the Living Room include Mies van der Rohe Barcelona Benches in a dark lagoon color. The space is also home to custom-designed egg-shaped Moroccan-influenced rattan chairs and low-profile vinyl

sectionals in multi-tone white and metallic colors that be easily moved and reconfigured for private parties, Sheehan notes.

When it came to the hotel's guest accommodations, DDA's marching orders from owner Pebblebrook Hotel Trust included upping the number of rooms within the property. To accomplish that, designers took blocks of five existing rooms and converted them into seven.

"The old configuration consisted of mostly suites, with a small bedroom completely separate from the main living space," Dawson says. "By removing the interior walls we were able to create open rooms that felt bigger than the old layout, but were actually smaller in terms of square footage."

That process netted the hotel a total of 39 new rooms, bringing its total key count to 297. The updated guest rooms, in turn, are a softer version of the public spaces, blending a mid-century bungalow style that reflect the architecture of several nearby buildings. The carpets and wallcoverings are inspired by palm trees, while low-profile sectionals in metallic colors double as beds when extra guests need a place to crash.

To fuse fashion with the property's underlying water theme in the guest rooms and elsewhere, Sheehan commissioned a shoot by photographer Amber Gray of models dressed in couture gowns swimming in water. "We dropped them into a tank, hit the backlights to give them an ethereal quality and photographed them," she says. Images from this playful series are applied to mirrors in the guest rooms, making those viewing them feel like they're part of the artwork.

PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

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Pebblebrook Hotel Trust

OPERATOR
Starwood Hotels and
Resorts-W Hotels

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GENERAL CONTRACTOR
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PROJECT MANAGEMENT
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ARTWORK
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Inside Avenue
Mirror Image Inc.

AUDIOVISUAL
Electric Mirror
Illuminate Frame Inc.
Samsung Electronics

FIXTURES
Grohe America Inc.
Peerless AV
Vitraform

FLOORING
Alarwool Carpets
Chandra Rugs
Oregon Tile & Marble
Signature Hospitality Carpets
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Furnishings
Eurostyle
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JL Furnishings
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Plantation Design
PT. Saniharto Enggatharjo
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Vaughan Benz

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Go Antiques
Hallmark Collective
Mooi Lighting
Northern Lighting
SLV Lighting
Solavanti Lighting LLC
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YLighting

TEXTILES/DRAPERY
Brentano
Edelman Leather
Harlequin
S. Harris
Justin David
Kravet Inc.
P/Kaufmann
Pollack Associates
Valley Forge Fabrics

WALLCOVERINGS
DAC Hospitality
Kravet Inc.
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4 Helping create a romantic, Arabian Nights feel in the Extreme WOW Suite's bedroom are such touches as an oversized four poster bed, a patterned gold screen and pendant lighting.

As with any renovation, DDA kept some aspects of the previous guest rooms for budgetary reasons and/or because they still worked. For example, the glass desks and Eames task chairs stayed. In the bathrooms, tile work was retained, but the vanities and palm tree-inspired wallcoverings are new.

But for the renovated 16th-floor, 1,365-sq.-ft. Extreme WOW Suite, Sheehan says the client wanted an over-the-top space—and got it. “We brought the spacious, opulent quality of the lobby into the EWOW Suite and took it to the level of fantasy,” she says.

The suite's screening room, for example, is a luxe venue for taking in a movie, with its gold-colored tufted vinyl walls and a wraparound two-tiered settee. The bedroom, meantime, is now home to a romantic four-post bed backed by a gold screen that gives the space Arabian Nights feel, with light filtering through the designers' interpretation of a Spanish grill.

The suite's dining and living areas are separated by an etched, backlit, mirrored wall that doubles as a light fixture. As a final touch, the master bathroom was completely renovated. That space is now lavishly equipped with a vanity featuring a Carrera marble countertop and polished chrome-finished glass basin, while a mirror with exposed LED bulbs evokes mid-century glamour.

Sheehan says this renovation was one of the most complicated projects she's ever worked on. In addition to the challenge of keeping the hotel open during four months of work, the rooms have a wide variety of footprints. “We designed 157 different room types for a 297-key hotel, so guests can stay multiple times and never see the same layout,” she says.

Despite those challenges, Sheehan credits Pebblebrook with encouraging DDA to push the creative envelope in its work on this W. “Our client has discovered that the more we make that push, the more money they make,” says Sheehan, whose firm has worked for the company on more than 25 properties in recent years, including the Hotel Zephyr and Hotel Zetta, both in San Francisco. “It's all about getting into people's heads and providing a fantasy for them.” ●