



HBA

HBA CREATES NATURAL LUXURY IN IRELAND'S HOTEL EUROPE

KILLARNEY, IRELAND, September 16, 2008 — The Gallery, HBA/Hirsch Bedner Associates' London-based studio, has added another feather to its cap with the striking redesign of Hotel Europe. Completed in July, the resort hotel and spa exudes contemporary, natural luxury as it overlooks Killarney's majestic Loch Lein.

The renovation, begun in November 2006, covered all of the resort's public areas including the Crystal Bar, Brasserie, spa and café, suites and guestrooms. "We totally gutted the existing space," said HBA designer Shoko Nishimura. "It was a different kind of Irish limited-service hotel before."

The late-1960s-style, mid-century modern building contained especially spacious rooms that allowed panoramic views of Loch Lein. HBA suggested removal of some façade and augmented it with clear glazing to accentuate the views. Contrasting the large areas, the hotel contains several intimate spaces, such as a library and a champagne bar, which made the project much more residential and a trend in boutique hotel design.

According to HBA's London Director, Inge Moore, "Hotel Europe represents a breakthrough in innovative luxury design in this part of Ireland. It sets a new kind of standard for hospitality—there's nothing like it in the region." The bespoke design vision and precision details should certainly galvanize the unique property within the upper-end market.

In consideration of the local surroundings, the design team brought elements from nature into the property and incorporated them as key interior design elements. Moore commented on the guestrooms, "In creating the palette, we took inspiration from the neutral exterior colors—grays, blues and greens. Wooden tree trunks were collected and fashioned into artwork. All the colors that you see in nature are used as accents in each room, and each room is totally different from the others.

"Conversely," she continued, "the lobby, the restaurant, and the massive spa leverage unique patterns and vivid colors, tempered by cozy fireplaces and intimate spaces for conversation or relaxation. The whole project is very quirky and much more colorful than many of HBA's previous projects."

The firm's priority was to create a comfortable yet luxurious environment. Massive three-sided fireplaces in the two-story lobby lounge are boldly fashioned of rich, chocolate limestone, and the walls are finished in cream Venetian plaster with simple banding details. Monolithic reception desks have unique textured-metal finishes. Timber disks arranged as focal artwork cover one wall and enhance the concept of nature and complement the neutral color. In an eclectic twist, deep burnt-red seating arrangements enhance the space.

The Crystal Bar is clearly the hotel's "jewel," featuring warm, elegant oak-plank flooring, engraved mirror tiles on the walls, and columns that reflect lights from the shimmering crystal chandeliers hung above the bar. The space simply glitters, spiked with eye-catching color pairings of grays and vivid orange to create a fun and lively atmosphere.

Contrasting to the glamour of the bar, the Brasserie has an airy and calm demeanor. Antiqued mirrors grace the paneled walls above putty-colored, deep button-tufted banquettes. Relaxing guests can enjoy a leisurely conversation while chefs "entertain" at open kitchen cook stations or mingle with other patrons at Carrara marble buffet counters.

The library is the resort's most cerebral area. A central, contemporary, double-sided fireplace rests below whimsical art pieces. Majestic, custom-designed, dark burnt-oak-finished bookcases with black and nickel accents flank the roaring fire. Inside, each shelf has the unique bright-blue fringe trim with nail head details. A vast warm rug, with design inspired by the splashes of water from Loch Lein, introduces a brilliant blue hue and softens the wood flooring.

Hotel Europe is one of Ireland's most comprehensive spa facilities, managed by world-class operator ESPA.

In creating the spa, HBA designer Constantina Tsoutsikou commented, "guests are greeted in the spa lobby by an impressive art installation of carved monolithic timber blocks spread along the floor, echoing design features from the hotel lobby. During the day, an 11-meter-tall glass-enclosed atrium staircase floods the entry area with warm daylight. The wall flanking the staircase is composed of dark water, and in the gray afternoon hours, a central glass chandelier casts warm spirals of light from above the stair."

Upon arrival to the spa, guests are visually engaged with a centuries-old Irish pattern, cut out from paper-thin bronze sheets suspended from the ceiling. Spa amenities are comprised on two separate levels. The first, or active, level contains a state-of-the art fitness, kinesis and Tai Chi studio, along with female and male changing rooms.

This active level has opalescent silk wall coverings and jewel-like creamish gray accents that contrast with the dark and opulent relaxation areas. Here, the hardness of the black stonewall, dappled with niches for candlelight, is complemented and softened by velvet throws and soft pillows, while custom-designed bespoke relaxation beds surrounded by slat sail-like screens offer the ultimate privacy and comfort. Also on this level is a plunge pool adjacent to the indoor/outdoor vitality pool, plus a brasserie and "heat experience" areas consisting of a salt-water vitality pool, steam room, sauna and large activity showers in dark, dramatic tones.

The second floor is more of a sanctuary, offering treatment rooms arranged around a peaceful internal courtyard that is designed as a contemporary topiary garden. The tone here is sleek and sophisticated, with silver ash timber flooring, warm grays and lacquered surfaces. Bespoke-patterned metal panels, original B&B Italia armchairs upholstered in soft, opulent charcoal gray velvet and Mercury silver art give guests the ultimate setting for decadent pampering and treatments. This level also features a private terraced suite, complete with a Wenge-wood sauna overlooking the lake, sizable rain showers, and a stone-clad tub with water jets for two.

Clearly, Hotel Europe has been transformed into a breathtaking oasis as rejuvenating and soothing as its surrounding scenery. A haven for mind, body and spirit, this resort is a don't- miss destination spot for all who appreciate magnificent comfort and luxury interwoven with the splendor of the great outdoors.

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About HBA/Hirsch Bedner Associates

As a global leader in hospitality interior design, HBA/Hirsch Bedner Associates is credited with revolutionizing the design industry. Since it was founded in 1964, the company has continually set design trends, pushing boundaries and injecting fresh ideas in to some of the world's most prestigious and well-known addresses.

HBA/Hirsch Bedner Associates has successfully completed over 900 projects in 80 countries worldwide. More than 70 percent of its current project list is located in Pacific Rim countries, including many hotels with the world's premier brands such as Mandarin Oriental, Shangri-La, Ritz-Carlton, Four Seasons and others.

HBA/Hirsch Bedner Associates prides itself on its unrivalled knowledge of the cultural, financial, geographical and programmatic requirements involved in design projects, and applies that knowledge to all of its projects, ranging from world-class hotels and resorts to individual boutique hotels, spas, casinos, cruise ships and private residences.

HBA employs more than 450 design professionals in 12 offices worldwide: Los Angeles, Atlanta, San Francisco, London, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Tokyo, Singapore, Brisbane, Melbourne, New Delhi and Dubai. HBA attributes its achievements to its fundamental values of research and sensitivity to the needs of its markets.

For more information about HBA/Hirsch Bedner Associates, please visit the company's website at www.hbadesign.com.

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