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RAFFLES ISTANBUL ZORLU CENTER BALANCES MODERNITY AND HISTORY

By Jena Tesse Fox

OVER THE SUMMER, HBA/Hirsch Bedner Associates completed work on the new Raffles Istanbul at Zorlu Center, focusing on both the needs of modern luxury travelers and the local culture of Istanbul.

Sandra Cortner, principal/partner at HBA, says that the team's goal was to design a hotel "with a sense of fashion and a reference to the Byzantine past of Istanbul." In fact, Cortner says the hotel's spaces were designed around the artwork. "The concept is a dream of Istanbul," she says. For example, in guestrooms, the entire headboard wall is a soft silver-toned mural that has elements of Istanbul laid over classical European interiors. "In one room type, it is the chandeliers from Hagia Sophia; another features elements of the famous Blue Mosque," she says. HBA also worked closely with Zorlu Property Group for a collection of works by Turkish artists.

"Our research into the Byzantine era told us that every man could wear gold, but only the noblemen could wear precious stones," Cortner says. "That informed some portions of the palette, as did mosaics which feature prominently in Byzantine architecture. The selection of materials creates a backdrop for these features."

ART AND DESIGN

The basic interior architecture was largely in place when Zorlu awarded HBA the project, Cortner says. "We were able to influence the location of the reception area...and create the lobby lounge as the heart of the hotel, surrounded by quiet pools of water. We were also able to create the interior spaces within each area," she adds, citing each of the food-and-beverage areas, the spa, guestrooms and suites.



THE FIVE WS

WHAT: Raffles Istanbul Zorlu Center

WHO: HBA

WHERE: Istanbul, Turkey

WHEN: September 2014

WAY: New-build in a new business and shopping development

The hotel's entryway includes an onyx vestibule with a gold mosaic floor opening up to the Grand Lobby with reflecting pools flanking the lobby lounge. And this lounge is where most guests will see the first element of HBA's collaboration with its partner company Canvas, which provided the hotel's artwork: "Lavinia" is a 52.5-foot x 16.4-foot abstract bronze sculpture by artist Martin Dawe, reportedly inspired by a Turkish poem. Canvas Director Matthew Whitaker says that Lavinia "anchors" the lounge and brings a "human scale to the double volume space, and contributes inherent warmth that helps to create a connection to guests." The lounge also displays a commissioned work by French hyper-photo realist Jean-Francois Rauzier.

Up on the mezzanine level are The Long Bar, Arola Restaurant, Champagne Room, and the Writer's Bar. The entry to The Long Bar displays artwork by Turkish sculptor Oylum Oktem that evokes Istanbul's Byzantine heritage. Living up to its name, The Long Bar has a 24.6-foot-long bar that is flanked by mirrors, making it appear to extend into the adjacent Champagne Room, which itself is encircled by glazed wine displays framed in brass and with a curved counter formed from polished stone slabs.



PHOTOGRAPHY: Raffles Istanbul Zorlu Center

Clockwise from left page:
 Suites evoke Byzantine heritage;
 Pools take advantage of natural light;
 The Long Bar has dramatic mirrors;
 The lobby's abstract bronze sculpture.

The Writer's Bar, meanwhile, is a warm, cognac-colored space with library shelves displaying an art installation comprised of ceramic books by Turkish artist Ismail Oklugil. The bar's back wall has a custom cast glass installation of fiery yellow and orange tiles that give the lounge a warm glow.

"The overall ambience is quiet elegance, but each space has a different ambience," Cortner says. "Rocca Restaurant has a more modern upbeat look; The Writers Bar has an intimate club feel; The Long Bar has a higher energy feel; Arola has the sleek tailored lines of a modern Pullman car."

SOUND AND LIGHT

As light affects the way viewers see artwork, HBA worked with Illuminate, its lighting design consultancy arm, to coordinate the lighting with the interior finishes, special design elements and artwork. The designs "embody form and shape on a monolithic scale" that also maintains a strong connection with the outside environment. "The lighting had to complement and sympathize with the interiors, and yet maintain a respectful level of focus without under- or over-playing the visual interest," Simon Berry, partner at Illuminate, says. "To create a balanced flow from outside to inside, we utilized the full color temperature range from cool white for a high energy daytime feel through to a warm white for the more relaxed evenings."

To control how sound carried around so much marble and with multiple-story atriums, an acoustic material was incorporated into the design of the ceilings for the larger public areas at the recommendation of the acoustic consultant.

"HBA does design with a sense of place," Cortner says of the overall

PARTICIPANTS

Architect: Emre Arolat Architects

Interior Design Consultant: HBA

Lighting Consultant: Illuminate

Art Consultant: Canvas

Chandeliers: Preciosa, Lasvit

Public Area fit-out contractor: HITIT

Guest Area fit-out contractor: MOB

Spa fit-out contractor: AHK Company

Carpet: Golden Halicilik

Wallcovering: Zorlu Textiles

Sanitary Ware: Villeroy and Boch

Taps/Faucets: Dornbracht

property. "The main points of inspiration for the design are the faceting of the architecture, Byzantine design and detail, fashion—as Istanbul is a very fashion-forward city, and the motion of tops—borrowed from the motion of Dervishes.

"The biggest challenge was to accommodate the Raffles concept," she adds, "which is more intimate and residential into the grand space of the building." **HD**

