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*Photos by Michael Kleinberg**Text by Margaret Poe*

Situated as it is, on New York City's Eighth Avenue in the heart of Times Square, the marquee is all but mandatory. But the high-wattage bulbs welcoming guests to the [Row NYC](#) do more than light many a selfie on the sidewalk below. They also animate and beckon visitors to step in the door, says Michael Gabellini of [Gabellini Sheppard Associates](#), whose firm was tasked with transforming the hotel's public spaces. Once they walk inside, guests are immersed in a street-smart aesthetic throughout the newly renovated hotel.

The building has greeted tourists since opening as the Lincoln Hotel in 1928, among the largest in the city at the time. And after a two year, \$140 million renovation, the look is contemporary city chic—with a sense of history. From the poured concrete to the jet-mist concrete and blackened steel, the materials are "embedded onto the street character of New York City," Gabellini says. This sense of "refined grittiness," as he calls it, pairs well with rich recessed lighting within the slatted wood canopy ceiling to create a warm, inviting ambience.

A nod to the city's many stages, the two-story, panoramic lobby is crafted as a theatre-in-the-round, with the second story overlooking the lower-level entrance. The common areas serve dual purposes, according to Gabellini: seamlessly moving crowds through the space while simultaneously providing an intimate, hospitable gathering area. He sees the sweeping lobby as "an urban embrace."

It also lets visitors into District M—European cafe by day, pizza bar and cocktail lounge by night—"to feel cocooned from the motion of Times Square," he says, "while maintaining the allure and 'see and be seen' feeling throughout."

That camera-ready sensibility is evident in the works by legendary paparazzi photographer [Ron Galella](#) featured in District M's digital art gallery, highlighting the exuberant energy of Manhattan in the late '70s and early '80s. In the reception area, an installation by New York-based artist Yorgo Alexopoulos "is the culmination of a visual tour de force," Gabellini says.

Even the name reflects a deep sense of place. It's called Row NYC, explains Kimberly Sheppard, because the hotel offers "a front row view of quintessential New York City."

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