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Sneak Peek! Public - Chicago

Dec 6, 2011

Ian Schrager is at it again with the October debut of his new brand, **Public**, in what was once the famed Ambassador East in Chicago. "This is a huge opportunity to create a new genre of hotel that is not pigeonholed into a specific and traditional business classification," says Schrager in the opening release. "The industry has created a Frankenstein. The idea behind the boutique, as I saw it, was meant to touch people emotionally and viscerally and offer guests a truly unique experience. The idea has been lost with the huge number of watered down versions. I want to bring it back in an updated version and elevate it to a cultural experience for the modern day traveler. These travelers now expect truly unique experiences and not merely a place to sleep. Public will punctuate this with great value and service as well."



Gone are the velvet ropes. Instead, expect affordable luxury. "Luxury," says Schrager, "is no longer about spending the most money. It is about getting the best value and being made to feel special. This is not in response to difficult economic times, it is a true paradigm shift."



Design wise, Schrager calls the hotel the “new, sincere chic.” Saying that hotels have become overdesigned, Public instead is meant to feel personal, authentic, pared down. Anda Andrei, who has led Schrager’s in-house design team for some 30 years, spearheaded the design in collaboration with **Yabu Pushelberg** (guestrooms) and **Gabellini Sheppard Associates**, which developed the design of the lobby and reception, library bar and café, and the Pump Room bar and restaurant.

“There is no pretense here, just effortless, timeless, purist design providing a relaxed vibe and familiar atmosphere that feels like home,” Schrager says. “We are not trying to be hip, we are in fact anti-hip, and therefore by definition, we are.”



Keeping the architectural details of the Gold Coast’s institution, the design team infused spaces with

a mix of modern, clean-lined pieces in unexpected combinations in “no color colors.” The 285 guestrooms are awash in white, with desks facing the window or the room, rather than the wall. Making sure the lobby was a place for socializing throughout the day and night, it takes its cues from European coffee houses with communal tables and computer stations. Its Library, complete with a fireplace and fuzzy chairs, even features its own coffee bar during the day, transformed into a lounge at night.



The most dramatic space might be the Pump Room, with its with its floating oversized spheres and one long banquette done in green. The restaurant, once a favorite of celebrities such as Frank Sinatra (who had his own booth), Elizabeth Taylor, Marilyn Monroe, Humphrey Bogart, Lauren Bacall, Judy Garland, John F. Kennedy, and Robert Redford, and rock legends such as Led Zeppelin and David Bowie, is now a Jean-Georges Vongerichten restaurant. Staying in line with Schrager’s accessible model, the restaurant is inspired by Jean-Georges’ ABC Kitchen in New York, offering up local cuisine at reasonable prices.



“It’s a new simplicity. A ‘new chic.’ A ‘sincere chic.’ Tasteful and understated without attitude where quality and comfort are paramount. It is a really personal, authentic, confident style and authenticity can’t be faked. Genuine, understated good taste is a universal language, yet hard to find,” says Schragger.



Back in January, HD caught up with Schragger when he first announced the brand. Read the entire interview [here](#).

Links referenced within this article

Public

<http://www.publichotels.com/chicago/home/>

Yabu Pushelberg

<http://www.yabupushelberg.com>

Gabellini Sheppard Associates

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