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# Hotel Design

TRENDS, PEOPLE & INSPIRATION

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**Creativity**

Has the economy changed design for the better? Experts weigh in. Pg. 12

VICEROY MIAMI, FLA.

# TRENDLINES historic hotels

BY CHRIS CROWELL

**A**fter watching “The Godfather: Part III” or a litany of other Hollywood sequels or remakes, one truth stands out—it’s hard to improve on a classic. But for today’s hotel designers, this situation pops up more and more in the form of historic hotel renovations.

Historic hotel jobs may seem like creativity-stifling tasks, but they are often energizing calls to action.

“I find it challenging, but I find it inspirational because it provides an opportunity for you to dive into the story of the hotel, the history,” says David Hill, designer for David Hill Design. Hill’s latest project, the Hotel deLuxe in Portland, had a rich local story the community hoped to maintain.

“It was a landmark hotel despite its worn appearance,” Hill says. “We wanted to respect those feelings but give them something to be excited about for decades to come.”



David Hill



Dianna Wong

The challenge of maintaining a hotel’s history could be intimidating, but Dianna Wong, principal of Dianna Wong Architecture and Interior Design, says to approach historic projects more as a curator than a creator. The success of a project rests on the editorial eye of the designer.

As an example, The Hotel Washington, which was remade into the W Washington D.C., had a small bank teller desk as a front desk that no longer served its intended function.

“There you could have gotten rid of it, but I felt it was important [to keep it],” she says. So she repurposed the desk into a wireless lobby workspace, which is a W brand standard and a tribute to the past of the property.

“It’s an artful editorial process. When you bring something new into [the design], it makes old things look less frumpy, and it makes new things look less perfect,” she says.

When choosing elements from the previous design to keep in an update, Hill suggests looking for a thematic pattern or design.

“The shapes in furniture or graphics in a rug can be abstract,” Hill says, about the Hotel deLuxe in particular. He took patterns from the original 1925 hotel and implemented them in the carpet.

“They were new and fresh ... they didn’t feel old and stayed.”

Wong did something similar with an old chandelier in the W Washington D.C., lobby. She wanted to enhance the dramatic ceiling architecture from the original design, yet update the look. So she relamped the chandelier with color changing LED lights.

“It’s about taking the old and seeing it with new eyes,” she says.

A solid art and design history background is practically a must for historic hotel renovation, Wong says. Also, if the hotel has mixed styles from different eras due to several renovations over the years, try to incorporate them all in some way.

“Be inspired by the overall history of the hotel, not just the original [open] date. The owners have collected things over the years and each is significant. You have to pay respect to that,” she says.

## Hotel deLuxe, Portland

Rufus Mallory, former U.S. attorney for Oregon, originally built this eight-story, 130-room hotel in 1912. Provenance Hotels bought the deLuxe for \$7.9 million in 2004 and wanted to revive the nearly century-old property with a vintage Hollywood aesthetic. It committed \$10 million to the renovation, which was completed by San Francisco designer David Hill. The result is a modern retro hotel with crystal chandeliers and more than 400 large photographs of Hollywood films from the ‘30s and ‘40s hanging throughout the property.



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