

The James New York – NoMad

JoAnn Greco • Photography courtesy of the james • May 10, 2018



Photos: The James New York – NoMad

When GFI Development—one of the development groups behind the NoMad and Ace Hotel New York—tasked [Thomas Juul-Hansen \(TJH\)](#) with tackling the James New York – NoMad, a renovation of the former Carlton Hotel into Denihan Hospitality Group’s newest, the neighborhood had been experiencing a bit of a rebirth. Yet, the James is “a key development in the renaissance of the NoMad neighborhood,” notes Denihan president and COO Vera Manoukian, “bringing a balanced lifestyle approach to the community,” where guests don’t even have to leave the hotel to achieve both serenity and conviviality. Not to mention, the New York design studio, known for its work on high-end residences, including the Beekman condos in Lower Manhattan, was happily surprised at the benefits of working on a hotel. “Being able to carry a full vision all the way through to completion—right down to the art and accessories—was very rewarding,” says TJH studio director Michael Stevens. “With residential work, there’s always a point where the owners take over and make it their own,” whereas the inherent nature of designing a hotel was liberating, he adds.

Completed on a tight budget and schedule, the project involved creating a new identity for the hotel, including a redesign of all 337 guestrooms, while sticking with the original configurations and layouts for most of the rooms. Luxe details and materials set the residential tone: “Patterns come from the veining of the marble, the walnut in the headboard and armoire, and the brass bar cabinet, and bring a lot of warmth. Touches of color come from the dyed wool in the upholstery,” Stevens explains. A subdued palette of gray and beige prevails, with an emphasis on rounded, amorphous shapes—appearing everywhere from the bathroom sink to the armchairs—that contrast the hard edges of stone and metal found throughout.

In the public areas, the firm “embraced and retained the original characteristics of the building, including revealing the columns in the lobby and restaurant,” adds Manoukian. But in other ways, “we needed to wipe the slate clean and begin from scratch,” Stevens points out. Not only was the hotel entrance moved from Madison Avenue to 29th Street, but it carved out space for two concepts from local group LDV Hospitality, a relocation of the original iteration of its Italian concept Scarpetta and new cocktail lounge the Seville, which takes its design cues and name from the hotel that first opened in the landmark 1904 Beaux-Arts style building.

Scarpetta 2.0 is “the prettiest [one] we’ve ever done,” notes John Meadow, founder and president of LDV. “There’s something very soft and feminine about it.” Consider the bar and café, which boasts a ceiling covered in foliage. “TJH took the core of what works in the Scarpetta experience and pushed it forward. This is not a replica but a fresh take,” he adds. In contrast, the Seville “is a bit maximalist. Every single chair is different, and there’s a whiff of basement sensuality” for a decadent yet gritty atmosphere.

That sumptuousness extends to the hotel lobby with plush upholstered walls and a warm wood ceiling. The design team “wanted to maintain a softness” throughout to “contrast with the architecture,” Stevens notes. “This includes the forms of the seating, the weave of the fabrics, and the more muted color palette, [all of] which helped to keep a serene and peaceful feeling.”