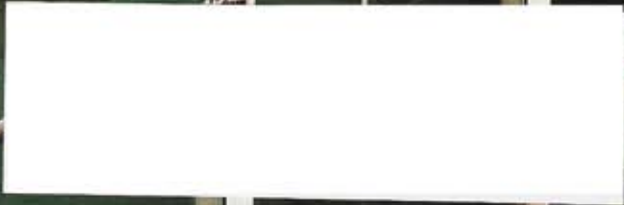


hospitality design

**16 stunning projects
the magicians of citycenter
platinum circle 2010**



By Mary Beth Klatt

Photography by Mark Ballogg (State and Lake, cibo
matto, and Roof) and InSite Architectural
Photography (hotel)

bolt of energy

A collaborative effort helps
revitalize Chicago's North Loop

Chicago's Wit Hotel is making headlines for several reasons. Not only is it the North Loop's first new-build hotel in 20 years, helping in the revitalization of North State Street, but it's also a contemporary and surprising addition to the Doubletree brand, a collaborative effort by local breakout architect Jackie Koo, hotel veteran Cheryl Rowley, and restaurant designer Bill Johnson.

First, Koo had to figure out how to fit 250,000 square feet of programming—298 guestrooms, two restaurants, a rooftop lounge, spa, screening room, and meeting rooms—into the 9,500-square-foot postage stamp-sized site. Her solution: a 27-story steel and glass sculptural building that embraces its urban location and views, and features a zigzagging chartreuse glass “lightening bolt” running the entire length. “We wanted the design to be an

This photo: A view of the Wit Hotel's graphic lobby from above.





This and opposite page, clockwise from top left: The 27th floor lounge, aptly named Roof, features large firepits surrounded by modern seating; the classic ribo matto dining room; State and Lake restaurant, which is swathed in chocolate leather and wood; and a large tattoo wall mural leads guests up a glass and steel staircase to the mezzanine level.







extension of the excitement of the theater district," explains Koo, of her namesake firm's first major commercial building. "The 'lightening bolt' was a kind of marquis for the building and provided a signature element for [the owner's] hotel branding aspirations. We think it is a real Chicago lover's building."

The grittiness and glamour of the Windy City prevail inside as well where Rowley found it best to be bold and lavish despite the small space. Rough-textured concrete columns done in a brown finish are reminiscent of the rusted beams of the nearby elevated train (the "L"); lavish brocade on the pillows are a reminder of the drama of its next-door neighbor, the iconic Chicago Theatre; and there's a large tattoo mural that Rowley says has a "little bit of tribalism," which leads guests up a glass and steel stairway to the mezzanine level. "I wanted to do something eye-catching in the lobby," she says.

As for the guestrooms, Rowley calls them "more laid back." She used a red crackled finish on the armoires, and over the beds, there is a piece of artwork made of red and taupe three-dimensional textiles intended to mimic the geometry of the surrounding city architecture.

Meanwhile, Johnson created decidedly different interiors for each of the three F&B units. In the masculine State and Lake gastropub (named for its location), wood, chocolate leather, and vintage photos prevail, while three shelves of backlit antique seltzer bottles in varying shades

of yellow, green, orange, and pink line the massive curved bar's top. "We wanted it to change for different parts of the day," explains Johnson. "It was challenging. What was attractive for after hours wasn't great for breakfast."

Up a stunning stairway made of glowing risers with glass pendants hanging overhead guests find the more feminine Italian fine dining restaurant *cibo matto* (Italian for "crazy food"), made up of dark woods, gray-white tones, and an oval ceiling fresco. Since space was a premium, Johnson created a communal dining table, and added red wood and glass doors to close off part of the restaurant for private events.

On the 27th floor lounge, aptly dubbed Roof, Johnson used a stack of glass wall to visually separate the indoor-outdoor space, and sprinkled bits of the same blue-green glass throughout for unity. Four large rectangular firepits on the exterior patio "give a warmth even in the dead of winter," Johnson says.

"It's highly energized—a city within a city," says developer Steve Greenberg. **hd**

www.kooandassociates.com; www.cherylrowleydesign.com;
www.johnsonstudio.com; www.thewithhotel.com



opposite page, from left: A guestroom boasts impressive city views; the Whisper Lounge in the spa, which Rowley calls "an urban lake that's energetic and reflective of the city." Above, from top: A piece of artwork meant to echo the geometry of the local city architecture hangs above the bed in a Cityview Spa Junior Suite; orange and blue hues pop against a natural color palette in a typical guestroom.

The Wit Hotel

Chicago

Owner ECD Company

Architecture Firms Koo and Associates, Chicago (hotel), and the Johnson Studio, Atlanta (State and Lake, cibo matto, and Roof)

Architecture Project Teams Jackie Koo, principal (Koo and Associates); and Bill Johnson, senior principal and partner; Brian Finkel, principal and partner; and Bo Amer, project manager (the Johnson Studio)

Interior Design Firms Cheryl Rowley Design, Inc., Beverly Hills, California, and the Johnson Studio, Atlanta

Interior Design Project Teams Cheryl Rowley, principal; Linda Collins, project manager; Erwin Canela, job captain; Rich Mayrend, designer; and Ekin Erdogan, designer (Cheryl Rowley Design); Karen Teske Blue, director of interior design; and Juliana Kerschen, interior designer (the Johnson Studio)

Contractor James McHugh Construction

Purchasing Firms Gerry Brown & Associates (hotel), and Directsource Inc. (State and Lake, cibo matto, and Roof)

Lighting Lightswitch Architectural Lighting

MEP Engineer Cosentini Associates (State and Lake, cibo matto, and Roof)

GUEST BEDROOMS

Headboard/Nightstand/Side Table

Fleetwood Fine Furniture

Headboard and Chaise Upholstery

Valley Forge Fabrics

Bed Throw Andrew Morgan Collection

Nightstand and Floor Lamp Coronet Lighting

Artwork Anne Kyyro Quinn and Still

Wallcovering MDC Wallcoverings

Drapery Fabric P/Kaufmann

LOBBY

Sofas Sutherland

Sofa Upholstery Fabric TDC

Chairs Lilly Jack

Chair Pillow Fabric Osbourne & Little

Area Carpet Tai Ping

Floor Lamp Spark Lighting

Chandeliers Lushie Decor

STATE AND LAKE

Custom Barstools Puzio Studio

Vinyl SilverState

Antique Bottles Love Train Antiques

Banquette EJ Industries

Fabric Giant

CIBO MATTO

Dining Chairs Aria International

Vinyl Architex

Custom Settees EJ Industries

Leather Moore & Giles

Custom Tables Georgia Cabinet & Supply

Custom Ceiling Mural Todd Murphy

ROOF

Floor Lamp Vibia

Lounge Chair Aceray

Fabric DesignTex

Custom Sofa JL Furnishings

Fabrics Carnegie and Valley Forge Fabrics

Bar and Counter Stools JANUS et Cie