

BOUTIQUE design

HOSPITALITY REINVENTED

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STRONG MINDS

SHARAN PASRICHA
ENNISMORE



DESIGN deconstructed

THE SUMMIT
CINCINNATI, OHIO

BY EMILY POTTS

Adaptive reuse projects often feel like hallowed ground. For designers, working to preserve these irreplaceable pieces of architectural history while giving them a relevant second (or third) life is a labor of love, and a pretty labor intensive one at that. But what if the “revered” landmark is a parking garage that was once a door chime and fan ventilation factory built in 1950, and the unique characteristics in question are rainbow-painted columns? You take what you can use and build on it—literally—which is exactly what the developers for The Summit, a Dolce Hotel, in Cincinnati, Ohio’s Madisonville neighborhood did.

Samach+Seo Architecture & Planning LLP transformed the mid-century structure from a hunk of concrete into a nine story, 239-key sleek, upscale hotel property. Hirsch Bedner Associates (HBA) fused elements of the building’s past lives with art-centric modern touches to craft the interior narrative. The expansive lobby occupies the original two-story parking structure, fondly remembered by locals as “the rainbow garage.” It maintains the exposed sandblasted columns and 20-ft. ceilings, giving the space an industrial feel. That’s counterbalanced with an extensive art program, including sculptural re-imaginings of manufacturing parts from the original Nutone factory.

“The brief called for a boutique, art-centric hotel with an emphasis on attracting meeting groups,” says HBA associate Nicole Smith. Colorful murals placed throughout the hotel provide a painterly backdrop to each space, such as the dramatic abstract artwork showcased on the curved wall in the lobby. Smith says the artist’s original work was scaled up to a massive size, printed on wallcovering and then applied to the wall.

“The designers showed a deft hand when balancing the exposed concrete structure with newly inserted hotel elements. In many ways, the color layered into each space is a skilled response to the modern industrial palette we embraced as the project progressed,” notes Ted Brumleve, senior director, design & construction, Wyndham Hotels & Resorts, the parent company of Dolce Hotels and Resorts. “We were lucky to have such a robust factory structure to start with: large spatial volumes that led to innovative design solutions and access to natural light throughout the hotel.” The rainbow connection has come full circle. ●

PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

CLIENT
RBM Development

OWNER
AT Hospitality

OPERATOR
Wyndham Hotels & Resorts

DESIGN FIRMS
Hirsch Bedner Associates (HBA): Sandra Cortner,

partner; Nicole Smith, associate; Colleen Smith and Alex Birkholz, designers

Wyndham Hotels & Resorts: Ted Brumleve, director, design & construction

ARCHITECT
Samach+Seo Architecture & Planning LLP

PURCHASING FIRM
Benjamin West

GENERAL CONTRACTOR
TBA/Thorson Baker + Associates

DESIGN CONSULTANTS
PHA Lighting Design Consultants



WHITE STRIPES

Recessed linear white lights play up the drama of the lobby’s vertical reach. The installation pattern also directs guests’ focus to the public area’s signature art pieces.

TONAL BALANCE

HBA’s designers originally envisioned an industrial concrete tile floor for the lobby but shifted to stained concrete to keep costs in line. The resulting smooth gray surface is factory chic and easy to maintain in this heavily trafficked area.



HEAVY METAL

The floating staircase visually anchors the lobby, combining industrial and modern elements. Wooden steps counterbalance the burnished bronze structure, and add a natural touch.

LIGHTING THE WAY

A custom multi-tiered industrial black corded pendant fixture with strands of filament bulbs hanging at different heights reflects and refracts light from the broad range of textures and materials used throughout the public areas.

OVER THE RAINBOW

The slightly curved floor-to-ceiling mural enlivens the neutral lobby with an explosion of color—a nod to the building's former life as the fondly remembered "rainbow garage."

FACTORY FINISH

Incorporating a perforated metal screen onto the front of the check-in desk makes it less formal. Behind it, a display case features factory parts referencing the old Nutone factory.