

Renovations

How a New York hotel got a new look with a small budget

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The renovation of The InterContinental Times Square took advantage of the hotel's 36 stories and gave each room a sense of looking down on Midtown Manhattan from high above. Photo Credit: Michael Klein Photography

In November, the InterContinental Times Square emerged from a renovation led by the team at Jeffrey Beers International, the design firm that created the property's interiors when the hotel made its debut 10 years earlier.

The project, said studio leader Pierre Josselin, had a very limited budget of just a few thousand dollars per room. "How can we reinvent this hotel on a small budget [while] keeping what it's about?" Josselin remembered wondering. The property's original design was meant to evoke the nature of Central Park, 15 blocks away from the hotel. "They didn't want a complete departure. They wanted to keep that vibe of a very casual resort."

JBI's new concept, then, was to take advantage of the hotel's 36 stories and give each room a sense of looking down on Midtown Manhattan from high above, including elements of the park.

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With that in mind, the team held onto the existing casegoods, which had a “warm wood” finish. “Everything was really beige in the original design, so nothing was sticking out,” Josselin recalled. The team decided to paint the wood with a neutral gray tone to evoke the clouds and contrast with the other furniture in the room. “And then they wanted a pop of color, so we brought the blue of the cloud within the carpet.” The geometric patterns in the carpeting, meanwhile, evoke the city streets below.

Some of the changes were more subtle, such as new leatherette upholstered panels in the headboards that give the impression that the bed is floating in the clouds. Bedside lamps got new shades while some chairs in the rooms got new light blue upholstery. One large piece of artwork was removed from the guestrooms for a more streamlined vibe and the bathroom mirrors were also upgraded. “There's this serenity about it,” Josselin said. “It's not Park Avenue urban super chic detail and things like that. It's just that very casual, relaxing vibe.”

The hallways also got a new aesthetic, with a dark gray border added to the beige doors to create a “dramatic” contrast to the rest of the corridor. The chevron pattern in the hallway carpet, meanwhile, is inspired by the colors of lights in the city streets. “We changed the [hallway lamp] shades so the light is warmer and fresher, because the old ones tend to be very orangey,” Josselin said.

Challenge & Solution

The limited budget for the project proved a challenge for the JBI team, and Josselin is proud of how he and the other designers came up with affordable fixes for a new look. “It's picking the right element with the right budget for the overall look to come together,” he said. “There's nothing really innovative about the design in a sense—we picked vinyl wall coverings, standard sheers, off-the-shelf products to keep the cost down, but it was a matter of more like the combination coming together and creating an impactful change.”

Before the renovation, the property had individual pieces of art placed “every so often” down the corridors. “The new high-contrast corridor design didn't really need artwork so instead of replacing the pieces we selected key ones and made a collage at elevator landings, which looks like a new collection.”

Lighting in the elevator landings was “dark and unflattering,” Josselin recalled. “Just by replacing the bulbs, we created a much brighter welcoming experience.”