

For the ZaZa Houston, a concept of Phantom of the Opera meets Cirque du Soleil meets Rock Star was blended into existing elements of a historic hotel.



A Grand Entrance

Hotel ZaZa makes bold statement in lobby

By TONI MCQUILKEN

When it came to designing the lobbies of the two Hotel ZaZas, one in Dallas and one in Houston, there was one goal above all else and that was to instill a whimsical spirit that left guests saying "wow."

Hotel ZaZa was created by Charles Givens and Jeff Records, and is owned by their firm, Givens-Records Developments. It is managed by Z Resorts, and both hotels were designed by Design Duncan Miller Ullmann.

"The initial concept behind the hotel...was to create a specific culture for our guests," said Benji Homsey, president of Z Resorts. "Hotel ZaZa was created by infusing characteristics that anyone would expect from their best friend: reliable, humorous, sensitive,

spontaneous, caring and consistent. We also wanted to make sure that all five senses were stimulated, a feast for the senses if you will."

"The design is elegant, unexpected and sensual with a hint of both the South of France and an Asian twist," noted Kimberley Miller, CEO of Design Duncan Miller Ullmann. "The lobby of Hotel ZaZa Dallas incorporates a few theatrical elements, such as the seven foot diameter crystal chandelier that changes color by way of a theatrical stage light. The Bali bed at the front desk is an example of the unexpected. The limestone floor, installed in ashlar pattern, and light plaster walls overlaid with deep, rich color fabrics and textures set the mood."

The most important elements Miller used to set that mood were Damask drapes that hang floor to ceiling, a chandelier and an ornate balcony. "Elements such as these create the theatrical and inspirational design that is truly unique."

For the Houston property, instead of a blank slate, ZaZa had an existing property to work with. "The hotel was a conversion and renovation of the historic Warwick Hotel, and incorporating those elements, such as the original carved wood wall panels, was essential," said Miller. "The panels ended up being stained black from their original

fruitwood stain—certainly a nod to the Hotel ZaZa aesthetic, which has a language all its own. The former fountain areas transformed into an ongoing "theater/art hoopla"—one never knows what kind of creativity may show up. It's sometimes irreverent, sometimes whimsical, but always an "ahhh moment."

The concept for the ZaZa Houston, Miller noted, was "Phantom of the Opera meets Cirque du Soleil meets Rock Star." She went on to note that, "The initial concept for the hotel overall was to create a new and unique urban hotel that would exude style without the label of trendy. It is designed to be comfortable, very unique and highly detailed with a hint of whimsy and theater. The lobby embodies a collection of seating groupings that offer different experiences and embrace that each guest may use the space differently."

Overall, both properties have a unique voice, illustrated best in their lobbies. Creating a brand that celebrates the spirit of properties along with giving them that individuality is what ZaZa is all about. "The originality and whimsical spirit were crucial to solidifying both properties as part of the entire ZaZa brand. It is exciting to have two properties to design differently while complementing the overall design concept of the brand," said Homsey. **HB**



The ZaZa Dallas lobby was designed to be unexpected, with elements of French and Asian design, along with a theatrical feel.



The Hotel ZaZa Dallas reception desk.