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The brutalist exterior of the Marcel Breuer-designed Hotel Marcel in New Haven, Connecticut

Photos and renderings courtesy of DUTCH EAST DESIGN



Larah Moravek

Partner
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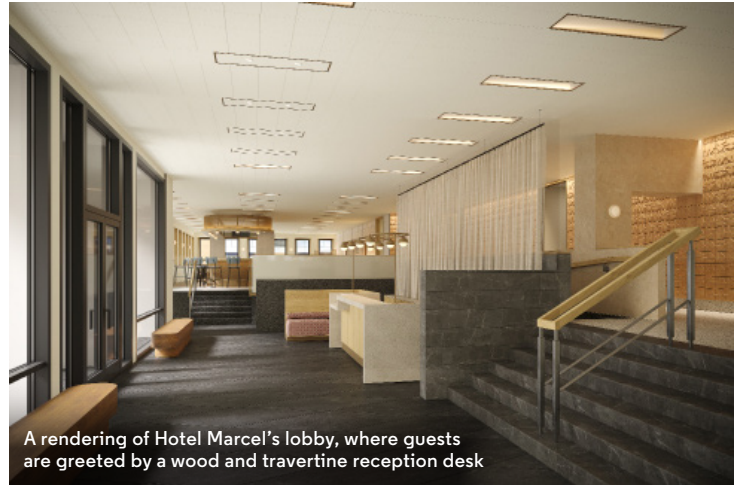
New York firm Dutch East Design has a vast portfolio of projects that reflect its commitment to community, wellbeing, and longevity. Among those is the Hotel Marcel, an adaptive reuse of the iconic brutalist Pirelli Armstrong Building in New Haven, Connecticut, originally designed by Marcel Breuer. The project provides a blueprint for hotels on how to be sustainable (it will be the first Passive House-certified hotel in the U.S. when it opens next year) while maintaining its historic character. During the New Concepts in Wellbeing panel, Dutch East Design partner Larah Moravek shared the firm's process, how wellbeing and sustainability are intertwined at Hotel Marcel, and the importance of wellness.

How do you incorporate wellness principles into design?

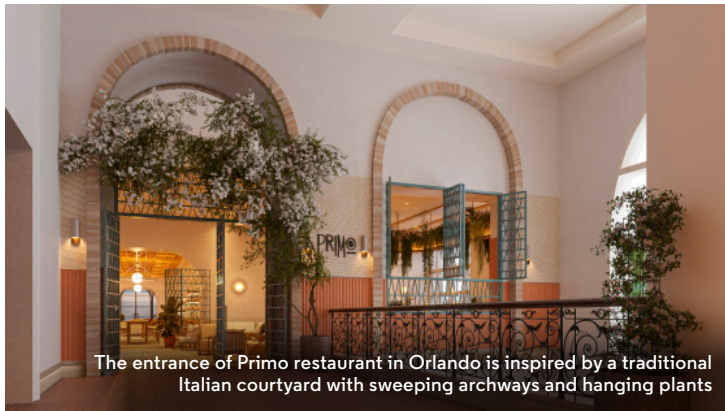
It is important to see a space as working universally. Wellness is not the activities we may partake in, it is about living our best life in the most sustainable way we can. For instance, when designing our F&B venues, we create areas that incorporate accessible counter seating throughout, rather than having defined so-called ADA areas. We are also working toward honing our knowledge on how materials are manufactured, where materials come from, and specifying as such in both our custom and specified furnishings. It is overwhelming with all the new data, yet this empowers us to design better and that is a great starting point moving forward. We are fortunate to be able to create artistic built environments, and we aim to be thoughtful and responsible in this pursuit.



Warm tones and soft textures mark the public areas of the Hotel Marcel, shown in a rendering



A rendering of Hotel Marcel's lobby, where guests are greeted by a wood and travertine reception desk



The entrance of Primo restaurant in Orlando is inspired by a traditional Italian courtyard with sweeping archways and hanging plants



Aged copper, limestone, and terracotta come together in Primo for a handmade quality

How do you remain sensitive to the brand, the project, or the building when designing a space?

I come to a project first as an observer, to take in, reflect on, and to collate all findings before setting forth a design narrative. I have a very curious sensibility and that makes me a thoughtful designer as I am always interested in exploring the deeper layers of a problem. We tend not to work with brands that require universality, but instead require a direct response to place in a meaningful way.

How is the Hotel Marcel a model for sustainable hospitality?

The design not only calls for meeting the stringent guidelines for historic preservation, but also the high standards of sustainability and performance. Breathing new life into this iconic structure is a welcome challenge. The hotel will generate 100 percent of its own electricity, heat, and hot water with a rooftop solar array and solar parking canopies. No fossil fuels will be used to power or heat the

building. The building will be all electric, powered by renewable onsite energy, including the kitchen and laundry (a first in the U.S.). There will be 12 onsite Tesla Superchargers as well as level-two electric vehicle chargers for overnight guests and a Tesla as the guest courtesy car. The building's solar microgrid will be equipped with a battery that will power the hotel, feed power to the grid during peak times, and maintain power to the building during grid outages. For LEED and Passive House certification, we're using a high-performance envelope with industry-leading thermal insulation technology, energy recovery ventilators, and high-efficiency variant refrigerant flow (VRF) air-source heat pumps for HVAC and water heating.

What are the challenges when designing a zero-net energy hotel?

The challenges to achieve this are many and varied and require buy-in from everyone on the project. Because many of the systems are atypical, they're not industry standard, so

there's often a steep learning curve. To launch a truly sustainable building all systems need to be integrated. This is very difficult with an adaptive reuse project, especially when the building is also a historic landmark.

How can owners help propel wellness forward in the hospitality industry?

Hospitality is meant to offer comfort, enjoyment, and companionship—even if temporary. The community we are designing for and designing within, we are impacting their path forward and have an opportunity to allow those guests to leave a little more mindful than when they arrive. A hospitality venue should strive to make sure everyone leaves their establishment a little better than when they came in. What better means is subjective to the individual. We do have a responsibility to create tangible built environments where sustainability and wellness are at the forefront of how we solve for design. We are at a point where this is necessary.