high society

A landmark hotel returns to its former glory

By JoAnn Greco
Photography by Eric Laignel

1. Corridors in the Gran Hotel Inglés are lined with sconces that double as room numbers and a chevron-style carpet—a modern interpretation of an Art Deco motif.

2. In guestrooms, the design team deconstructed the classic geometry of traditional molding on walls, extending it across the ceiling.


When it opened in 1886, the landmark Gran Hotel Inglés, originally designed by Juan José Sánchez Pescador, was history in the making: not only was it located on the first street in Madrid to receive electricity, it was also the first hotel to feature a restaurant. To revive the neglected building, Rockwell Group Madrid set out to “celebrate the hotel’s past in a contemporary way,” notes studio leader Eva Longoria.

With the help of the client, the firm collected “old advertisements and newspaper stories produced when the hotel first opened, as well as looked to cultural figures like Virginia Woolf, Henri Matisse, and famous Spanish bullfighters who passed through over the years,” Longoria explains. It became clear that, during its heyday, the hotel was a “place where people came to meet and talk about literature and the ideas of the time,” she says. Part of the allure was to recreate the salon-like feel that encouraged rigorous intellectual discourse and cultural energy at the hotel’s peak. “The project was, she continues, “a design of intent, not just colors and finishes.”

In contrast to the drama in the public areas, the 46 guestrooms are symphonies in white anchored with jewel-toned accents. “That’s not to say there aren’t surprises: a slipper clawfoot bathtub presents itself as an objet d’art in the bedrooms. Yet, some are meant to be discovered, like replicas of vintage hotel postcards with beautiful handwriting notes that the designers found and transformed into wallpaper—a clever moment in the closets.

Despite such special touches, the lobby remains Longoria’s favorite aspect of the hotel. “To have this very large, very lively space is new for Madrid,” she says. While the allure was to recreate the salon-like feel that encouraged rigorous intellectual discourse and cultural energy at the hotel’s peak, the project was, she continues, “a design of intent, not just colors and finishes.”

In an effort to “celebrate the hotel’s past in a contemporary way,” notes studio leader Eva Longoria.

Upon arrival, guests are immediately flanked by original uplit cast iron pillars and antiqued mirrors with vinyl decals and gold, it’s flanked by original uplit cast iron pillars and antiqued mirrors with vinyl decals and gold. Oak columns and glass doors.”

3. Flanked by original uplit cast iron pillars, the oval bar is awash in Art Deco details and acts as a beacon in the lively lobby.

4. Oak columns and built in bookshelves lined with volumes curated by Spanish publisher Zenda frame the library, evoking a salon-style ambiance.

5. Required in white, guestrooms are symphonies in white anchored with jewel-toned and metal accents, revealing subtle moments of surprise like a slipper clawfoot tub.

6. Spanish stately homes served as inspiration for the project, with a palette of blue and gold tones and includes framed illustrations of wolves, a reference to the restaurant’s name.

On hidden away hotel architecture and interior design firm Rockwell Group Madrid: 1. David Rockwell, Eva Longoria, Ana de los Rios, María Borell, Juan Carlos Rodríguez, and Cristina Neco Contractor Fernandez Meliones Lighting: ROLO; Brian Other Lighting Design Engineering: International Hospitality Projects (IHP)

Lobby
Furniture, Sofas, and Armchairs Custom by Rockwell Group; manufactured by Gastón y Daniela
Seating Upholstery: Gastón y Daniela
Accent Pillows: Bright Textiles, Lelievre, Dedal, Lisa, Gastón y Daniela, Covina Fabrics, Mobenery, and Casamance
Vanity Amber Bar: Custom by Rockwell Group; Manufactured by Auping
Academy Bar: Custom by Rockwell Group; Manufactured by Auping

Restaurant
Flooring: Hospitality Projects (IHP)
Ceiling and Wall Moldings: NMC; manufactured by Alarwool
Area Rug: Velour Custom by Rockwell Group; Manufactured by Dedar, Pierre Frey, Casamance, Jane Churchill and Gastón y Daniela

Guestrooms
Furniture Custom by Rockwell Group; manufactured by Crazy Contract
Entry Door and Plumbing Fixtures: Arcon; manufactured: Aquatica Wash Basin; Dorott; Drapery: Gancedo; Seating Upholstery: Casamance: Accent Pillows: Jane Churchill and Knoll Textiles; Area Rug: Custom by Rockwell Group; manufactured by Arcon; Reupholstered: Comfort by Merlot; Custom by Rockwell Group; Manufactured by Auping

Suites
Flooring: Hospitality Projects (IHP)
Ceiling and Wall Moldings: NMC; manufactured by Arcon; Plumbing Fixtures: Pompani; air conditioning: Lalo; Custom by Rockwell Group; manufactured by Arcon; Reupholstered: Comfort by Merlot;