

Don't think "redesign."  
Think marketing opportunity.  
New looks are bringing new  
markets and profit potential  
to hotels ranging from the  
Radisson Plaza, Minneapolis, to  
The Martinez in Cannes and The  
Park, Chennai, India.

# REMIX *Your Market*

By Mary Scoviak, Design Editor

**R**enovation and conversion are business strategies, not Cinderella stories. Minneapolis, Minnesota's Radisson Plaza, Cannes' Martinez and The Park, Chennai, India, maximized the impact of their redesigns by incorporating new style into every aspect of their relaunch sales and marketing initiatives, including attention-getting publicity campaigns and chic new web sites. State-of-the-art technology and saleable design are broadening the markets and increasing yield potential for these three diverse hotels.

## Radisson Plaza, Minneapolis, Minnesota

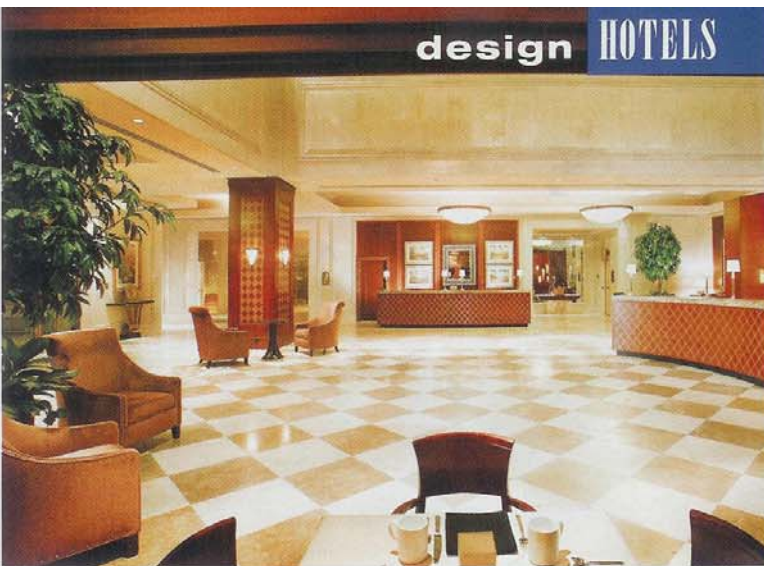
**The opportunity:** With competitors having

completed renovations and new supply coming from Le Méridien's trendy Art & Tech concept, the Radisson Plaza wanted a fresh look to capture a bigger share of Minneapolis' growing meetings market, play to its strengths in the corporate transient market and reset the flagship standard for Radisson.

**The solution:** "Convention planners and business travelers are not looking for ultra hip if it comes at the expense of visual and physical comfort. We used natural materials and mixes of texture to make the hotel cool, not cold," says Becka Chester, vice president, SFA Design, Santa Barbara, California. Despite its 360 rooms and urban location, the Radisson Plaza has an escapist appeal underscored by the curvilinear shape of the reception desk, the plushness of duvets and the ►

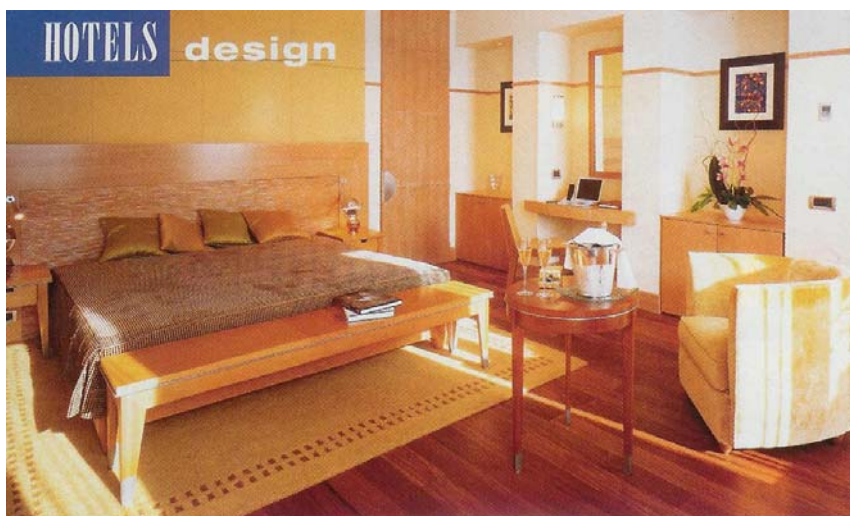
A US\$11.5 million renovation brought not only a more contemporary look to Minneapolis' Radisson Plaza, but also a more efficient layout. A curving front desk was relocated on a direct sight line with the entry, while the restaurant was relocated from its third-floor obscurity to a ground floor site with windows onto the street to generate more buzz.

Cool metal finishes and custom lighting give the Radisson Plaza's FireLake Grill House and Cocktail the flexibility to morph from barista in the morning to a contemporary urban haven at night. Seating mixes the bar and restaurant space, creating added potential for incremental revenues.





## HOTELS design



Like the new, award-winning seventh floor junior suites, the Martinez' penthouse opens up selling opportunities for CEOs as well as social functions. The luxurious penthouse is included on every site tour, with sales staff trained to offer a range of options for its use.

The contemporary blend of Art Deco and modern design elements adds an understated elegance to the Martinez' penthouse bathrooms. Free of any hint of stuffiness, the new look is broadening the hotel's audience to a younger market without losing its core clientele.

welcoming option of dining at a communal table.

Deerfield, Illinois-based architect/interior designer Knauer and SFA Design replaced third-floor food and beverage concepts with the main floor FireLake Grill House and Cocktail restaurant and bar. The buzz from the restaurant has earned the Radisson Plaza priority ranking on many of Minneapolis' "places to be" lists and nearly tripled sales during the ramp-up. With public dining out of the third-floor mix, the hotel added 4,000 sq. ft. (371 sq. m) of meeting space and made existing space more efficient. General Manager James Callaghan reports a 7% increase in group rooms for 2003.

**The trends:** The designers used draperies and screens to subdivide FireLake into private areas and cozy booths along with "convertible spaces" that can easily morph into places for large groups to gather. Design elements carve out separate, functional areas within the single room. Seating surrounding the large, dominant bar can be part of the dining room or the bar scene. "Even seemingly minor decisions such as placing the espresso machine behind the bar instead of at the server's stations allows the bar to convert into a barista station at breakfast," Royce Ring, Knauer says.

Cost controls play an important role in successful renovation. SFA Design uses a "quantity surveyor" as part of the team to get solid numbers for elements in the design budget. "You cannot just design, go to bid and hope you'll be on budget. You have to know," Chester says. Provisions, Carlson Hotels Worldwide's purchasing division, went beyond basic procurement to assist in the research and development necessary to upgrade guest touch points—primarily in the bed and bath experience. "We needed to upgrade from a competitive standpoint to maintain our edge in the market," says Steven Harper, regional vice president of operations. "We improved our three club floors to target the upscale transient market. With the new design and amenities, this property not only defines the brand, but where the brand is heading."

### The Martinez, Cannes, France

**The opportunity:** "The Martinez needed a new image— younger and more dynamic. The hotel had to be seen as moving on to hold its existing market and expanding its client base," says Philippe Parodi, the Martinez' director of sales and market-



ing. Management identified a stockpile of untapped revenue potential to penetrate new markets and fill niches.

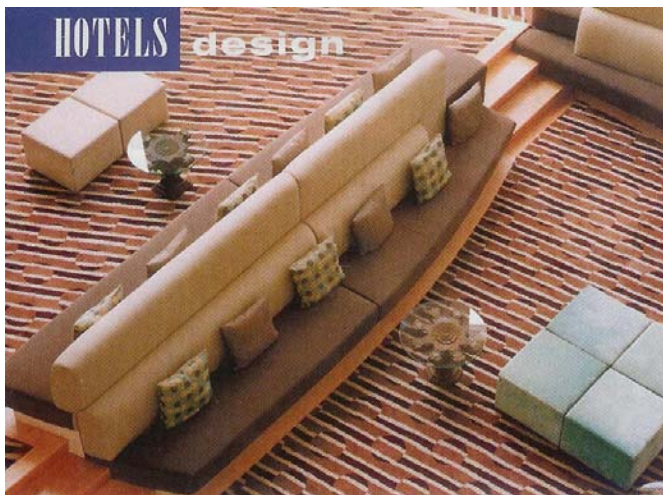
**The solution:** The Martinez distanced itself from the grande dames and the brands with a blend of streamlined contemporary design and respect for the hotel's classic Art Deco roots. Gilles LeBorgne, who directed the project for Paris-based Ecart Architects, maintained the warmth of the hotel's retro atmosphere but updated the look with rare woods in the public areas and on the terraces, strategic jolts of color and a highly residential approach to lighting and commissioned art. Sybille de Margerie of SM Design removed any hint of stuffiness from the Palme d'Or restaurant with deeply shaded fabrics, crisp white napery and a sensual mix of textures.

Inspired by the redesign, Webmaster Apicius' flawlessly Art Deco Web site tripled the hotel's 15,000-name key client list in a matter of months. Parodi and his staff showcased the new look and facilities on Internet merchant models, through Concorde Hotels' brochures and web site, and via direct mailings to travel agents. *Harpers & Queens* pumped up the hotel's profile by naming the new seventh floor suites the best suites for 2002. One of the few hotels in its competitive set to make budget in 2003, the Martinez expects its renovation to pay off with a 3% jump in occupancy in 2004 and a 6% increase in turnover, says Parodi.

**The trends:** Renovation is about raising revenue production. The conversion of seventh floor staff offices into 11 luxurious ►



## HOTELS design



Natural materials, from leather and glass to teak and bamboo, emphasize the softer side of contemporary design in The Park's public spaces.

1,000-sq.ft. (92.9-sq.m) junior suites with a peak season rate of US\$2,100 opened up a new rate tier marketable to both high-spend travelers and high-level meetings and function business. Incremental revenues are being driven by the newly added SPA Givenchy, with a health/makeup/treatment menu positioned to sell against the more clinical "spas" typical of its competitors. The redesign created saleable features such as a new forecourt reconfigured to handle heavier visitor traffic and an extended reception desk so that long-haul travelers can sit down and relax while checking in. State-of-the-art technology for meetings and function spaces includes 18 programmable spotlights in the Royal Galuchat, as well as plasma screens and Internet links. **Next** up will be renovation of the hotel's 400 guestrooms. Some options under consideration: Wi-Fi wireless Internet, small plasma screen televisions, and, perhaps, some sensual scents and sounds.

### The Park, Chennai, India

**The opportunity:** As a city coming into its own, the Tamil Nadu capital of Chennai is an emerging hot market in search of a cool hotel.

**The solution:** New Delhi-based Park Hotels delivered a property with broad domestic and international market reach by converting an abandoned building on the former Gemini Film Studios lot to a luxury, 215-room hotel. Architect Ranjinder Kumar & Associates, New Delhi, and interior HBA/Hirsch Bedner Associates, Los Angeles, played off Gemini's larger than-life, Technicolor history to create a saleable "theater of life" alternative to the city's international standard or traditional luxury hotels. The Park Chennai's contemporary attitude boosts cross-selling potential with its four chic city center sisters in

Converted from a building on a film set, The Park Chennai plays up hotel as theater with its stage-like lobby and the textures, surfaces, shadow and light that tell its story. Maintaining the open plan leads guests to the food and beverage outlets, as well as retail shops. Nightly films projected on a floating screen over the lobby and aggressive food and beverage promotions draw guests and locals into this dynamic young hotel.



Bangalore, Kolkata, New Delhi and Visakhapatnam, while promotional rates around US\$100 this autumn expand marketability within the 4- and 5-star markets. Membership in Design Hotels, concept-driven food promotions (the chefs see cooking as "a live performance") and high-profile events such as fashion shows keep this 18-month-old property in the headlines.

**The trends:** The trend-setting travel market loves drama. HBA/Hirsch Bedner Associates simplified The Park's stage-like public spaces to showcase a few bold statements such as the reception desk, a huge granite arc floating on glass, the wall of light on the grand staircase (an homage to walls of traditional deepam lamps that light temples and homes across India) and the glass waterfall wall that rushes water down a mammoth sheet of slanted glass in the lobby.

Glass is the modern measure of luxury. In a witty take, The Park Chennai's guests literally walk on water as they approach the staircase landing on a glass floor with a rushing waterfall beneath it. The luxury of the

lobby carries through to the guestrooms with glass-walled bathrooms and glass bowl sinks. HBA/Hirsch Bedner Associates brought out the softer side of contemporary design with a mix of rich natural materials such as rough cut stones juxtaposed with glass and steel, smooth aqua leather, chocolate velvets and soft linen draperies. "Park Hotels wanted a heavy influence on new trends, culture, film, fashion, literature and social events—contemporary, but not cold or impersonal," says Shahram Vaziri, HBA/Hirsch Bedner Associates' project designer. "We took advantage of the openness of the existing building to create interconnected spaces that are comfortable and entertaining. There are no boundaries to the excitement of the hotel experience—either physical or aesthetic."

No renovation should skimp on lighting design or art if the hotel wants to get noticed. Integrated Lighting Design, Marina del Rey, California, makes the all-day 601 restaurant a must-see destination with light columns that soar 18 ft. (5.4 m) toward a ceiling that flows from wood to metal. Changes in lighting guide guests through the open plan of the public spaces.

Reminders of the building's history help differentiate the hotel experience with unexpected touches such as the cutting-edge video art in the silk and leather swaddled elevators or old movies projected onto a floating screen above the lobby/atrium in the evening. Says Vaziri, "The mix of design elements makes the hotel an active, energetic place." ♦

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