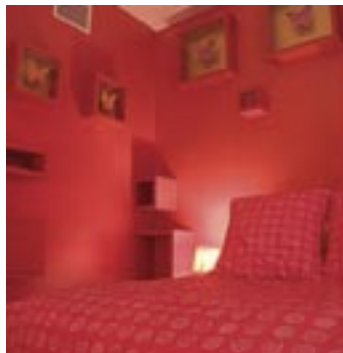


The Gladstone Hotel

words_cheryl hung
photos_brandon allen

“Unique Hotel,
Unique Experience.”



Dubbed as Toronto's oldest and newest "unique" hotel, The Gladstone on Queen West is a story about the classic labour of love. As the Development Manager of the recently renovated hotel, Christina Zeidler has overcome some of the biggest mechanical, structural and electrical problems of her career to successfully produce 37 creative masterpieces for the art and design community to enjoy for years to come.

Calling on for submissions from local community members for proposals to redesign each individual hotel room by a different designer, the project attracted self-taught artistic locals from backgrounds varying from interior design to store management. Along with Project Manager Suanne McGregor, Zeidler set out the minimal perimeters of the project - each room had to contain a bed, night table, and ensuite bathroom - and left the rest to the designers. "It was their own project - each room contains a concept that is driven by their vision, idea, passion and emotion."

According to Zeidler, the dream project was born out of the desire to facilitate the local arts by providing a canvas for artists to express their work. In turn, this idea revolutionizes and redefines the boutique hotels that have been standardized in the commercial hotel industry. All the rooms in Gladstone have unique names and strays away from the Hilton-esque labels of "standards" and "deluxe". Larger Gladstone rooms are affectionately named "Gimme Mores" to indicate rooms fit for needy and greedy space lovers. Without compromising in comfort, style and hospitality, each room seeks to provide a unique adventure for the guests to interpret themselves. "We didn't want themed rooms - we wanted a personal experience to come out of each stay." There were many fine lines walked and balanced throughout the project, but it all boiled down to creating a harmony with artistic egos and guest experience. A well-designed room elicits emotion and experience



without displacement and oppression in a new environment - all while staying true to the hotel's long history.

Whether it's a stroll through the picturesque serenity of the Canadiana Room, or reminiscing about the nostalgic innocence of an idolatrous childhood in the Teen Queen, the Gladstone is about a reaction to the elements of its surroundings. Real, personal, emotional and entirely priceless for both guest and designer to begin describing, each room exuberates passion and bravery found only in true artists. "How do you quantify the [passion and bravery] that these artists had for this project? They all wore their hearts on their sleeves!"

To Zeidler, this is the essence of re-creating Toronto's unique hotel in the heart of the art and design community. Investing in passionate people, the artistic value associated with the rooms, and the hotel's long-standing belief and promotion in local art is just as important - if not more - as the distinctive hospitality and service The Gladstone gives to its guests.

The Gladstone renovation is about accessibility and reversing expectations from the art community and beyond. For people who haven't yet seen the vision to veterans of the Queen West scene, each room promises a different interpretation and experience every time. With a new trust in the cultural entrepreneurship and the intangibility of The Gladstone's business strategy, the "darling of the community" seeks to blend and build commerce, culture and community in the spirit of artistic passion and merit.

