

FINALIST

## ACE HOTEL DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES

Designer: Commune Design, Los Angeles

**THE CHALLENGE:** Score a bold LA debut by casting architectural opposites as a perfect millennial match.

**THE INSIDE STORY:** Intended to be the anchor for the Broadway Theater District's renaissance, the site slated to become Ace's first hotel in Los Angeles was home to an unlikely duo: United Artists' Spanish Gothic-style flagship theater dating from the 1920s and a minimalist, poured concrete office tower. Atelier Ace, the group's in-house creative services firm, and Commune Design flouted conventional wisdom about distilling these disparate directions into one vanilla style. They opted to strip the office building back to its concrete core so that the public spaces would flow naturally from one room to the next and both guests and locals would be encouraged to animate each destination. That same approach informs the design. Architectural and interior references "are gilded on top of one another" to create customizable choices for socializing. If the charm of a Viennese café doesn't suit, maybe a venue inspired by mission churches, Bauhaus concepts or Parisian modernism would tick the right boxes.



**THE TAKEAWAY:** Make materials the message. For the 182 guest rooms, Commune Design gave a nod to architect Rudolph Schindler's West Hollywood residence by retaining the original concrete ceilings.

### SOURCES

**CLIENT:** Dreamfield Partners.  
**DESIGNER:** Commune Design, Roman Alonso, partner/creative director; Pamela Shearlock, partner/creative director; Lynn Napoli, director of commercial architecture; Amy Gray, designer; Eric Kambrows, designer; Zoe Penfold, junior designer. **ARCHITECTS:** GPEC Architects (architect of record); Kähler Flammang Architects (interior architect). **PURCHASING COMPANY:** Canoe Hospitality.  
**GENERAL CONTRACTOR:** Murray Builders. **LANDSCAPE CONSULTANT:** Matthew Brown Landscape Design.  
**LIGHTING CONSULTANT:** Sean O'Connor Lighting. **ACCESSORIES:** The Julian Studio (decorative glass).  
**ARTISANS:** Tonya Aguirre, Alma Allen, Mike Mills, Lisa Pinneri. **CARPENTRY:** Commune Design, Masland Contract. **FABRICS:** Fairchild Textile, Penetration (bedding), Schumacher (drapery), Inc. (window treatments).  
**FIXTURES:** Blaineworks. **FLOORING:** Exquisite Surfaces (hardwood and tile floor). **FURNITURE:** Atelier de Truque, Arrowoods Works Inc., Hartman Miller (seating), Michael Boyd (seating), Rehab Vintage Interiors, Royal Custom Design (seating), Thonet (seating).  
**LIGHTING:** Adam Silverman, Michael Schmidt Studios, Naguchi, Robert Lewis Studio, Victoria Maria Peltzer. **SURFACING:** Exquisite Surfaces (tile walls), Fincoze Plant (plant), Monospace (guest room walls and ceilings).

### 2014 GOLD KEY AWARDS

BEST ECO- OR SOCIALLY CONSCIOUS HOTEL

WINNER

## AMERICAN TRADE HOTEL, CASCO VIEJO, PANAMA

Designer: Commune Design, Los Angeles

**THE CHALLENGE:** Prove that a luxury hotel can be part of the solution for improving a neighborhood's social and environmental climates.



**THE INSIDE STORY:** To answer the client's pro-environmental mandate, Commune Design, working alongside Atelier Ace (Ace Hotel's in-house creative services team), used certified local hardwoods reclaimed by underwriter logging in the Panama Canal basin for all of the flooring. Hardwood reclaimed from Hurricane Felix was transformed into elegant guest room furniture. Finishes had to be eco-friendly as well. On the socially conscious side, the designers wore together allusions to 400 years of cultural change in the city. Leather, wood and tile serve as the constants that unify an eclectic FF&E package that stretches from historic patterns to mid-century lobby seating and of-the-moment leather and wire framed chairs by Jamey Garza.

**THE SHOWSTOPPER:** The thoroughness of the commitment to the environment and the community. Sustainability permeates this conversion of a building that has housed retail outlets, international corporations and, most recently, a sort of business park for local gangs. That applies as much to materials as to the decisions to train local women to enter the hotel and tourism industry and partner with Grammy-winning Panamanian jazz pianist Danilo Pérez on an eponymous jazz club that would connect artists, guests and residents.

**THE TAKEAWAY:** Enjoy an inside joke. The bathroom doors used to adorn New York's Plaza Hotel.

### SOURCES

**CLIENT:** Conservatorio SA. **DESIGNER:** Commune Design, Roman Alonso, partner/creative director; Eric Kambrows, designer; Amy Gray, designer.  
**ARCHITECT:** Hache Ue, S.A. (Hilbert's Village), in close collaboration with Atelier Ace. **PURCHASING COMPANY:** Hache Ue, S.A. **GENERAL CONTRACTOR:** Arquitectura Reservas. **LANDSCAPE CONSULTANT:** Matthew Brown Landscape.  
**CONTRACTOR:** Sean O'Connor Lighting. **ARTISANS:** Alma Allen, Tonya Aguirre. **CARPETS:** Decorated Carpets, Merida. **FABRICS:** Interior Specialties Group (window treatments), Maggie Gehlen (decorative pillows). **FURNITURE:** Atelier de Truque, Commune Design (seating made in Nicaragua), Garza Mark (seating), George Smith (seating), Harry Berthia (seating), Thonet (seating).  
**LIGHTING:** Atelier de Truque. **STONE/TILE WORK:** Hache Ue, S.A. (custom cement tile).

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