

METROPOLIS

**ARCHITECTURE AND
DESIGN AT ALL SCALES**
September 2015

**Case studies in
unconventional
learning**

**This fall's 50
must-read books**

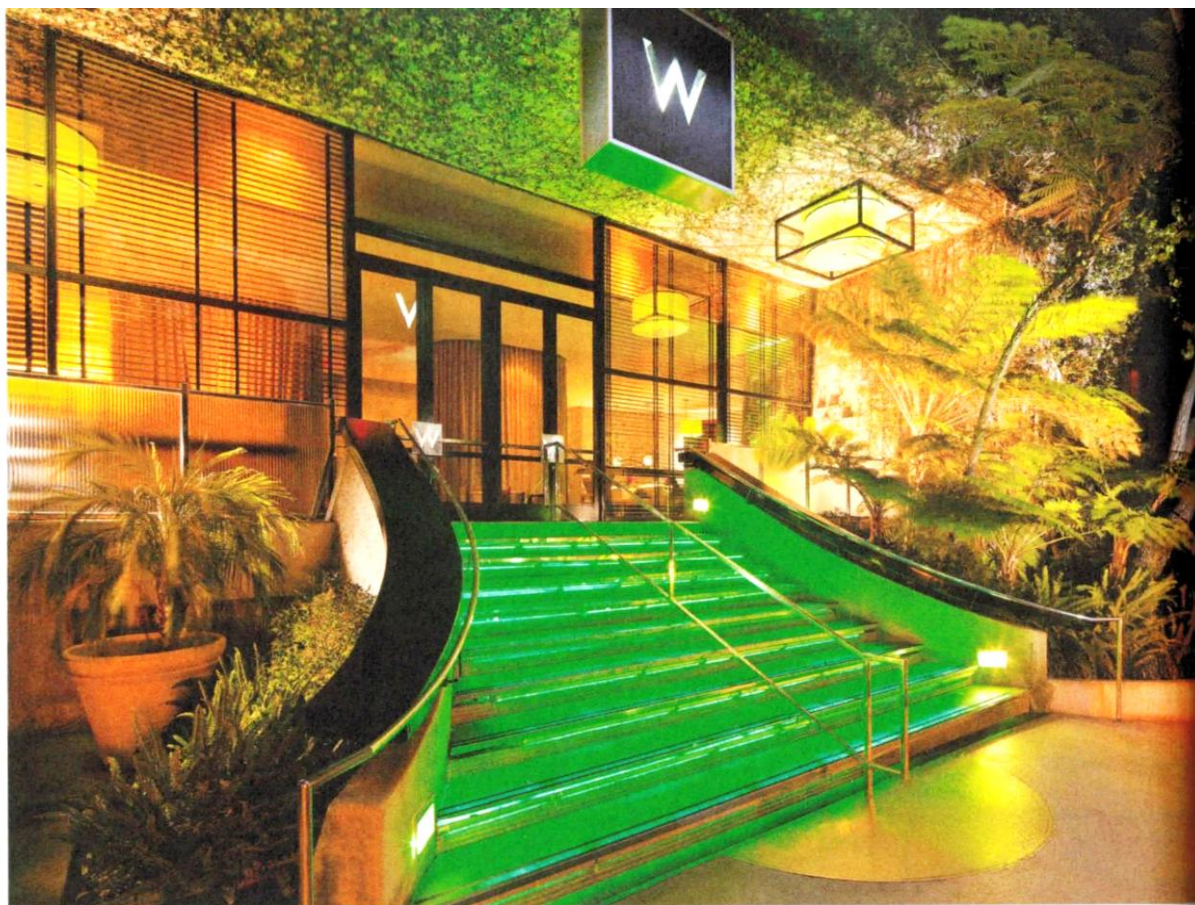
**Preview Chicago's
new architecture
biennial**

**IDEO predicts 7
shifts in education**

**An innovative
fabricator joins
forces with
SCI-Arc grads**

New Rules for Schools





HOTEL Beverly Hills Oasis

Los Angeles contains multitudes, but is perhaps better defined by its dichotomies: the east versus the west, Santa Monica and Venice Beach, the Getty Center and the Getty Villa. So it is with the W Hollywood Hotel and its recently renovated West Beverly Hills counterpart. Where the former soaks up the gritty glamour (and gawking eyeballs) of the Hollywood strip, the W Hotel West Beverly Hills is a private redoubt, its quasi-Brutalist carapace concealing a haven for those escaping the limelight.

The building, formerly a 1960s concrete dormitory for students at the University of California at Los Angeles next door, is partly camouflaged by a handsome thicket of ivy. A sweeping yet somehow unassuming (at least by day) staircase with an embedded water feature spills out toward the whizzing traffic of Hilgard Avenue. All have been trademarks of the hotel since its opening in 1999.

Regulars and curious neighbors walking inside, however, will be surprised to find a different hotel. The lobby and the adjoining common spaces have been substantially redesigned, if not completely reconfigured, in a \$25 million overhaul that has also seen the addition of 39 guest rooms and new decor for all 297 keys. Installations and features such as the centrally poised light box, a room-within-a-room framed by a sculptural imbrication of curved wooden slats, refocus these spaces to emphasize the easy intimacy guests have always ascribed to the property.

"We wanted an environment that was both exotic and intimate, where people could engage, be seen, or, conversely, retreat behind layered screens," say Renee Herron and Andrea Dawson Sheehan of Seattle-based Dawson Design Associates, who were responsible for the hotel's aesthetic about-face. The lounge is appealingly low-key and frequently changes, >

The entry staircase to the W Hotel West Beverly Hills integrates a subtle water feature. The hotel completed a \$25 million renovation in late June.

COURTESY W HOTEL



The redesigned lobby (above) and guest rooms (below) emphasize a domestic intimacy that's unique among W Hotels' 48 properties.

thanks both to the lazily kinetic lighting and the movable sofas and chairs that can be rearranged according to the night's dictates, or for the hotel's weekly music series, *Rendition*. Similarly, sliding partitions turn the social areas along the periphery into cozy niches; they too alternately open up or close off STK, the just-moved-in restaurant and beloved West Hollywood steak house.

At night, dappled colored light licks the walls and ceiling, evoking the aquatic affinities of an oasis, say the designers. The theme is picked up in the rooms via

specially commissioned Surrealist portraits by the photographer Amber Gray, depicting water nymphs "swimming or perhaps drowning in the fantasy of L.A. and the dream of fame." The rooms nevertheless favor lived-in domesticity, with L-section sofas, Eames bucket chairs, and other midcentury trappings. Unless, of course, you can splurge on the hyperbolically named Extreme Wow suite, which, with its private screening room, ubiquitous media screens, and king-like canopy bed, embraces the fantasy and fame of the Hollywood Hills. —Samuel Medina



COURTESY W HOTEL