

# Hotel Zetta *San Francisco*

Words: Catherine Martin Photography: Courtesy of Dawson Design Associates

Dawson Design Associates has created a 'work hard, play hard' scheme for Viceroy Hotel Group's Urban Retreats Collection, inspired by the tech firms based nearby.



Home to an eclectic mix of swanky nightspots, loft apartments, renovated warehouses and inventive art spaces, San Francisco's sprawling SoMa neighbourhood is fast becoming a hip hangout for the city's new creative classes.

South of Market, to give it its full name, is also known for its concentration of dot-com companies that survived the market crash of the early 2000s. Internet giants such as Twitter, Facebook, Microsoft and Google all have a presence nearby, and it is this sector that has inspired the interior design scheme for the newest member of Viceroy Hotel Group's Urban Retreats collection.

Formerly the Hotel Milano – an outdated guesthouse boasting little more than a prime location – the property was acquired by Pebblebrook Hotel Trust in 2012. Following a USD\$13 million transformation led by Ajax

Consulting Services, the new Hotel Zetta opened its doors earlier this year as a dynamic hub where work, rest and play co-exist.

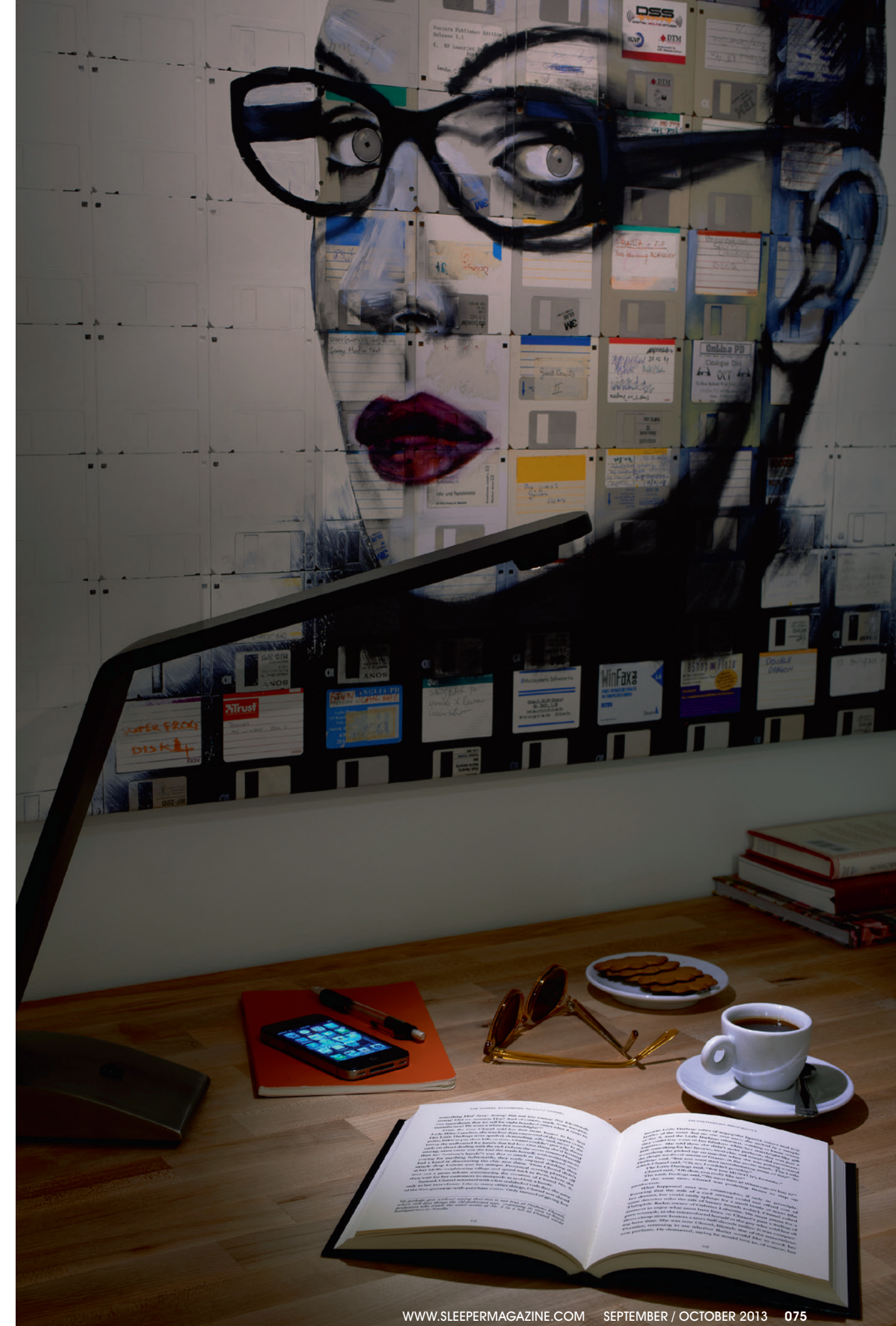
Dawson Design Associates (DDA) was appointed as interior designer and looked to SoMa's thriving art, technology and design communities as a starting point for their scheme. The firm's founding Principal and Art Director Andrea Dawson Sheehan tapped into her own connections with the likes of Microsoft and Vulcan to find a concept that would capture the imagination of the technogeeks based nearby. "We wanted to create a product that would speak to them," she explains. "They're visionaries, but playful at heart, and always exploring. We wanted to capture that spirit and energy, yet still create a hotel that was in the upper luxury tier of the market."

With these visionaries firmly in mind, DDA set about creating spaces that would encourage

networking, teambuilding and brainstorming, while injecting some fun into the often staid MICE facilities. The three meeting rooms, equipped with free WiFi and state-of-the-art technology, are expected to attract local business people as well as delegates at the nearby Moscone Center. But it's not all conference calls and PowerPoint presentations; whiteboard and cork walls encourage a more informal style of meeting and will likely appeal to the creative types.

From the off, the lobby exudes a work-and-play quality. In one corner, a workstation is fitted-out with the latest Apple iMacs, while opposite, a giant game of Plinko fills a 30ft wall. The public spaces also introduce Hotel Zetta's second theme, one that runs through the property in its fixtures, fittings and artwork. Coined by DDA, "recycle, reuse, repurpose" is a way of keeping rubbish from the landfill, jokes Dawson Sheehan. But

OPPOSITE PAGE: Recycled materials have been made into design features in the lobby as part of DDA's "recycle, reuse, repurpose" concept. Chandeliers are made from reading glasses, the back bar from wine bottles, and the hotel's own pet dog is sculpted from scrap metal  
THIS PAGE: Nick Gentry's artwork in the guestrooms brings disused floppy disks back to life





■ in all seriousness, the salvaged materials that have been integrated into the design prove that creativity doesn't always require a big budget. For instance, antique doors have been sandblasted and stained to become wall paneling; over 600 pairs of reading glasses have been fashioned into chandeliers by lighting manufacturer Lusive Décor; wine bottles from Napa Valley wineries make for a striking back bar; and vinyl LPs have a new life as musical birds. And not forgetting the hotel's friendly pet, a life-sized canine sculpted from scrap metal welded together by Brian Mock. Even the patchwork carpets in each of the guestrooms are recycled in a process that involved Spanish manufacturer Alarwool reconstructing distressed rugs collected from Pakistan, Turkey and India.

However Hotel Zetta's biggest draw has to be its Playroom, previously thought of as a worthless space due to its low ceilings and

lack of natural daylight. By removing ceiling tiles and knocking through walls, DDA has created a 1,500ft<sup>2</sup> mezzanine that can be used as flexible events space, conference breakout or an additional lounge for guests.

Serving as the hotel's physical social network, the Playroom is equipped with the latest games consoles, video chat facilities and a selection of retro board games. A refurbished Rochester pool table – rumoured to have been designed by the great American architect Louis Sullivan – is reportedly a hit, as is the table shuffleboard, which comes with its own audience of chalkboard faces sketched by Julie Coyle. Other quirky features include a traditional British red telephone box from which to order room service, and unconventional table centrepieces in the shape of Rubik's Cubes, all to the industrial backdrop of exposed pipework, blacked-out ceilings, and concrete floors in keeping with the warehouses

of the surrounding area. This 'work hard, play hard' approach also continues to the fitness centre, where Technogym's Arke kit sits alongside the more traditional treadmills and cross trainers.

Offering a contrast, Hotel Zetta's 116 guestrooms are sleek and sophisticated, falling in line with Viceroy's brand standards. They range in size from 250ft<sup>2</sup> for a Superior Room to 800ft<sup>2</sup> for the one-bedroom Zetta Suite, and exude the feeling of an urban loft apartment. Naturally, the technology offering is state-of-the-art allowing for music and movies from the guest's own personal device to be streamed wirelessly through the 46-inch flatscreen TV. In addition, every TV comes with complimentary internet browsing capabilities, a vast library of apps, and an HD channel lineup.

References to DDA's design concept appear in a more refined manner, through industrial style fixtures and fittings and curated ■



LEFT: A photo montage in the lobby displays mugshots of Alcatraz's most notorious inmates and is a haunting reminder of the city's history BELOW: In the bathroom, a tromp l'oeil bookshelf features a custom collection of books that tell the story of San Francisco



artworks. In the bathroom, a tromp l'oeil bookshelf conceptualised by DDA and Seattle-based studio Grand Image shows a custom collection of books that tell the story of San Francisco. Titles range from tongue-in-cheek bathroom humour to those associated with the city's technology culture.

Artwork in the guestrooms again point to the design themes prevalent throughout the hotel. British artist Nick Gentry, known for his social art projects made from contributed items, has brought disused floppy disks back to life by mounting them on wood and applying oil paints to create portraits.

Art plays an important role in DDA's design concept. A seemingly disparate collection of works in fact share a common subject matter – that of discarded objects that are being collected for re-use and recycling. Piles of old tyres, retro television sets and dismantled computer parts have been photographed and turned into works of art for the guestrooms, corridors and public spaces.

Perhaps the most unlikely subject matter comes from the high security penitentiary that sits off the coast of San Francisco, Alcatraz. Working with Soho Myriad, DDA has curated

its own "book of faces" using mugshots of the prison's most notorious inmates. The likes of Al Capone, Creepy Karpis, Machine Gun Kelly and the Birdman of Alcatraz serve as a haunting reminder of the city's history and have become a controversial talking point amongst guests.

Hotel Zetta's food and beverage offering comes courtesy of Anna Weinberg, James Nicholas and Chef Jennifer Puccio, the team behind city restaurants Marlowe and Park Tavern. The S&R Lounge (short for 'salvage and rescue') is a laid-back dining experience serving up classic American party food, while a full-service restaurant, The Cavalier, is a British-inspired brasserie. Designed by Ken Fulk, the recently-opened space evokes the character of an English hunting lodge with its leather banquettes, polished brass and taxidermied animals.

Naturally, Hotel Zetta has taken to Facebook and Twitter to promote itself. An online storybook documenting the design process of its curious art collection makes for an interesting read, while the use of social media targets the creative classes the hotel is aiming to attract. ■

#### EXPRESS CHECKOUT

**Hotel Zetta**  
55 5th Street  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
USA  
Tel: +1 415 543 8555  
[www.viceroyhotelgroup.com](http://www.viceroyhotelgroup.com)

✈ 116 guestrooms  
🍷 The Cavalier  
🍴 S&R Lounge  
🧘 Wellness Centre, in-room spa services  
+ 3 meeting rooms, pre-function reception, The Playroom

**Developer / Owner:** Pebblebrook Hotel Trust  
**Operator:** Viceroy Hotel Group  
**Architect:** Stanton Architecture  
**Interior Designers:** Dawson Design Associates, Ken Fulk (The Cavalier)  
**Contractor:** Digney York (guestrooms), Centric (public spaces)  
**Consultants:** Ajax Consulting Services