

Notes From the Bureau



For Hotel Rouge, we were inspired by the existing Venus statues at the entrance and wanted to play up the hedonistic quality of the ancient Romans and Greeks. We wanted guests to feel like they were staying in a room at this fabulous house owned by this eccentric person.

**DB: How did you bring this narrative to life in the design?**

**ADS:** We made the space more elegant but we also made it more intimate, more residential. It feels authentic, like someone's house. We replaced the cork floors with red quartz that screams 'rouge' and introduced walnut veneer wall panels to make it warmer. The mirrored chrome and crystal accents add sparkle. There is a ruby slipper type of quality now that is hard to miss.

We also added a photo mural of the Greek gods that is a focal point. It screams sex and sex appeal. It's moody and provocative. This not a hotel where you would bring your children—it's adult. Don't say, 'It's nice.' If it's nice, it's a failure. w



Dawson Design Associates spiced up Hotel Rouge with new high-end finishes and furnishings. To help achieve the look, Sheehan turned to fine furniture manufacturer Saniharto, which provided casegoods and upholstery for the project. Founded in early 1990 by the four Enggalhardjo brothers, the company creates custom furniture using heritage-quality construction and finishes. The company specializes in solid and veneer wood products from casegoods to

millwork, and creates one-of-a-kind pieces using detailed techniques such as mosaic designs, inlays, bentwood, and carvings. Since designing furnishings for its first hotel more than 15 years ago, Saniharto has provided its custom designs for numerous hospitality projects, including Kimpton Hotels' Alexis Hotel, Grand Hotel, Topaz Hotel, and Sir Francis Drake Hotel, all designed by Dawson Design Associates.

**DB: What was the original design concept for Hotel Rouge?**

**ADS:** It was based on Moulin Rouge. The space was conceived as an adult playground, a combination hotel and nightclub. It had that burlesque quality to it but with an urban slant. At the same time, there were lots of retro elements to the design like cork floors and a lobby that had a '60s-era quality to it.

"Don't say, 'It's nice.'  
If it's nice, it's  
a failure."

- ANDREA DAWSON SHEEHAN

**DB: As you were getting started, how did you approach the re-concepting?**

**ADS:** We have a very artistic bent to how we do things. Our designers create a vortex of ideas and we bring them all to the table. It's almost like Pinterest. From there, we create a narrative around an imagined eccentric personality, and we pick elements that would work for them.

## Seeing Red

*The provocative design of Hotel Rouge seduces its guests with sexy style*

Sex sells. Just ask Dawson Design Associates principal and creative director Andrea Dawson Sheehan, whose team recently reinvigorated Washington D.C.'s Hotel Rouge with a racy new design that's heavy on the sex appeal. Sheehan reveals her dirty little secrets behind the revamp of Rouge.

**DB: The hotel is only 12 years old. Why the need to reconcept it now?**

**Andrea Dawson Sheehan:** When this hotel was built it was one of the first boutique hotels in D.C., and this neighborhood was still up-and-coming. But the neighborhood has grown up around it and has become very fashionable. So we wanted the product to evolve with it. We took it to the next level of luxury and fashion-forward design.



Saniharto is one of the world's leading manufacturing companies, specializing in custom state-of-the-art residential and contract furniture for the luxury hotel and apartment market.

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