Functional Beauty: 
The Design of Hospitality

East Side of 1st Ave between 41st and 38th St, New York City, NY

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Abstract

This project explores the use of poured-in-place concrete as a bearing wall structure, in lieu of a column and slab system, in order to permit the formation of multi-story, grand spaces indicative of a luxury hotel. These carved out spaces create a pathway through the building, allowing for the choreographed movement of a traveler from the initial point of arrival to reaching his or her destination at the pinnacle suite.
To my family and friends:

Thank you, for allowing me to follow the road less traveled, for supporting my dreams, and for encouraging me to defeat all odds.
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Introduction
Hospitality is the act of letting in a stranger: a very risky and dangerous profession. Today, hospitality has lost some of its risk by turning itself into a purely service industry: where every human interaction begins with an act and ends with a transaction. In order to provide true hospitality, one must strip away all facades and become exposed, to bear their soul, in order to connect with their fellow human.

This same degradation occurs in contemporary architecture. Current building practices plaster layers upon layers until the outward facades have nothing to do with the structure that holds them. In the same way that humans lose their integrity and their soul by demeaning themselves to a performance, so does a building lose its soul.

This project attempts to design a hotel where the building retains and exposes its soul. Exploring the use of reinforced concrete as an interwoven bearing wall system takes advantage of concrete’s multi-directional force distribution capabilities, and allows for the creation of large, grand spaces. This sets the stage for beautiful, functional design at the human level, and opens the door for true hospitality to take place.

This page: The Palm Court, The Plaza Hotel, left; The Madison Room, The New York Palace, right. 
Opposite page: Ballroom Elevator Lobby, The Plaza Hotel, left; Registration Lobby, Waldorf=Astoria Hotel, middle; Entry Lobby, The Four Seasons, right.
Site + Context
Located just south of the United Nations Complex on 1st Ave, this hotel is meant to capture the demands of the UN and surrounding area visitors to New York City. With a competitive set including hotels like the Waldorf-Astoria, St. Regis Hotel, and Intercontinental, this hotel would provide the advantage and convenience of proximity. Locating guest rooms, suites, and upscale meeting facilities close to the UN would allow for the ease of security and limit the security impact of UN activities on New York as a whole, especially during the annual General Assembly.
Structure
Weaving has repeatedly found its way into architecture. Here, the concept of the interlocking warp and weft sparked the idea of perpendicular reinforced concrete bearing walls. Treating concrete in this manner ensures structural support against shear forces, allows the removal of interior walls to create larger spaces, and diverges resulting load responsibilities to larger exterior members.

Just as removing a thread from a plain weave leaves that area weaker than the rest of the fabric, so would removing a wall weaken the structure. Therefore, as walls are removed to open up key spaces, their loads are bundled into neighboring walls, protecting the structure against the created weakness and strengthening the fabric as a whole.
Study Drawing: Building Structure
All walls included, watercolor

Study Drawing: Building Structure
Walls removed to create multi-story spaces, watercolor

Study Drawing: Building Structure
Forces diverted to remaining walls, watercolor
Study Model: Building Structure, Column System with bundled forces from removed columns
Study Model: Building Structure. Walled system with walls removed to create multi-story spaces.
Program + Organization
As William Shakespeare wrote in *As You Like It*, "All the world's a stage...", and hotels are no exception. Hotels are microcosms within a city, setting the stage for many functions beyond just a place for travelers to sleep. Within these walls, people work, dine, revitalize, and socialize. With so many responsibilities occurring concurrently, pieces of the program must relate intelligently, and remain connected through a web of service spaces running through the floor plans.
Preliminary Drawing: Floor Plan, Lower Level - 1st Version

Preliminary Drawing: Floor Plan, Lobby Level - 1st Version
Section: 39th St to 41st St
1st Floor: Lobby

2nd Floor: Lobby Mezzanine + Ballroom
6th Floor: Gym + Spa

7th Floor: Concierge Level + Boardroom + Rooftop Restaurant/Bar
8th Floor: Guestrooms

9th - 13th Floor: Guestrooms
14th Floor: Meetings + Events

15th - 31st Floor: Tower Guestrooms
33rd Floor: Tower Guestrooms

34th Floor: Tower Guestrooms

35th Floor: Tower Guestrooms
36th - 40th Floor: Tower Guestrooms

41st Floor: Penthouse Suite 1st Floor

42nd Floor: Penthouse Suite 2nd Floor
Choreographed Views
Each building offers a few precious moments where the architect can carefully arrange what a person sees as he or she moves through the sculpted spaces. The importance of these views may go unnoticed to many of the building’s visitors. But, the few who perceive the carefully directed movements, the choreographed views, are awarded a glimpse into the architect’s mind, and ultimately, the building’s soul.
1. 1st Ave Entrance
2. Rotunda
3. Lobby
4. Lower Level + Accessible Entrance
5. Ballroom
6. Penthouse Suite Entrance
Lobby Level: 1st Ave Entrance
Lobby Level: Rotunda
41st Floor - Penthouse Suite Entrance
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