

Philadelphia Hotel's Room Design Risk Pays Off

Local Artists Turn Everyday Hotel Room Into Art Masterpiece

By JIM WEAVER
SPECIAL TO THE
JOURNAL & TOPICS NEWSPAPERS

What happens when you turn 30 highly creative artists loose on a single project?

The Westin Philadelphia Hotel decided it was worth the risk and the results are nothing short of fabulous.

While hotels periodically remodel and redecorate, they are generally "cookie cutter" designs with standard hotel furnishings. One of the city's leading hotels, however, decided to turn over its Room 414 to a group of Philadelphia artists and see what would happen.

Now the Westin is an upscale hotel in every respect and is spending \$10 million to keep it that way. The Room 414 idea was proposed by the Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation and its new internet website www.uwishunu.com. Hotel General Manager Michael Manzari agreed and Philadelphia designer T. J. Thornburg was enlisted to head the project. Thornburg turned to freelance art curator Eileen Tognini to recruit the artists to handle various aspects of the

project and to manage its day to day progress. She had just seven weeks to complete the job. All the hotel required was that it include its special luxury bed and 35 inch LCD television.

Internationally acclaimed mural artist Meg Saligman, of the Philadelphia Mural Arts program, visually transformed the room with a colorful two-dimensional

"Room 414 provides a unique opportunity for hotel guests to experience local artists' work in the context and comfort of an intimate environment."

**T.J. Thornburg
Philadelphia designer**

mural of hope and urban renaissance, that covers an entire wall and the upholstered headboard above the bed. A creative glass and metal lighting sculpture by Warren Muller, illuminates the room. The room also includes custom hand-crafted cabinetry, courtesy of Sherman & Gosweiler; custom hardware by Greg Nangle;

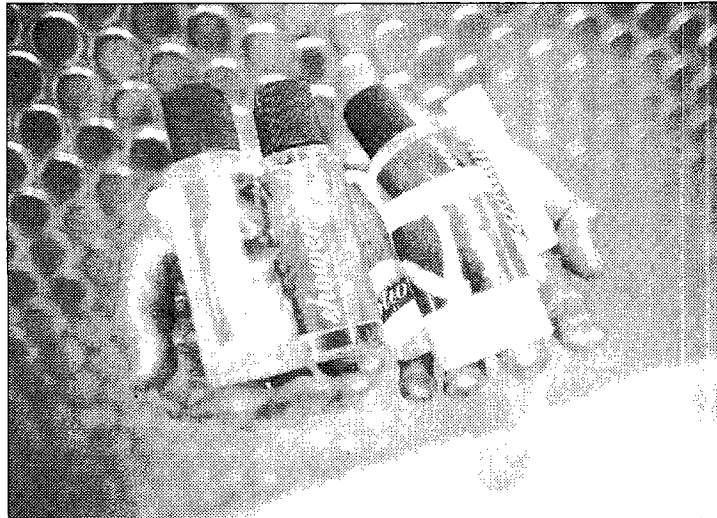
furniture by Jack Larimore; and textile design by Kevin O'Brien, including curtains, upholstery and fabric accents.

One of the bathroom's unusual features is a pair of life-size sculpted bronze hands that extend from the wall holding necessary toiletries. Even the soap, shampoo, and other bath products were specially formulated and produced for Room 414 by Duross & Langel. Each time the room is cleaned the toiletries are restocked and products removed are donated to a local shelter for abused women.

Room 414 is generously proportioned (300 sq. ft.) with a king size bed, dresser, desk, upholstered chairs, flat screen television, and full luxury bath. It's the only room of its kind at any Westin property and quite unlike anything else in the City of Brotherly Love. Guests can specifically request Room 414 when they call to make a reservation (215-563-1600).

"Room 414 provides a unique opportunity for hotel guests to experience local artists' work in the context and comfort of an intimate environment," Tognini said. "What really comes through in the design of the space — the furniture, the lighting, the art work, even the tiling — is a celebration of Philadelphia's exceptional design talent and creative spirit."





One of the more unusual features of Room 414 at the Westin Philadelphia Hotel is the lifelike bronze hands offering specially made toiletries to guests.