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Hôtel Saint-Paul by Acanto Interiors
and In Situ Design
Diversion
2003 Healthcare Environment Awards Winners
Green Retail
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fire and ice

Although its Montreal locale may be downright frigid come winter, the Hôtel Saint-Paul provides a dose of hot design year-round thanks to Acanto Interiors and In Situ Design

By Katie Weeks
Photography by Jean Blais



When it came to the interiors of Hôtel Saint-Paul, Edwin Zawadski and Mason Wickham of In Situ Design and Ana Borallo of Acanto Interiors played off the theme of fire and ice inspired by Montreal's harsh winters. In casual gathering spaces (above), shots of vibrant red punctuate the aesthetic, while the lobby's giant alabaster fireplace (opposite) is surrounded by soothing blue accents.

Revered for its rich history and favorable currency rates, Montreal has drawn visitors north for years. Out-of-towners can soak up the French-Canadian culture, take in the historic sites of Old Montreal, and, if they stay at the Hôtel Saint-Paul, surround themselves in cutting-edge design.

From the exterior, the hotel looks as historic as the nearby Old Port. Built in 1900 by local architect Alexander C. Hutchinson, the former Canadian Express Building was one of the city's first high-rises. Located near the city's business and shopping centers, the 10-story structure features an ornate exterior with lion's head gargoyles. But, while the stoic façade of the building still harks back to its regal past, the interiors welcome visitors to the hip, up-and-coming feel of present-day Montreal.

"The outside of the building is really robust and muscular. It's sort of a grainy sandstone that is very thick and carved up. But, inside it's very quiet and detailed down. The inside and the outside are very different," says Mason Wickham, principal of Brooklyn, N.Y.-based In Situ Design, who designed the hotel in collaboration with Montreal-based Acanto Interiors.

"The goal was to do something simple and elegant," says Ana Borallo, interior designer at Acanto. In contrast to the ornate exterior, the interior aesthetic of the hotel is minimal and Modern, blending a monochromatic theme with simplistic lines and strong architecture. The lobby and restaurant wrap the building, whose corner location gives it an



L-shaped layout, and aims to pull people into the hotel. The goal here was to use the lobby as a social space as opposed to an area restricted for hotel guests only. The concept is anchored by an inviting alabaster fireplace (the largest in North America at the time of its design) to the left of the entranceway and a bronze standing bar off to the right. "They didn't want to alienate people and everyone was always saying, 'Anybody should be comfortable there.' It should be simple and chic, and feel elegant and grand, but everyone should feel like they can order a drink," says Wickham.

For the interior palette, the design team took its cue from the hotel's location. "We didn't want it to be this cool, minimalist hotel that could have been anywhere in the world. We wanted it to have

something to do with Montreal and Canada. In the end, it had more to do with ideas about Canada and its landscape," says Wickham. Inspired by the harsh Canadian winters, the designers aimed to translate the mix of prevalent ice and the fire needed for warmth. Abstract concepts of the two elements, articulated in deep hues and stark whites, shape the lobby, while the guest room floors take their shape from the Earth (through wood and natural materials) and sky (using translucent materials and mirrored furniture). The latter two concepts alternate from floor to floor.

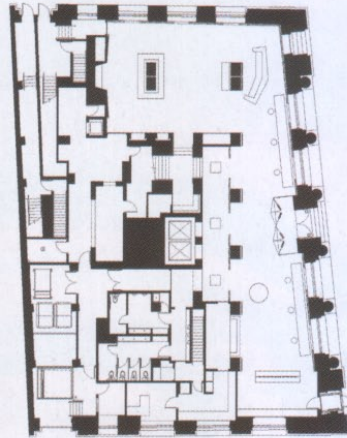
"The monochromatic theme works because it makes it look very soothing," Borallo says. "And everyone loves the use of alabaster. It's a novelty;

you don't see many places like that." Indeed, Hôtel Saint-Paul has earned rave reviews since it opened in 2002, including a grand prize award from the Commerce Design Montreal initiative.

"It's been an amazing experience," says Borallo. "When you work on these things, you never know if you're going to achieve what you've set out to do. It can be tense or stressful. But people say it's very elegant, which is what we wanted to do and kept in mind," she adds. "We wanted something elegant and Modern. You can tell that people feel it when they walk in. You don't always feel that in every building you go to. I think good design does that." ■



Project Summary



Who

Project: Hôtel Saint-Paul. **Client:** Iber Management. **Architect:** Lemoyne, Lapointe, Magne. **Interior designers:** Ana Borallo, Acanto Interiors; Edwin Zawadski, Mason Wickham, In Situ Design. **Structural engineer:** Jean Pierre Caza. **Mechanical engineer, electrical engineer:** L.C.B.A. **Construction manager:** Decarel. **Lighting designers:** In Situ Design, Lumitech. **Furniture dealer:** Acanto Interiors. **Photographer:** Jean Blais.

What

Paint: Benjamin Moore, Para Paints, Pratt & Lambert. **Flooring:** Parquet De Luce La Saller. **Carpet/carpet tile:** Tapis Aspect. **Door hardware:** Ilco Unicam, Baldwin. **Window treatments:** Westmount Draperies. **Guest room casegoods, guest room beds, guest room tables, guest room lighting, guest room seating, lounge seating:** Custom by Acanto Interiors. **Dining/convention/conference seating:** Tiede, Knoll. **Upholstery:** Robert Allen, Kravet, Carrier & Co. **Dining/convention/conference tables, occasional furniture:** Custom. **Architectural woodworking:** Reber. **Signage:** Summum Signalisation. **HVAC:** York. **Security:** Protectron. **Building management system:** Hoteltec. **Public plumbing fixtures:** Kohler. **Guest room plumbing fixtures:** Dornbracht.

Where

Location: Montreal, Quebec. **Total floor area:** 85,000 sq. ft. **No. of floors:** 10. **Average floor size:** 8,000 sq. ft. **No. of beds:** 128. **Total staff size:** 100. **Cost/sq. ft.:** \$225.

While the concepts of fire and ice drive the design of public areas like the atrium (opposite, bottom), escalier (opposite, top), and business center (above), the rooms alternate by floor between Earth- and sky-inspired palettes (opposite, left). But, no matter what the color palette, the Modern feel holds true throughout the hotel, a sharp contrast to the ornate exterior of the historic structure (opposite right).