

INSPIREDESIGN[®]

innovative vision for today's hotel



“ 1960s **ITALIAN CINEMA**
CONSTANTLY **ENCHANTS** ME...
THE **ALLURING** ANGLES, **LINGERING**
TAKES AND **AVANT-GARDE** COMPOSITIONS...”

—JAQUI SEERMAN

COMPLETION



hints of HISTORY

A building's past is reimagined—and remembered

WORDS BY **ABBY ELYSSA**

Nestled in Denver's historic downtown is The Slate, a former trade school turned independent property with design at the forefront.

Inspired by the Emily Griffith Opportunity School, designers at The Society crafted a modern space within the 100-year-old building, creating a full-service hotel that is now writing a story of its own.

"The building's history as a schoolhouse drove a lot of the design," said Casey Scalf, director, The Society. "We wanted to honor the past in both subtle details and overt, larger expressions. From an arithmetic-derived carpet pattern and textbook wallpaper in guestrooms to chalkboards behind the

reception desk and books integrated into the lobby bar, we sought opportunities to weave a story that challenged guests to search for the hidden meanings behind the design."

As a protected landmark, there were severe limits on what the designers could and could not alter, both inside and outside the building. For example, Scalf said, the glazed block corridor walls could not be changed.

"We couldn't alter the corridor walls at all, and being 12 ft. wide made them an unexpected challenge," Scalf explained. "We wanted the corridor experience to be inviting and not vast or open, so vignettes of credenzas, bookcases, lockers, art and lamps were placed





periodically along the journey to narrow the space and create a more natural experience. The beautiful guestroom windows had a less-than-ideal sill height, so to keep the space from feeling closed-in, the desks in each guestroom were elevated to be counter height, providing views of the active street below. Also, the toilet entries in each room had to be precise due to support columns that were closely spaced underneath the floors. We really had to make sure our measurements were correct to prevent the waste system pipes from interfering with the support beams.”



Its history didn't just limit the team, it also provided the perfect environment for inspiration to thrive.

“Some of the design opportunities that made this project unique included the original terracotta-tiled columns in the lobby,” Scalf said. “The tiled columns provided an opportunity to display the building's past juxtaposed with some of

the more modern, newer furnishings. This project was also unique in part because of the history of the building, and its protected historical landmark designation. Leaning into that history and aesthetic makes for a unique guest experience hard to find elsewhere.”

As another nod to its history, the front desk is designed to imitate a card catalog, and a peninsula-style fireplace and geometry class-inspired carpet adorn the space.

The bar and restaurant feature academic details like the analog number tiles installed in the window wells and light fixtures inspired by the school’s technical class offerings.

“Operating for over 100 years and open to anybody—regardless of age or financial standing—all hours of the day, the Emily Griffith Opportunity School transformed the landscape of adult education. The Slate Hotel is the successor to the building’s space and is dedicated to preserving the school’s legacy through its design features and decor elements,” Scalf said.

Moving on from the public spaces, guests can make their way to their rooms via the original corridors. Inside, guests will find arithmetic-inspired carpet, textile-look wallcovering and chalkboard-like materials.

“We hope that from The Slate’s design guests take home a wonderful experience and some respect and admiration for the building’s past,” Scalf said. “It’s our intention that the design of the hotel will inspire guests to look into the history of the building and the story of Emily Griffith. We want her spirit and legacy to be carried by the guests, away from the site of the hotel and into their daily lives, not forgotten about.”

