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W Hotels: Greg Karn interview

TRAVEL

More than just sleek design and indulgent comfort, W Hotels are about what Greg Karn calls 'the unexpected event'. Like the luminous, 20-foot high woven stainless steel curtain draped along the central ground floor walkway of the new [W Hoboken hotel](#) and residential tower, one of his latest projects with Gwathmey Siegel & Associates Architects.

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The braided mesh screen changes colour according to mood and atmosphere and glowingly guides the way for visitors from the reception area through the hotel's 'living room' (the main entry pavilion in every W hotel) to the bank of elevators beyond.

Neat. But in the case of the Hoboken development, much of the hotel's wow factor lies in its prime geography – right on the New Jersey coast with spectacular point blank views across the Hudson River to the iconic Manhattan skyline.

Almost every guest room shares the dazzling outlook, but one of the best views in the house has to be from a window seat at the chic ground floor restaurant and bar, situated at the tip of the arrow-shaped structure.

A dramatic two-story glass wall ushers the outside in, and a large terrace off the bar makes for the perfect summer cocktail. 'Manhattan becomes the fourth façade,' as Karn puts it.

Karn describes W's approach to its designers as cleverly balanced – keen to allow significant creative freedom around core values like comfort, high design and chic, unexpected luxury but 'cautious' and specific as required.

'They're very conscious of certain details. They'll want to know the dimensions between chairs, the orientation of a seating group, how light enters a room, and how guests interact with the different environments.'

That kind of attention to detail makes sense when you experience first-hand the meticulously finished interior. For the inside of the four-story high entry space, Karn and his team used wood panelling on walls and ceilings for a warm, natural effect – which he likens to that of an 'old world boardroom with contemporary

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shape and proportion.'

In the guest rooms, which feature protruding bay windows to optimally capture the river and skyline views, the designers fitted oversized round sofas into the private glass nooks.

The sofas swivel to function either as a piece of bedroom furniture, facing inwards, or as a relaxing sunbathed daybed facing outwards. 'It's cute, and surprising,' says Karn, 'and that's what they look for. Lots of little things like that. Little unexpected events.'

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