

# SLEEPER

GLOBAL HOTEL DESIGN

SEPTEMBER | OCTOBER 2016



## East

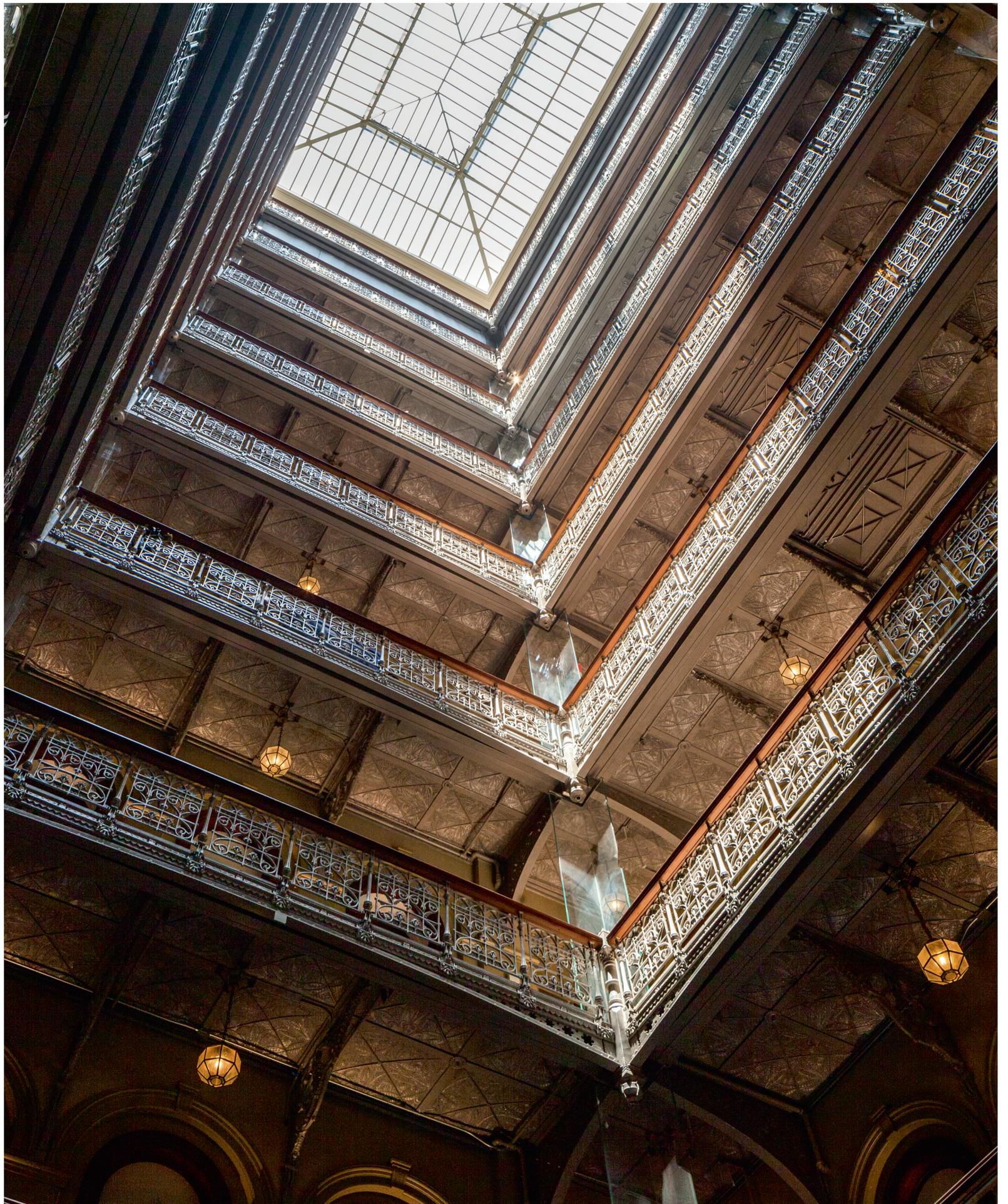
Swire Hotels' business lifestyle brand makes its US debut at Brickell City Centre

## Four Seasons

Adam Tihany designs an intimately scaled oasis at the heart of Dubai's financial centre

## Hoshinoya

Hoshino Resorts and Rie Azuma collaborate on Tokyo's first luxury tower ryokan





# The Beekman

NEW YORK

Lower Manhattan's transformation into a leisure destination continues with the opening of an atmospheric hotel in an iconic building.

Words: Dan F. Stapleton | Photography: © Richard Barnes (unless otherwise stated)

In 2016, the colloquialism that New York speculators are using to describe Lower Manhattan is 'ripe'. It's been 15 years since the September 11 attacks, and for most of that time, the island's southern tip has been dominated by disruptive building projects, including the construction of a new World Trade Center and its associated transport connections. Now, with most of the infrastructure work completed (the Trade Center's \$4 billion subway hub opened to the public in March), the city is preparing for an influx of business tenants, residents and, perhaps most significantly, tourists.

Lower Manhattan's residential population has been swelling for years, thanks in part to the area's quiet feel and relatively affordable rents around the Financial District. New attractions such as the 9/11 Memorial Museum and the upscale Westfield shopping mall, plus classics sights like Wall Street and the Brooklyn Bridge, are luring significantly more visitors, too. But hotel development is still very much a work-in-progress. Although outliers such as The Greenwich Hotel in Tribeca and Andaz Wall Street have been operating since 2009 and 2011 respectively, there's a sense that development opportunities in the area remain plentiful.

Thompson Hotels, an upmarket subsidiary of the Commune Hotels group – whose portfolio also includes the Alila and Joie de

Vivre brands – has already been successful in Lower Manhattan with the Smyth hotel, which opened in 2009. But Thompson's newest venture, The Beekman, significantly expands its presence in the area: the property features 287 guestrooms including 45 suites and two penthouses, and occupies one of Lower Manhattan's most distinctive buildings. It's a statement hotel from a brand that, until now, has specialised in unassuming properties.

The Beekman takes up the entirety of the Temple Court Building, a 19<sup>th</sup> century office block on the corner of Beekman and Nassau that originally housed attorneys' offices before becoming a hub for creative businesses in the 1900s. The Queen Anne revival-style building, rendered in granite, red Philadelphia brick and tan Dorchester stone, is the only one of its kind in the vicinity. Two turrets, which are now the penthouse suites, further distinguish the building.

Inside, The Beekman is even more striking. A nine-storey atrium and pyramidal skylight fill the centre of the hotel, and period details abound. Upon acquiring the Temple Court Building in 2012, Thompson Hotels enlisted architecture firm Gerner Kronick + Valcarcel – whose restoration portfolio also includes Park Hyatt Istanbul Macka Palas – to ensure the building's original characteristics could be preserved.



**Above:** The Beekman's common areas are decked out in contrasting textures and fabrics of mohair velvet, dark wood and brass  
**Previous Page:** A nine-storey atrium and pyramidal skylight fill the centre of the hotel and period details abound

“The scope and intricacy of the renovation is extraordinary,” says General Manager Robert Andrews. “For example, the atrium itself was concealed by a false roof for 65 years because there was a change of code and the landlord at the time did not want to spend the funds required to seal the atrium.”

With the restoration complete, Thompson Hotels engaged Martin Brudnizki, the Swedish-born, UK-based interior designer with a reputation for delivering forthright hotel fit-outs and historically attuned overhauls of iconic restaurants such as The Ivy and St. Pancras Grand, both in London. Brudnizki's brief was to design a property that referenced Lower Manhattan's significant history – closer in tone to one of the grand dame hotels of Midtown than the ultra-modern Andaz nearby.

“With any project, be it hospitality or private residential, we always start by looking at the building, the location and then the surrounding area,” Brudnizki explains. “With Soho Beach House in Miami, for example, we looked at the vibrant history of Latin America and Cuba and sought to elevate the look through the use of beautiful materials and a rich colour palette, synonymous with Miami Beach.

“For The Beekman,” he continues, “our design encompasses the architectural history and aesthetic of the Temple Court while

incorporating a sense of comfortable luxury through the modern use of fine materials. The building is utterly unique so we felt this really dictated the rest of the design. There's not a single space like this in New York.”

The Beekman's common areas, including the lobby and two restaurants – helmed by Tom Colicchio and Keith McNally – are decked out in contrasting textures and fabrics of mohair velvet, dark wood and brass. Brudnizki employed a relatively deep colour palette to create a sense of history and gravity, and to offset the copious natural light in the atrium. In the evening, soft lighting evokes warmth, while the use of bespoke furniture throughout creates a lived-in feel. “The overall look is that of a worldly traveller's drawing room filled with curiosities and objet d'art,” Brudnizki says. “It's all about elevated luxury in the most comfortable sense.”

Each guestroom is reminiscent of a smartly renovated bedroom in a Victorian house in England with ornamental light fixtures, wide floorboards and richly coloured carpets. The smallest rooms are a squeeze at 285ft<sup>2</sup> but high ceilings throughout create an airy feel. Unusually for Manhattan, even the smallest rooms feature bathtubs. Top-notch materials, including Sferra linens, Carrara-marble tiles, and bathroom fittings from Waterworks elevate the guest experience significantly, as does the lighting scheme custom designed by Chelsom.

— CHELSOM —



Shaftesbury by Chelsom



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**Left:** Guestrooms feature Sferra linens, Carrara-marble tiles, bathroom fittings from Waterworks and a lighting scheme by Chelsom. Working closely with Brudnizki, the British manufacturer created key pieces such as a kitsch foo dog table lamp in imperial blue

Working closely with Brudnizki, the British manufacturer created key pieces such as Art Deco pendants with laser-cut detailing, and a kitsch foo dog table lamp in imperial blue.

With its combination of at-home details and business amenities – there’s also a dual-level gym and 4,700ft<sup>2</sup> of private meeting and event space – The Beekman seems intent on courting a wide range of travellers – perhaps because Lower Manhattan itself is still figuring out what sort of neighbourhood it wants to be. Accordingly, Andrews has assembled a team of staff without too many preconceptions about hotel service, whom he hopes can evolve with The Beekman’s clientele. “Many of our team members have never worked in a hotel before,” he says, “but they all truly love making people happy. We can teach the rest.”

**EXPRESS CHECKOUT:** 287 guestrooms | 2 restaurants | 1 bar | 4,700ft<sup>2</sup> event space | Gym | [www.thebeekman.com](http://www.thebeekman.com)

**Owner / Developer:** GFI Capital Resources Group; GFI Development Company | **Operator:** Thompson Hotels | **Architecture:** James M. Farnsworth (original); Gerner Kronick + Valcarcel Architects | **Interior Design:** Martin Brudnizki Design Studio | **Lighting Design:** Bold