

(the) european (hotel design awards) 2002 (architectural award) - best new hotel

WINNER - *Delle Arti Design Hotel*

FINALISTS IN THIS CATEGORY

■ Cowley Manor

■ ThreadNeedles

■ **Delle Arti Design Hotel**

Client: Delle Arti Design Hotel

Architect: Georgio Palu / Michele Bianchi Architetti

THE project 'delle arti' or 'of the arts' in Cremona, Italy, was created from a desire to revisit the concept of hospitality and to invent a new way of 'welcoming' that differs from existing schemes. This welcoming space is not solely intended as a place of rest, but also as a dynamic and exciting environment.

It was decided to introduce art as a stimulating element as art embodies the dynamic and ever changing. This was achieved by using the space to continually promote young artists as well as offering the city the opportunity to become acquainted with already established names.

structure which was both modern and welcoming.

The approach adopted to satisfy these requests was to replace the traditional wall and window concept with a curtain wall consisting of glass mounted on a burnished bronze alloy frame which goes along the whole perimeter of the courtyard where all of the principal functions take place.

The entrance is through three large doors along the main façade which leads to the atrium and then the glass entrance way. The original façade functions as merely a backdrop or passageway, that leads to the main entrance. The entrance way leads to a very high ceilinged hall and the view ahead is of a perforated metallic backdrop – illuminated from behind – which contains three monitors which transmit images of exhibits, concerts and artistic works.

The use of technology was the leit motif that guided the whole project planning of the Delle Arti Design Hotel. This was the reasoning behind the mezzanine overlooking the hall which plays host to a multimedia zone equipped with internet connections, audio and dvd players, in addition to a reading room complete with a furnished book shelf. The mezzanine is accessed through a walkway – in steel with a mirror-like finish – which transversally cuts the volume of the hall below containing the reception desk and a small bar. From the hall and from the atrium one can see the courtyard through the curtain wall which occupies the whole perimeter of the C-shaped internal structure. The transparent construction also enables everyone inside the hotel to view the wall that closes the C. But this fourth wall is not just an ordinary wall, it is a living wall that rises up from a garden that extends up along the length of the wall. Eight tubes containing various electrical, heating, cooling systems etc., also vertically span the wall. The hall contains three maxi-screens which continually transmit images relating to art, culture or life in Cremona. The images are seen from the outside of the guestrooms, but the guests can control the corresponding sound from within the rooms.

The desire to provide high comfort levels at the hotel has resulted in a large zone dedicated to relaxation which includes a gym, sauna, tanning zone, and a hydromassage zone which is connected to a small beauty centre. The furniture in the Delle Arti is custom-made using materials which are natural, in particular wengé wood. A measured use of crystal and polished steel is also present which also bestows an aspect of sobriety and elegance united with a particular warmth.



These concepts were translated and shaped into a 'light' architectural idea which produced a light structure beginning with the structural frame of the hotel entirely realised in dry construction, at low environmental impact and with a strong technological connotation. The decision to abandon the use of a traditional perimeter wall and replace it with a curtain wall, creates an intriguing and unusual game of transparency and introspection in all the parts of the structure, from the guest rooms to the hall, from the courtyard to the dining and exhibition areas, as well as the fitness area. As far as room distribution was concerned, the project planning faced a number of difficulties. The previous building was in the shape of an elongated C and overlooked a small courtyard in the centre, which was closed off by a bordering wall, and the city did not allow the original outline to be modified. Exposure to natural light was also limited, as were the overall building dimensions, in contrast with the client requests to obtain an efficient

