

Charlotte

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ON THE MAP

How the city's hotel interior design is proving that Charlotte is a hot bed for design in the South

By Blake Miller

Charlotte has fast become a hot bed for design. In the last ten years alone, the city has seen an emergence of hotels, restaurants, storefronts, and more that are exceptional examples of Southern-inspired design. While restaurants like Suffolk Punch and Haberdish and clothing

boutiques like Capitol are leading the way when it comes to striking commercial interiors, the city's newest (alongside one enduring favorite) hotel accommodations are quickly helping to establish Charlotte as a design force to be reckoned with. Here's a look at three of the top properties in the Queen City that boast stellar interior design.



KIMPTON TRYON PARK HOTEL

Kimpton hotels are known for their sophisticated and elegant interiors and the hotel collection's latest addition, Tryon Park, is no exception. Designer Susan Caruso of Marina Del Ray, California-based design firm Intra-Spec Hospitality Design transformed the 217-room property with modern Southern-inspired decor that feels rich yet comfortable. (Caruso previously designed the interiors of another Kimpton project, the Argonaut Hotel in San Francisco.) In true Kimpton fashion, the attention to detail in both the service and the design are of the utmost priority, so you can expect architectural detailing and elegant finishes throughout.

HIGHLIGHTS

The millwork

As a LEED-certified gold property, the team could only source materials within a 500-mile radius or less. In the public areas of the hotel, Caruso opted to use local red oak, which was then stained to look like mahogany resulting in a rich, luxurious yet cozy feel to the hotel the moment you walk in.

The lighting

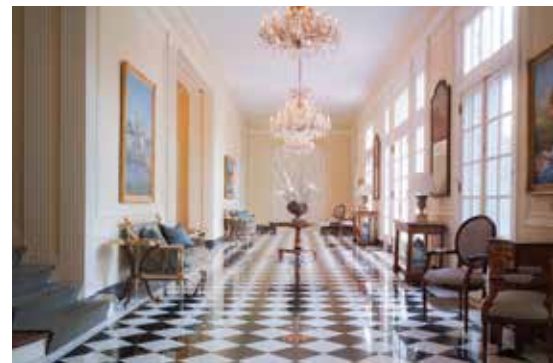
Most of the lighting throughout the hotel was custom designed by Caruso and the Kimpton team including the dramatic crystal chandelier hanging in the entryway of the hotel. This three-stories-high piece features undulating crystal drops and doubles as a piece of artwork and functional light. "The illumination it creates can be seen from outside the hotel in the evening, which is pretty spectacular," Caruso says.

The rooftop

Atop the 19th floor of the hotel, the spacious 4,500-square-foot rooftop bar, Merchant & Trade, provides birds-eye views of some of the city's top attractions including Romare Bearden Park. But it's the restaurant's oversize retractable roof that's the design draw here, offering an indoor/outdoor feel year-round.

The wallcoverings

In the guestrooms (including the 1,300-square-foot Presidential Suite) and ballrooms, you'll find a silvery damask wall covering, which was commissioned for Tryon Park Hotel. "The ballrooms are wrapped in this silver wallcovering and creates a sophisticated look," Caruso says. "And it helps with acoustics."



THE DUKE MANSION

This historic gem has been a mainstay in the boutique hotel scene in Charlotte (and the Southeast) for decades. In the last eight years or so, though, the interiors have been given a gentle overhaul by interior designer Jane Schwab whose eponymous firm continues to tweak the interiors every few months. “The Duke Mansion is exquisitely beautiful architecturally,” Schwab says. “The proportions and the scale of the architectural details are stunning. It’s perfection for this style house.” The idea behind the updated interiors was to “create an environment within such an expansive space that would be intimate and encourage gatherings anywhere from 200 to 300 people to 15 to 20 people.”

HIGHLIGHTS

The foyer

Schwab worked hand-in-hand with Duke Mansion staff to modernize the interiors with the first step being to revamp the entrance. Schwab freshened up the space by switching the paint color from the mansion’s classic yellow to a more modern, neutral hue – Benjamin Moore Philadelphia Cream. “So many events take place on property and so many people want to customize their florals, so this neutral color works best,” Schwab explains.

The blue accents

Drawing inspiration from an original painting of founder Doris Duke as a young girl, which hangs in the entry of the mansion, Schwab added doses of soft blue throughout the interiors, most notably in the entrance hallway where a pair of settees swathed in a stunning blue-and-gold brocade fabric by Suzanne Tucker provide comfortable seating. In other rooms, blue-and-white glass jars and

bowls Schwab uncovered in the mansion double as accessories and vessels for florals.

Organic accessories

Though the interior design is wholly traditional, Schwab wanted to create a high/low appeal to make the interiors feel more accessible and casual while also elegant. To achieve this, she added straw baskets underneath the gold consoles in the entryway.

Original features

To address the dated interiors of the guest bedrooms, Schwab worked with some of the original design details and built off them. The Dowd Suite features floor-to-ceiling drapery in a Kelly green-and-white botanical print, which was added in 1995. To complement this, Schwab designed a new headboard, swapped out the existing sheets for clean, white bed linens, and added an ottoman in a Brunschwig & Fils fabric to match the existing club chair.



THE IVEY'S HOTEL

In a city where so much of history has been torn down, The Ivey's Hotel is a breath of fresh air. Formerly the J.B. Ivey & Company department store, which dates back to the 1920s, the building has undergone a rebirth with the renovation and addition of this boutique 42-room hotel. Truly a team effort, the interiors were designed by Brett Kreuger, principal at the MRK Hotel Collection and owners of the hotel, and Miami-based designer Nick Alain. (MRK Hotel Collection is also behind the stunning Windsor Hotel in Asheville.) The coupling of an hotelier's love for interior design with an interior design pro resulted in an ultimate combination of Art Deco-meets-mid-century-modern with a steam punk vibe in a pre-War historic building.

HIGHLIGHTS

The floors

An avid traveler, Krueger found 500-year-old oak beams from a vineyard in France that his gut told him to buy. "I knew I'd use them for a project at some point down the road," he says. But having them cut into hardwood flooring proved difficult, as mill after mill turned down Krueger's request for fear the beams would fall apart during the cutting process. Finally, a mill out of Atlanta agreed, and now those stunning French oak floors can be found throughout the entire Ivey's Hotel.

Vintage everywhere

Krueger's love for collecting during his travels proved to be a great source for the hotel's interior design. Throughout The Ivey's Hotel, you'll find vintage clock faces (Krueger collected more than 10,000 from his travels) framed in a shadow box, early 20th century French magazine ads along

the guest room hallways, and a framed 100-year-old map of France.

Exposed brick

Though much of the historic architectural detailing of the building was wiped out during a renovation in 1995, the original brick columns from the building remain in the lobby. A nod to the Ivey's original facade, Krueger and Alain brought the outside in by adding exposed brick walls to the guest rooms resulting in a rustic elegance to every space.

Framed history

Krueger and his team hung photos from the Ivey family throughout the Tulip Room, the hotel's meeting space. Family photos from Thanksgiving and Christmas at the department store are hung alongside a smattering of photos of the family throughout the 1920s and beyond.