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Give the Mark high marks for its new incarnation



James Gardner

It is a great and all too rare pleasure to be able to greet any architectural development in New York City with unreserved praise. But such is the case at the reborn Mark Hotel at 25 East 77th Street at Madison Avenue. From the exterior, the hotel (now, plus residences) looks much as it always did, spruced up to be sure, but preserving the demure pre-war dignity that it had when it opened back in 1927.

The real pleasure of the place is revealed the moment you enter and behold one of the most exhilarating interiors in the city. It was conceived by Frenchman Jacques Grange, whom the New York Times described two years ago as “France’s most famous interior designer.” In these parts, he is best known for his work on Francois Pinault’s Manhattan digs.

Well, it seems as if the French, the inventors of art deco, have retained a special affinity for that style, which

has been so effectively deployed in the lobby of the Mark Hotel, developed by Alexico Group. This neo-art deco, if you will, is in dramatic contrast to the pleasant, but rather journeyman old world elegance of the place in its previous incarnation. It immediately conquers the entire visual field of the beholder through the severe, yet breath-taking elegance of its sharp, straight, marbled lines, reduced to stark patterns of jet black and bone white; you almost feel you are standing on the keyboard of a Steinway concert grand piano. Give the Mark high marks for its new incarnation.

The Mark Hotel at 25 East 77th Street

Only a few unexpected bursts of color and curvature are allowed to relieve the severity of this general conception, among them the winding whirligig of a chandelier in the dead center of the lobby. Even though the bar and restaurant, to be developed by master chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten, will open in about a month, already they look better than they ever did in their previous incarnation. As for the hallways, elevators



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and individual rooms, they largely reprise the two-toned motif of the lobby especially in the lavish use of marble in the bathrooms.

Like the Plaza, the Mark, which opened unofficially a few months ago, is a hybrid

that contains 118 rooms for guests as well as 42 co-op apartments.

James Gardner, formerly the architecture critic of the New York Sun, writes on the visual arts for several publications.