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urban oases

By Katie Tandy

New York City is high on style, tight on space, and Mother Nature can be terribly elusive amid all that concrete and steel. Check out these two new venues that are reclaiming some air and sky for a little more solace in city life.

Sweet Dreams

Designed to simultaneously transcend and celebrate its urban surroundings, the new Dream Downtown hotel, designed by Frank Fusaro of Handel Architects, offers a gleaming oasis of outdoor space. From the poolside beach club brimming with imported sands and cabana

DREAM DOWNTOWN: Architect: Handel Architects
Interior Design: Frank Fusaro of Handel Architects
POOL/Hotel Exterior: Custom Perforated Stainless Façade: A. Zahner Co Round Windows: Schuco USA
Acrylic Bottom Pool: Nippura Co **Pool Tile:** Nemo Tile Company **Garden Wall:** Greenscreen **Teak Chaise Lounges and side tables:** London Hotel Supply LTD
Roof Lounge: Floor: Ardex **Chandelier:** Antique Venini **Nickel Finish Paneling behind DJ Booth:** Odegard Macassar Ebony **DJ Booth Bacon Veneer Company Custom Wall Mounted Light Fixtures:** JPR Lighting Group **Custom Sofas; Cocktail Tables; Stools:** 5Star Furniture Manufacturer **Leather on Sofas:** Cortina **Upholstery on Stools:** Kvadrat **Drapery:** Integra Fabrics - **Roof Lounge Bar Wall Paint:** Benjamin Moore **Floor:** Ardex **Chandelier:** Antique Venini **Nickel Finish Paneling and Shelving at Backbar:** Odegard **Portoro Marble Walls; bar top:** Appia Marble & Granite **Macassar Ebony Bar Fascia:** Bacon Veneer Company **XVI: Owners:** Trust3 Hospitality **Architect:** Francois Frossard **Interior Design:** Francois Frossard **Construction Manager:** Trust3 Hospitality **All production** is done by FFD Products, an affiliated company of Francois Frossard that handles production for projects both in the U.S. and overseas.





boys, to the penthouse PH-D Rooftop Lounge, guests are sure to experience equal parts fresh air and modern style.

The 316-room property officially opened in June following a \$270 million renovation of the circa-1960s Albert C. Ledner building. Fusaro says his firm was granted the project through the visionary concepts they presented alongside a short list of designers in a charrette; many of those ideas found their way into the final aesthetic of the hotel, including the glass bottom pool inside The Beach.

Fusaro says that the new Dream Downtown, part of the Vikram Chatwal Hotels collection, "is rooted in the overarching notion of being able to transport yourself somewhere else by just walking through a door."

The Beach channels a turquoise cove in Cap Ferrat, drawing inspiration from the origins of the building, which was designed for the National Maritime Union and its nautical aesthetic, highlighting the sharp contrasts between blue and white. ▶

Opposite from top to bottom:
Dream Downtown PH-D club;
White décor at XVI.

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“The Beach is surrounded by the reflective silver walls of the hotel’s façades and green landscape,” says Fusaro. “The white-sand colored concrete pavers and white sand beach establish the ground plane along with the water and glass bottom pool. The teak wood tables and teak wood chaises bring the warm wood of the interior outside and allow the spaces to flow together.”

The crisp white linen on the chairs offset by blue throw pillows and further the seaside palette, while the operable teak and glass wall of the pool bar create a sense of expansive space, allowing the outside to come streaming in, a rare sensation in New York.

The PH-D Rooftop Lounge on the 12th floor of the hotel is a more luxurious affair, “the ultimate Penthouse,” Fusaro says, boasting Italian Portoro marble, Macassar ebony, and three, sure-to-scintillate amber Venini glass chandeliers crafted originally in the 1960s for the Grand Salon of the Hotel Monsieur Marcel Dassault in Paris.

The 1,500-square-foot outdoor terrace offers a retractable roof so revelers can sip and sway come rain or shine, surrounded by sweeping views of the Hudson River and Empire State Building. Fusaro says the roof lounge space and terrace were created as part of an architectural addition to the original building, with sliding exterior walls that, like The Beach, allow an intermingling of the interior and exterior spaces.

While Fusaro says that each venue elicits a different response from the guests, the overarching of Dream is designed “to evoke a feeling of otherworldliness. This begins from the outside, when a visitor approaches the building; the sight of a building with large round cutouts in perfect rows is not only unusual for the block, but also for the city. ‘How long has this building been here? Have I not noticed this before?’”

The entire façade of the building is dotted with holes, even the sidewalks are emblazoned with circles; Fusaro explains that the geometry of the circle influences everything both aesthetically and conceptually. “We see it as the portal to be transported through.”

And transport it does. Fusaro managed to take what he calls an “essentially constrained space,” and through a careful combination of architecture and interior design, infuses the entire property with a heady feeling of freedom and air, particularly with the outdoor venues.

“We wanted to make the visitor feel a sense of openness, like he or she wasn’t in New York City,” Fusaro says. “The open space also becomes the window-view for everyone looking down into the courtyard, and we wanted the space to stand on its own as much as a view of the skyline would.”

Of glamour and guillotines

In the teeming heart of Midtown West, nightclub guru Trust3 Hospitality (of Juliet Supperclub, the Pink Elephant in NYC and the Todd English P.U.B. in Las Vegas) have launched XVI, a decadent new rooftop venue designed by Francois Frossard, complete with a sprawling outdoor terrace.

Comprised of Kelley Jones, Joshua Kaiser and Joe Vicari, Trust3 Hospitality says they wanted to bring a little wildness, a little more excitement, back into New York nightlife, without sacrificing any sophistication—the result? “Versailles in the sky,” says Vicari. Frossard’s design work at XVI channels the opulence of the notorious monarch, while adding a dash of playful cheek.

Guests enter on the 16th floor of the Hilton Garden Inn and make their way down a long tunnel, reaching an express elevator that barrels them up to the breathtaking views on the roof.



From top to bottom:
XVI’s splashes of color;
XVI balcony.



Frossard says he wanted to infuse the entire space with “a feeling of surprise, freedom and grandeur.”

The rooftop features a pristine, white metal greenhouse with ceilings and walls of glass. Frossard kept the palette crisp and chic inside, using primarily white, but offsets any sense of starkness with warmer elements like a few woven gold rugs, dark brown end tables—and, of course, a few jewel-bright tones, like iridescent fuchsia curtains.

Outside, the palette is a little grittier, echoing the hues of the surrounding skyscrapers, but only in color—the shapes of the furniture are anything but utilitarian. Featuring oversized carved sofas, tufted armchairs and undulating tables with cut-out centers, the terrace is a sleek yet sumptuous escape. The furniture, offering a ranged of muted colors like steel gray, cream and tan, are all upholstered with a subtly metallic fabric that catches the light, and seems to glow from within.

Frossard also created enormous sculptural LED holders; white briars covered in dangerous spines climb their way into the sky from tall flowerboxes filled with gray stones—it adds an edge to the otherwise whimsical feeling of the space. There is also a 50-foot faux grass wall and delicate topiaries reminiscent of a manicured garden.

“When you enter the rooftop, you’re struck with beautiful views of the city’s urban landscape, but set inside this fabric is a magical décor and rooftop paradise,” says Frossard. “At XVI, you tend to leave your stress at the door as you are becoming part of a venue that now oversees the mundane nature of the city.”

From top to bottom:
XVI city views;
The Beach at Dream Downtown.

Clockwise from right:
The Beach at Dream Downtown cafe;
Dream Downtown PH-D terrace;
Dream Downtown PH-D club;
XVI.





Trust3 Hospitality explains that the creation of their latest nightclub was not without its obstacles, however.

“Dealing with the fact that most of the FF&E would be outdoor 24/7 and had to hold up to the elements was a big challenge. Spatially, we just wanted to ‘open’ the space up more and really give the guest a view of the entire sky.”

In addition to glamorous design details, the venue also boasts multiple indoor and outdoor bars, a gilded movie projection screen and fireplaces—this isn’t just a summer sipping spot.

Frossard says XVI is designed to honor its urban location, but also eclipse it, offering a starlit hideaway, a respite from the bustling streets.

“You are becoming one with a lounge that gives you the sense that you are floating above everything else,” he says. “It offers a simple escape for your soul and mind to relax and experience peace outside of the stressful life of NYC.”

When asked to describe his design motto, Frossard insisted it was simply understanding the “energy” of a space as soon as you walked in.

“If you can accomplish, understand or feel the energy, you know that your design will be felt and understood and appreciated by everyone else.” ❁

Photography: Dream Downtown and XVI