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The Guild Hotel

San Diego, USA

One of San Diego's revered architectural gems has undergone an £80m renovation to emerge as a 162-key luxury boutique hotel.

Given its fascinating past and handsome architecture, it's no surprise that San Diego's iconic Army-Navy YMCA building sparked the imagination of Alvin Mansour of Oram Hotels, and Rick Mansour of Azul Hospitality Group.

In the 1920s, as the number of military bases in the city burgeoned, the Italian Renaissance-inspired building at 500 West Broadway provided a community and recreation space for uniformed men and women. Indeed, over the course of its history, the Army-Navy YMCA building would provide services to a staggering 125m military personnel, and was registered as a Historic Place by the US Department of the Interior National Park Service as a result.



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Only the most considered and faithful of restorations would do for the property, and thus Oram Hotels worked tirelessly in collaboration with designer, Sormeh Rienne, to preserve the building's landmark status as it embarks on a new chapter.

"The Guild is a symbol of this city's incredible, rich history that we have reimagined with care and true passion through years of hard work and dedication," affirms Alvin. "As San Diego natives, our team at Oram envisioned a destination that would not only offer something new and inspired to our hometown, but that would celebrate its unique personality and cultural imprint on California, and we think we have brought it to life beautifully."

Uniting Alvin's vision of a refined, experiential boutique hotel, with a nod to some of Europe's most renowned independent properties, Sormeh Rienne has created an inviting and inclusive atmosphere with a degree of nostalgia for a bygone era of hospitality. Contemporary interiors juxtapose beautifully with the wealth of rich historic details and references to the property's Army-Navy background.

Passing beneath the building's meticulously restored exterior detailing and facade, guests enter the lobby via an original stone staircase. An assortment of intimate seating areas greets them, complete with plush custom sofas and chairs in vibrant velvet tones of pink, deep red



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and blue. To the right, a hand-carved, fluted burgundy reception desk is tucked away amid floor-to-ceiling drapery.

The focal point of the space, however, is The Guild Bar, with its Brazilian leathered quartzite counter, and striking backbar with custom millwork detailing.

Located directly off the lobby, across from the bar, the hotel's signature restaurant is a Mediterranean-influenced, al fresco destination. Its outdoor courtyard dining room features a black and white colour palette, with a custom-designed outdoor fireplace, lush greenery and mirrors that mimic the building's historic windows.

Diners can also make use of the separate greenery-filled outdoor courtyard, Grace Garden, with its assortment of dining tables and lounge seating. By night, the garden will be softly-illuminated with custom-designed lighting for an ethereal, unexpected retreat in the midst of the city.

The final public space is the extraordinary ballroom. Originally the YMCA's basketball court, with an elevated running track, the space has been completely transformed into an elegant 3,500ft² space with original brick wall inlays, dramatic floor-to-ceiling drapery and hardwood floors.

The underground pool on the hotel's basement level, meanwhile, has been converted into The Society Ballroom – a unique 3800m² events space awash with original architectural detailing.

When it came to the guest rooms, the design team opted for refined, minimal interiors with



custom-designed furniture, art and carpeting in a soothing palette of pale blue, grey and a soft army green.

Stearns & Foster guest beds with Garnier-Thiebaut linens sit atop wooden frames with leather headboards, while rose gold lighting and accents add a rich, contemporary finish.

This stripped-back scheme enhances the property's elegant high ceilings and abundant natural light, with many rooms offering striking views over the city and harbour. Each room also features a custom designed piece of art, highlighting historic San Diego artists and the property's own history.

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