

Grégoire Bridel

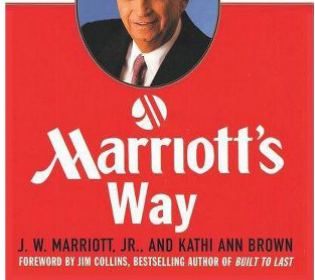
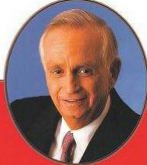
Behind Marriott

Research

Content

Before Marriott	p.4
Management	p.6
Occupation	p.8
Transformation	p.10
Behind Marriott	p.12
Re-describing	p.14
Stage set	p.16
Bypassing the entrance	p.28
Where things get confusing	p.38
Is there anyone else ?	p.48
Hotel gloom	p.58
Beyond Marriott ?	p.66
Embracing change	p.68

THE SPIRIT TO SERVE



The spirit to serve book cover

Before Marriott

Management

Marriott International is the largest hotel management company in the world and is based in the USA. It started in 1927 as a root beer restaurant named „Hot shoppes“, and soon became a franchise with the addition of two more restaurants. After a few years of running this business, the company made a shift to the hotel industry and opened in 1957 its first motor hotel. Over the next two decades, it became a global enterprise and transformed the hospitality industry. In the end of the 80s, the company started to diversify and created a portfolio of different hotel brands, each one geared towards a specific category of travelers. In the following years, new brands were created and already existing ones were brought into the Marriott family. In 2016, Marriott International acquired Starwood Hotels & Resorts, creating the largest hotel company in the world.

Nowadays, Marriott’s portfolio is constituted of 30 different brands. They are divided according to class and architecture. The hotels have either a classic or a distinctive design and go from mid-range category (select) to premium and luxury. A few brands are also geared towards longer stay. The Marriott brand itself falls within the premium category and has a more classic design. This means that the design will be similar for all the hotels of this brand and should follow a general design guideline. At the other spectrum, in brands such as Autograph collection, each hotel has a distinctive design, often inspired by the location and goes into the trend of the boutique hotel.

In 1997, Marriott International set up his first hotel in Zürich by taking over the management of the Hotel Zürich, which was originally built in 1972 by the architect Lehmann, Spöglger und Morf. A private investor bought the building and Marriott rather manages it. This means that the company only owns the furniture and the equipment. Following the acquisition, all the technical facilities were renewed and the interior design adapted to fit Marriott worldwide standards. Today, it is not anymore the only hotel in Zürich from this hotel management company. In total, Marriott International manages 6 hotels, each one under a different brand but still regrouped in two clusters. The Marriott Hotel is associated with Sheraton Zürich Hotel and Neues Schloss Privat. This means that for example, the same sales group manages those three hotels. This concern only a few activities as Marriott Hotel still remains on its own, meaning that it has its own society name (Hotel Zürich ag).



Marriott Hotel (Marriott.com)

	CLASSIC	DISTINCTIVE
LUXURY	THE RITZ-CARLTON ST. REGIS JW MARRIOTT	WESTIN AUTOGRAPH COLLECTION HOTELS RENAISSANCE MARRIOTT HOTELS EDITION
PREMIUM	MARRIOTT SHERATON DELTA HOTELS CO MARRIOTT LONGER STAYS	WESTIN AUTOGRAPH COLLECTION HOTELS MERIDIAN RENAISSANCE MARRIOTT HOTELS EDITION MARRIOTT HOTELS MARRIOTT HOTELS LONGER STAYS
SELECT	COURTYARD FOUR POINTS BY SHERATON SPRINGHILL SUITES RESIDENCE INN PROTEA HOTELS FAIRFIELD TOWNPLACE SUITES LONGER STAYS	AC HOTELS ALOFT MOXY MARRIOTT HOTELS LONGER STAYS

Marriott brand portfolio (Marriott.com)

Sources:

Marriott Website (Marriott.com)

Interview with Alexander Müller, chief of sales at Marriott Hotel

Interview with Mahsur Taycimen, chief of engineering at Marriott Hotel

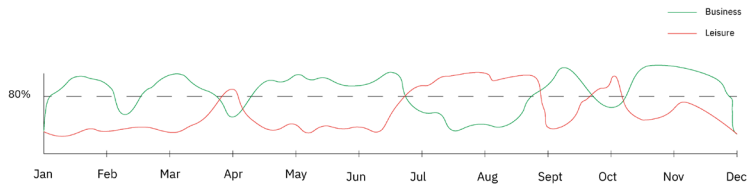
Occupation

The Marriott Hotel is a business hotel, which means that most of his clients are coming there because of their work. The occupation varies depending to the seasons but is marked mostly by the public holidays. Since no work takes place these days, the rate of business clients drops but is balanced by the clients coming for leisure. Since the hotel is situated in the city center, and is part of the global loyalty program “Marriott Bonvoy“, people are choosing this hotel not only for the business facilities but also for their vacation since it allows them to gain points. On average, the occupation rate is about 80%, meaning that 20% of the rooms are not used. There is always a shift between the business and the leisure customers throughout the year. This is the same when looking at the occupation on a weekly basis. The usual business customer comes between Monday and Thursday (or until Friday) and the week-end sees mostly leisure customers. It is the same with the meeting venues. They are booked during the week for business purposes and in the week-end social events are taking place, such as weddings or parties.

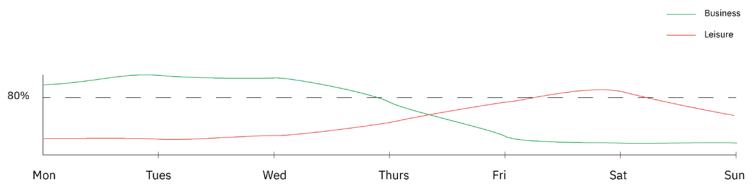
When looking at the type of room booked, the same applies. The business clients usually have arrangements with their company and get mostly the standard guest rooms. As for the clients coming for leisure, they are more likely to search for rooms that can be connected (when for example traveling as a family) or suites. Having more time to enjoy the hotel and its amenities, they are also more likely to book higher grade rooms. Standard rooms are an advantage for companies booking for events, since they can guarantee that everyone will be treated the same.

As a standard principle, the hotel fills from bottom to top and the bigger and more expensive rooms are the last rooms booked. However, platinum and gold members of the loyalty programs get automatically upgraded if better rooms are available.

Occupation	100 %	20 %
nbr. of floors :	19	3.8
nbr. of rooms :	257	51.4
nbr. of suites :	9	1.8
nbr. events rooms :	12	2.4
nbr. breakout rooms :	16	3.2



Yearly occupation



Weekly occupation

Sources:

Marriott Website (Marriot.com)

Interview with Mahsur Taycimen, chief of engineering at Marriott Hotel

Transformation

Even though the building was originally meant as a gesamtkunstwerk, meaning that every details (furniture, carpets, artworks...) had been designed to form a whole, the hotel was refitted in 1997 to adapt to Marriott global design look. Since then, the interior has been redone many times and the last renovation was done in 2019 in the new lobby/bar of the ground floor.

On average, a hotel changes the design of its guest room every 7 years. This is partially due to the wear and tear of the furniture, but mostly to always have a design that is up to date with the taste of the costumers. These renovations are carefully planned to avoid losing money due to customers finding the hotel outdated, but at the same time still using the the latest furniture and equipment at a maximum.

There is in general three different ways to renovate hotel rooms. The first one is going room by room. This method allows the hotel to have a lot of rooms still available and is less disruptive. However, it takes a long time to renovate every room and is in the end the most expensive method. The second one is to renovate floor by floor (or a couple of floors at a time). The construction still stays confined but it takes less time to finish the works. The last method is to close the entire building. This is the fastest way since the management don't have to care about the guests. However the hotel is not making money from its room during the whole duration of the renovation. A last way to renovate the rooms would be to renovate only certain categories at a time.

The renovations of the guest rooms at Marriott Hotel in Zürich rather follow the third method, but since the hotel is composed of two buildings, only one is closed while the other keeps receiving guests. Usually, Marriott decides when it's time to redo the rooms but since the building is privately owned, the owner also has a saying. The last guest room renovation happened in 2015 in the tower, and lasted about three months. The new design followed the general guideline of Marriott, which is adapted and worked on by local architects. Since it takes a long time to plan for the renovation of the whole hotel, the Marriott design guideline had the time to be changed between the two transformations, which means that the north building (which was renovated first) doesn't have the same design as the tower, which adapted to the newest guidelines.



Original design (Bauen + Wohnen)



Original design (Bauen + Wohnen)

Sources:

Interview with Alexander Müller, chief of sales at Marriott Hotel

Interview with Mahsur Taycimen, chief of engineering at Marriott Hotel



Schatzalp hotel, advertising for Swissair magazine

Behind Marriott

Re-describing

„To re-describe is not to describe a state of things, nor a simple passage, but to equip an object with a relational thickness that marks the places where these things differ slightly and thereby become.“¹

„It is a matter of making visible all those things buried in an object; not to make other meanings disappear, but to make it impossible for a single statement to have the last word.“²

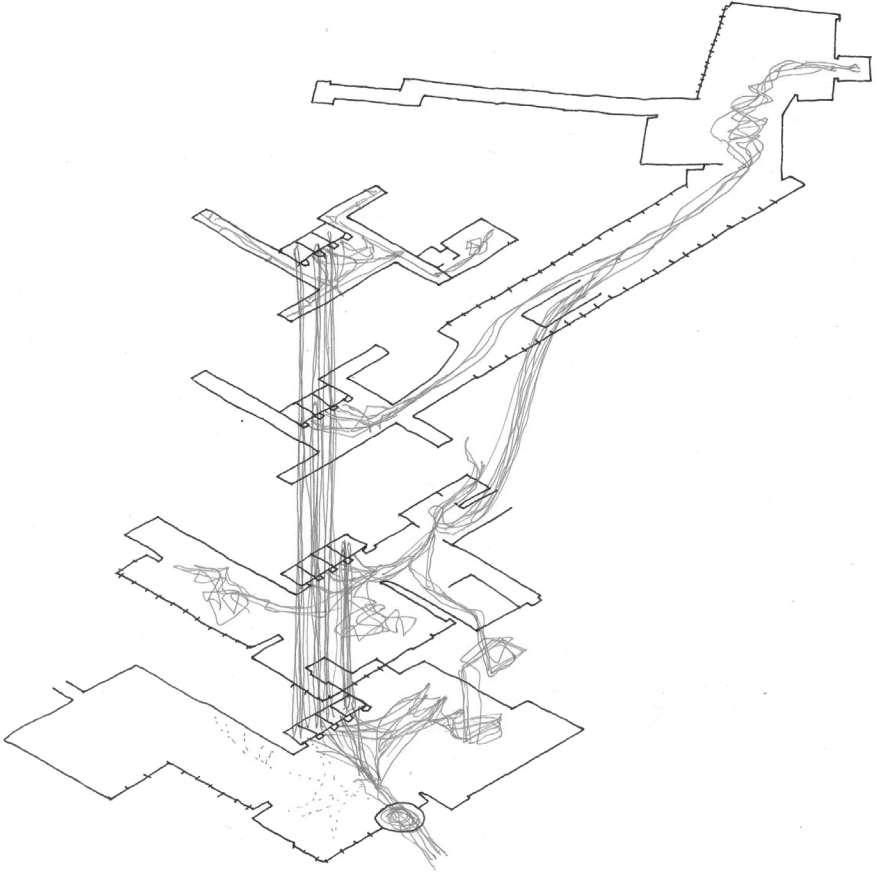
When looking at the Hotel on the Marriott website, numerous pictures depict the building and its various facilities. Divided into categories according to function (reception, guestrooms, events and meetings...), they portray the hotel under its best light. All the pictures are immaculate but are also mostly devoid of any human presence. The hotel appears empty, or as if it had never been used.

However, the experience of the guest will be different, as the hotel will be inhabited and his stay will be marked by his interactions with other people, as well as with all the elements that are not shown on the official pictures. Such experiences can be traced through the multiple reviews left on booking website. In addition to these comments, experiencing the space as an outsider, interviewing the staff and looking at the history of the building allow to see behind the corporate images and to re-describe the hotel.

Here, re-describing the hotel means following the journey of a guest from the lobby to his guest room. Along this path, a succession of objects highlights situations where things differs, are ambiguous or are confronted with each other. Above all, the objects make perceptible the potential of the multiple transitional spaces to be different.

¹ Ariane d’Hoop, *Habiter le Trouble*

² Donna Haraway, *Like a leaf*



Stage set

« Like stage sets, lobbies are designed to catch our attention and provide the backdrop for human interaction. Caught in the theatricality of the setting, guests become spectators and actors simultaneously, an appreciative audience of a drama of which they are or become a part »¹

Situated in the ground floor and directly accessible from the street, the lobby is the first place through which guests will transit. They will also have here their first interaction with Marriott's staff. The lobby of Marriott Hotel was renovated in 2019 and the new design follows the "greatroom" concept developed by the company in 2006. Instead of the "non longer popular formal living room", the space is divided into different zones that can be tailored to the guest own needs. Instead of architectural barriers, these zones, such as the welcome, the individual or the social zone, form spaces that can be adapted to the guest activity.

¹ *The Hotel as Setting in Early Twentieth-Century German and Austrian Literature*



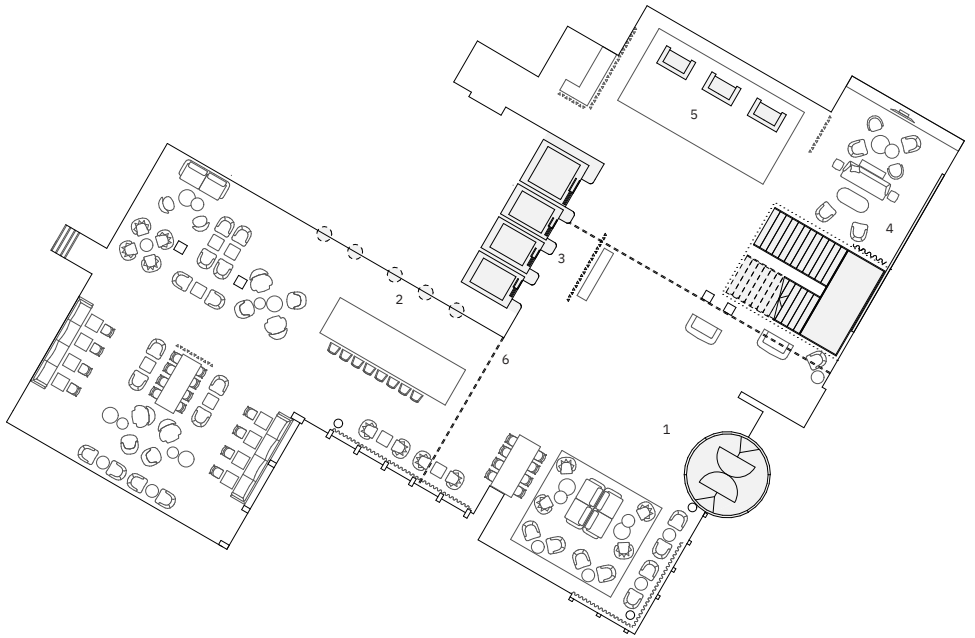
Reception (Marriott website)



Lobby (Marriott website)

Lobby

1. Revolving door
2. Shopping windows
3. Elevators
4. Sculpture
5. Reception desk
6. Hoarding board

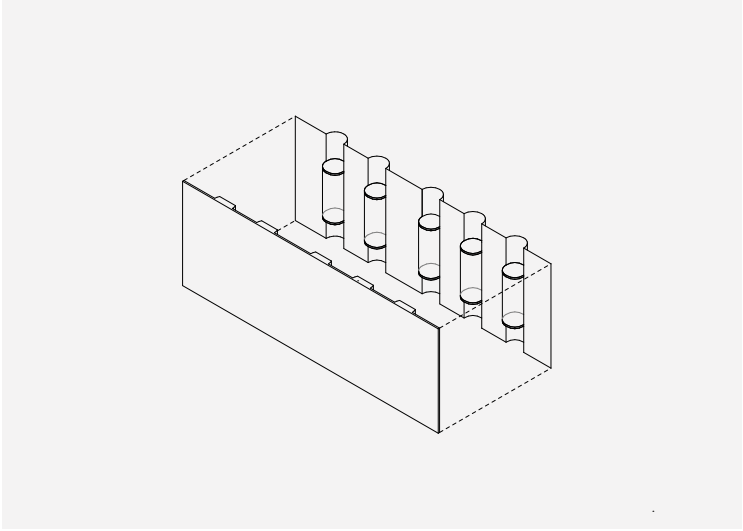
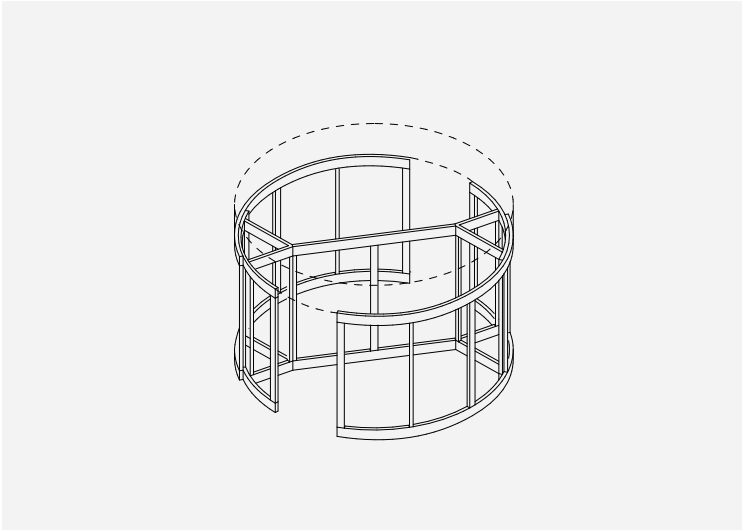


1. Exterior and interior

The revolving door marks the passage between the interior and the exterior of the building, and comes usually with a surprise. As the hotel was built in 1972, the façade still showcase the architectural language of that period and the façade doesn't look anymore like that of a five star hotel. This vision is then shifted after going through the revolving door, since the lobby was last renovated in 2019 and corresponds to the latest trends in terms of luxury. Even though the building is not a protected monument, the façade cannot be transformed. This posed some problem when changing the large logo hung on the concrete core and visible from afar. While the change was still possible, the procedure took a long time.

2. Zürich as a lobby

Inside the lobby, the guests can find the reception desk, a lounge area with various seating configurations, as well as a bar. In the original design from 1972, the lobby also hosted other activities such as a hairdresser and a shopping arcade with a flower shop and a watch, jewelry and fashion boutique. A few circular window displays were inserted directly into the concrete walls. When asked about the disappearance of the boutique, the chief of sales answered that since the hotel is situated in the city center, the whole city acts as a lobby and there is no need anymore for shops to be directly inside the hotel. However, a few comments by guests show that this perception varies from people to people. While some praised the central location of the building, others complained that the hotel is outside of the city center and too far from other attractions such as shopping streets or restaurants.

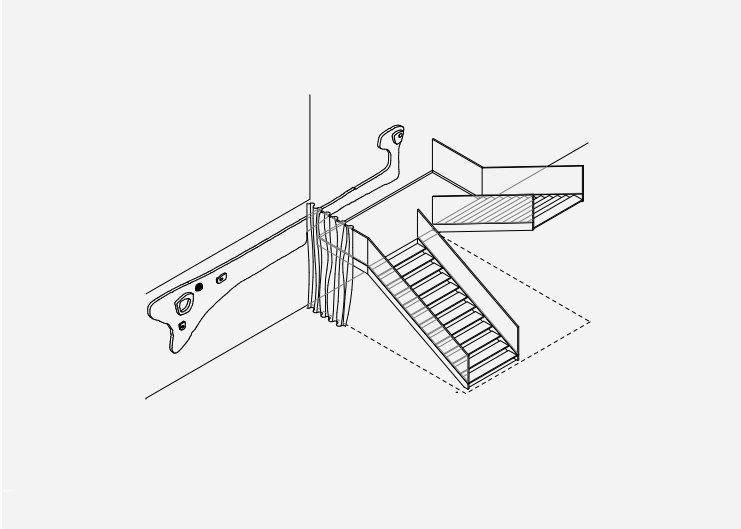
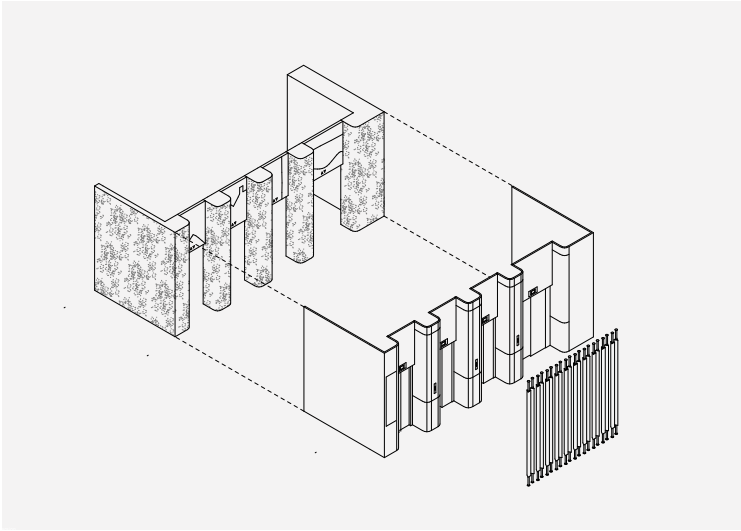


3. Hiding the elevators

One of the first things that a guest sees when arriving are the elevator doors. However, those are partially hidden by some wooden pillars. People coming and going out of the elevators are slightly hidden and are not directly confronted with the other guests waiting in the lobby. In the previous design, the wooden pillars were not there but a big circular table with large vases and flower arrangements was standing at the same place. This contrasts with the design made by the architect in 1972. Originally, the elevator doors were enameled in blue and yellow by the artist Hanny Fries and in collaboration with Willy Charles Erisman. The doors were also surrounded by the bush-hammered concrete walls. Today, the artwork doesn't exist anymore and the bush-hammered concrete has been covered by another material.

4. Traces of the past

Before going to the reception desk and asking for his room, guests can notice the staircase leading to the upper levels and the large in-situ sculpture that is shaped around it. The whole space is a reminiscence of the original architecture of the hotel and the wall behind the stair still has its bush-hammered concrete surface. The sculpture is however not displayed in the best way anymore because a curtain cuts the view of the sculpture in two. The functionality prevails and it is more important to give privacy to the lounge area rather than showing the whole sculpture. This is a good example of the treatment of the original architecture by Marriott. In a previous design, the carpet motif highly contrasted the colors of the concrete and the artwork. The hotel staff also uses the old 70s architecture as an excuse to answer to reviews criticizing the outdated appearance of the interior.

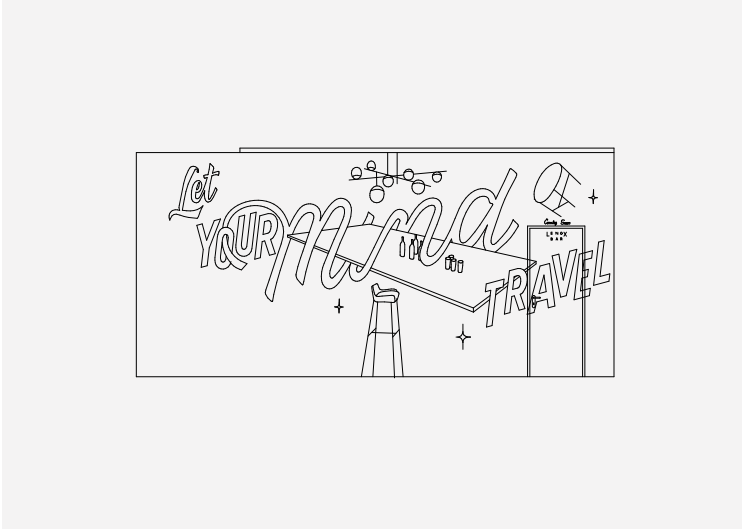
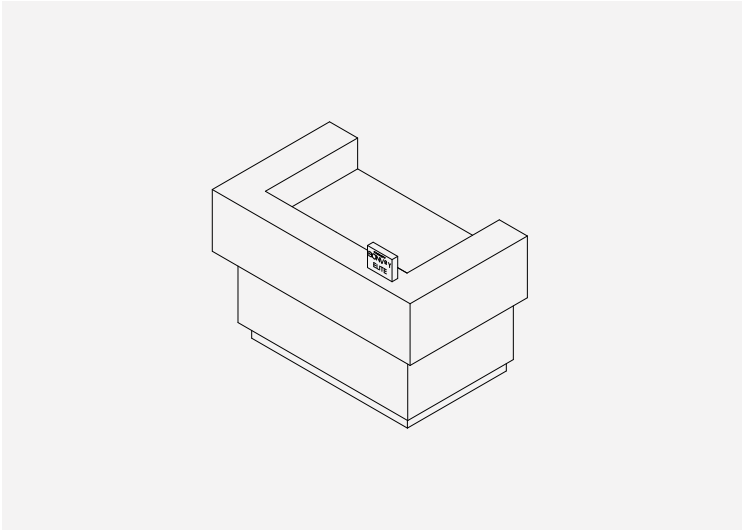


5. Rite de passage

The reception desk is the place where the guest will most likely have his first interaction with the personal of the hotel. By being registered and given a key to a room, he also officially becomes a hotel guest. This first contact is of high importance, will set the tone for the rest of the stay and will be remembered. “I was immediately welcomed by a smile“ or “none smiled at me and they couldn’t find the reservation“ are example of the many comments left about this rite de passage that often starts the description of the stay. The reception desk might also be the only place where the guest will interact with the hotel personal, since cleaning staff or other positions are rather encouraged to stay invisible to the costumers. With loyalty programs such as Bonvoy Marriott, the regular clients are also promised an upgrade and if the hotel staff fails to notice their status or no upgrade are available, their stay will be tarnished.

6. Keeping up appearances

Since the lobby was renovated in 2019 and the hotel was still receiving guest, the reception desks had to be moved into the lounge space near the revolving door. A makeshift lobby was reproduced and murals were painted on the hoarding boards enclosing the construction area. However, they didn’t mask everything and part of the false ceiling were removed, showing the underlying cables and other technical appliances. When asked about the potential use of the old lobby space of the north building, the chief of sale answered that it was actually easier to move the reception desks only a few meters, rather than into another building. Furthermore, as the hotel has a lot of regular clients, shifting the lobby would confuse them. The only downside was that the back-office of the reception, usually hidden behind a wall, now had to be moved in the reception area. As a consequence, the desks of the workers, which are normally rather messy, had to stay clean at all time.



Quotes

„Excellent service, facilities. True 5 star hotel, wrapped in a 3 star Marriott exterior. This should be rebranded under renaissance, or other name such the President Woodrow Wilson in Geneva.“

TripAdvisor review, Sept. 2021

„The Hotel is a standard Marriott hotel, clean and modern. The location was disappointing, a long walk to the central zone with all the restaurants. It is convenient to the train station. The staff was helpful to get tours outside of the city. The only restaurant opened for lunch on Sunday was in the bar. We were nervous returning in the evening and found that we could only get in the front entrance and had to pass sex shops and locals drinking and doing drugs on the streets around the hotel.“

TripAdvisor review, Sept. 2019

„If you book directly by the hotel webpage you get free wifi, if not you pay it extra !!! As you can see in my hotel reviews I travel a lot and many times to Marriott Hotels. This time was my second time at this hotel and I was very disappointed although they have remodeled the rooms but in a very cheap way with Made in China decor. Room service and food TERRIBLE and an extra effort from the management to help you, non existent. Its 5 blocks to far from the action downtown. You will find all the airplane crew from most airlines here. Not a 5 star !!! “

TripAdvisor review, Sept. 2015

„My family and I just completed a three night stay at the Marriott and had a delightful experience. From check-in to check-out, the staff were courteous and helpful. My Titanium Elite status was recognized at check-in, leading to an upgrade to a corner view premium room. We were granted access to the M Lounge, a beautiful facility on the Ground level. Daily breakfast and evening appetizers were very substantial. I'd like to recognize James in the M Lounge who was extremely hospitable and welcoming during our stay. We look forward to our next visit!“

TripAdvisor review, Nov. 2019

„Very nice hotel , not far away from downtown and bahnhof street. A little old outside but very modern inside , with very comfortable rooms. The staff and services are impeccable. Very nice place to stay.“

TripAdvisor review, Jul. 2017

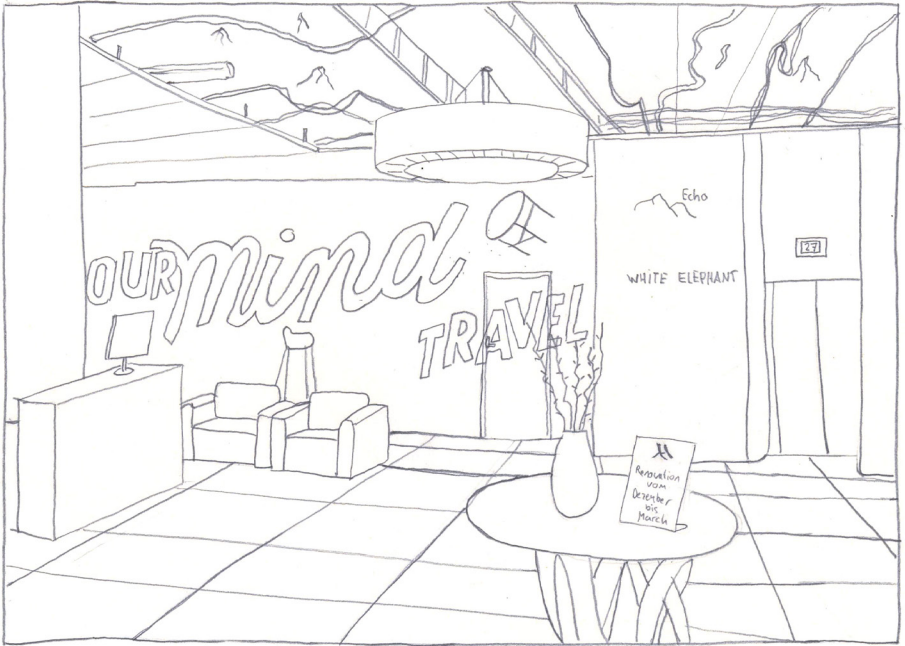
„The hotel is built up to be luxury. But honestly from what I experience now its just below ordinary Marriott. It can be included NEAR downtown, but actually it is outside of the town. Perhaps it is the Zurich connotations that one expects this hotel to be better rather than just ordinary. I do believe it was better before.

Not sure about the friendly tone and smiling faces as I surely didn't get that at check in. The Tibetan fellows that are the bellman were smiling but that where it ended at the front door. The check-in was rather dictatorial and authoritarian. Not sure how that can be hospitable, it was not nice.“

TripAdvisor review, Dec. 2018

„The “lobby space“ of the north building was not used as lobby because it is not really designed as reception anymore. Plus, it is easier to move everything a couple of meters rather than in another building. The travelers would also be confused and wouldn't know where to enter the building, especially since a lot of regulars come here.“

Alexander Müller, chief of sales



Bypassing the lobby

„The front desk . . . served as a kind of policing unit under legal obligation to check for unregistered aliens, and under a self-imposed moral and aesthetic imperative to bar access to indigents and undesirables.“¹

Situated in the second floor, the large foyer room is a threshold space within the hotel. Marking the frontier between private and public, the foyer is the last semi-public place of the hotel that is still freely accessible from the lobby. Above are the floors that contain all the guest rooms, and below the restaurants and lobby. These guest room floors can only be accessed with the elevator which needs to be activated with a hotel key. The foyer is also the last transit space of every guest coming to the hotel for conferences and marks the shift from public to private functions. Since the hotel is inserted into a slope, the second floor also has a direct access to the street.

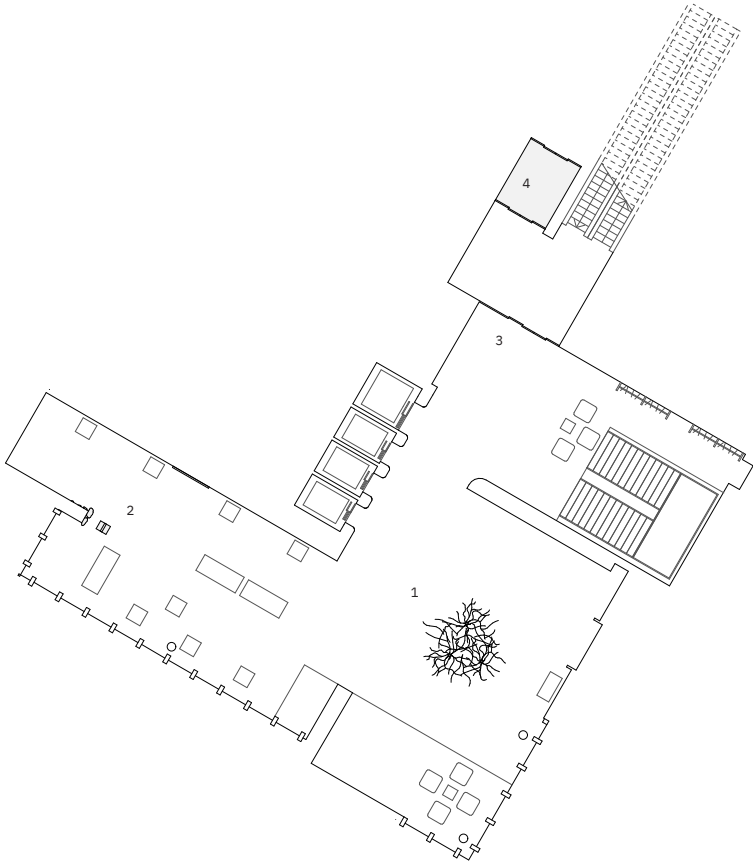
¹ *Hotel Lobbies and Lounges*



Hub 2 (Marriott website)

Foyer

1. Carpet
2. Artworks
3. Sliding door
4. Second entrance

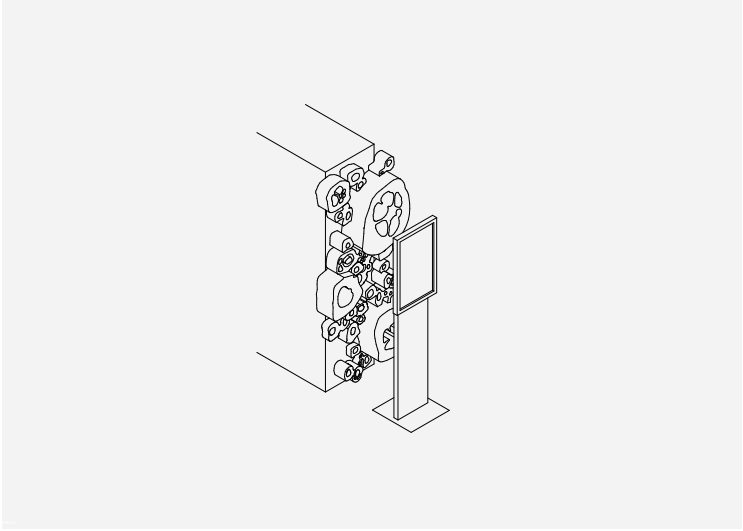
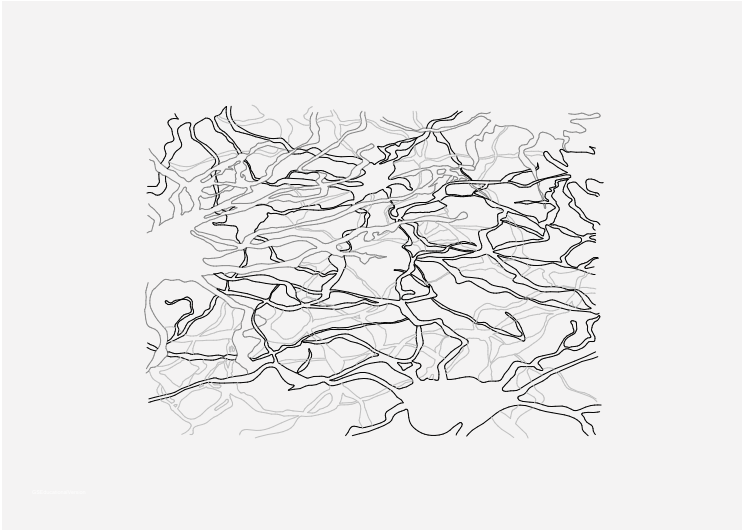


1. Local design and international chain

Upon entering the foyer, one of the first things that catches the eyes of the guest is the carpet design. The foyer was last renovated in 2016 and the carpet is one of the element of 'swissness' that was integrated in the design. Swiss as a motif was to be 'clearly noticeable' according to a news article. The design was indeed inspired by the original proposal for the new 50 francs bills, which won second place and was later rework into the bill currently in circulation. This Swiss aspect stays rather timid, as the motif is not really recognizable and foreign travelers might not associate it with their knowledge of Switzerland. The carpet rather resemble any other carpet found in multiple hotels across the globe. Heavily present but mostly overlooked, the carpet can however takes on meaning when appropriated by people. For example, a carpet at another Marriott Hotel suddenly became popular when it was first integrated into the cosplay costumes of the comic book convention taking place every year in the hotel. However Marriott failed to recognize the value of the carpet and replaced it with another motif.

2. Displaying art

While waiting for their meeting to start or having an apero at the end the conference, guests will most likely stumble into another trace of the original 70s architecture. On the wall next to the entrance of the first congress room is showcased another in-situ sculpture from Erwin Rehman. As it was the case with the sculpture in the lobby, the artwork lays partially hidden, this time by a screen displaying events and paced 1 meter ahead. Another artwork hangs on the opposite wall, this one added by Marriott in the same place of the tapestry of the artist Lissy Funk. Even though nothing is placed in front of it, the artwork is still invisible since it is almost indistinguishable from the concrete wall and the highly reflecting glass. Art exhibitions are however sometimes organized in the hotel, as it was the case with the Horst Meier sculptures exhibition in 2018.

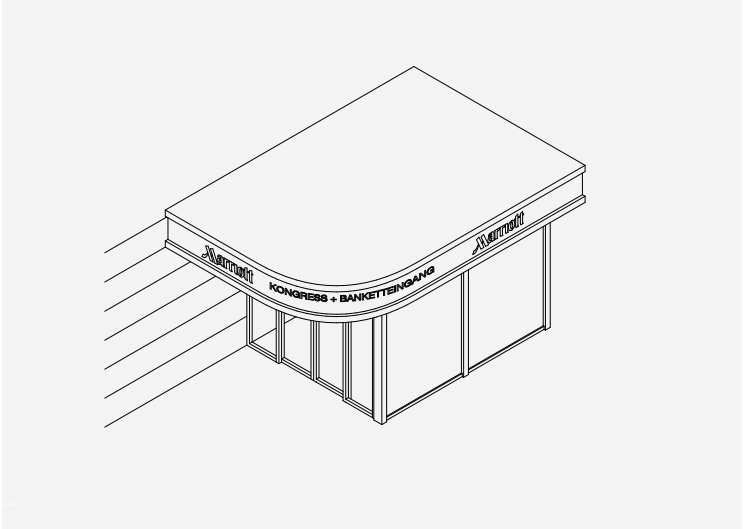
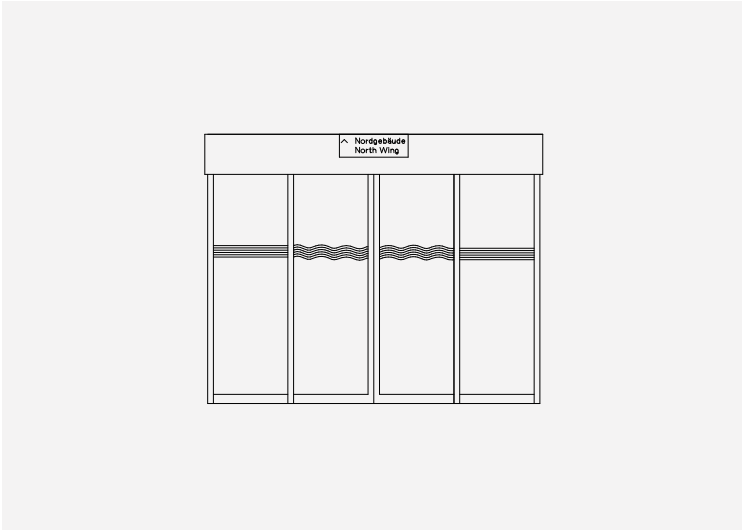


3. An extension

When arriving into the foyer, another new feature is the sliding glass door. Even though a wave motif partially hide the view, it stills let guest catch a glimpse of the escalator leading up to the bridge and into the second building. This may come as a surprise, since escalators are not a usual element of the hotel architecture and clients might ignore that the tower is only one of the two buildings constituting the hotel. A sign also indicate the way to the building but since it is made out of glass and the font is white, the sign is easily overlooked.

4. Intruding in the hotel

A second entrance allows to enter directly from the street into the foyer. Even though 'Kongress + Banketteingang' is written above the door, it is more meant as a quick exit for a cigarette break rather than the official entrance into the meeting rooms. According to the chief of sales, the door is usually closed, or only allows to exit the building. The management would rather prefer that guests go trough the lobby in order to keep an eye on the ins-and-outs. However, this proved to be wrong as it was easy to enter the building as an outsider by using this entrance. Suddenly, one becomes an intruder and can roam the hotel (or at least part of it) without the knowledge of the reception. The reception desk no longer works as a policing unit and no rite de passage is needed anymore to enter the place. This second entrance is also very close to the back entrance of the hotel, and walking past it allows to catch a glimpse of the building activities.



Quotes

„Plush rooms. Friendly staff. The first three floors above the ground floor are dedicated to conferences and there can be substantial traffic in the lobby and elevators from the attendees. The concierge lounge is quite nice and convenient. There is an ambulance station near by and light sleepers should put on some background noise and you can be assured of a sound night's sleep. The train station is a short walk away and downtown is just another five minute walk further.“

TripAdvisor review, Mar. 2018

„Great location and the room was very clean, however the hotel seems to have paper thin walls. I could hear everything people were saying in the room next door and when people were conversing in the hallways. My room was on the 4th floor and I could still hear the speakers from a conference that was happening on the 2nd floor. Other than the noise I was happy with the location and the service I received in the hotel.“

TripAdvisor review, Dec. 2016

*„Exklusive Vernissage und Kunstausstellung: Zürich Marriott Hotel zeigt schweizweit erstmals Werke von Horst Meier“
Kommunikationsagentur Karl F. Schneider AG*

„It is usually not meant as an entrance because we prefer that people enter through the lobby, so we can keep an eye on the ins and outs. There is also a lift dedicated to the congress room. People can still use this entrance, but it will maybe only be for going out and not in.“

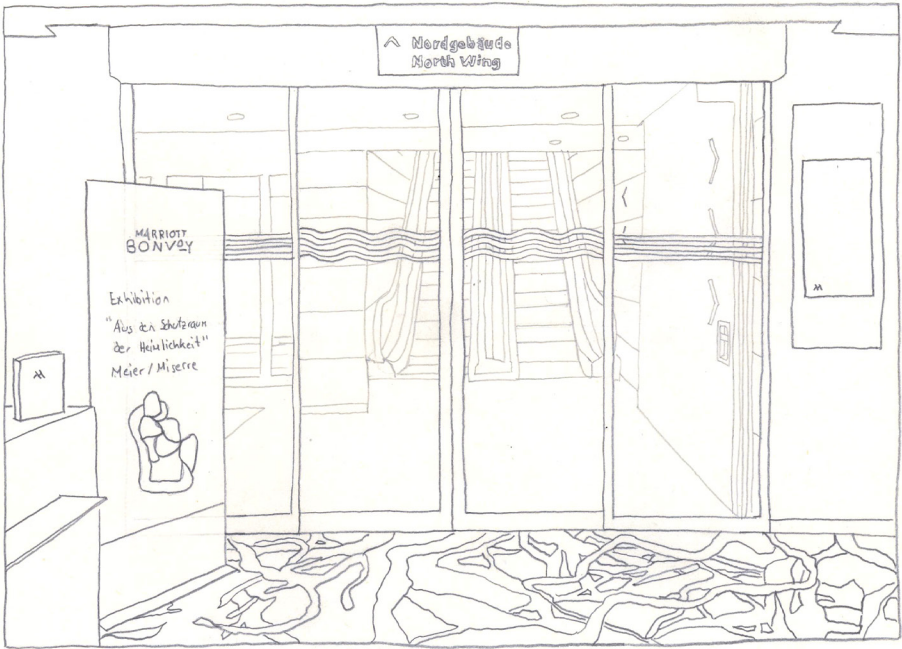
Alexander Müller, chief of sales

„Nach einer umfangreichen Renovierung präsentieren sich die 16 multifunktionalen Tagungsräume im Zürich Marriott Hotel in einem neuen, erfrischenden Look. Laut Mitteilung des Hotels lag das Hauptaugenmerk auf einem kreativen, frischen Design, das die Ausrichtung des Hotels auf innovative Meetingkonzepte unterstreicht. Zudem ist eine Portion «Swissness» bei der Innengestaltung deutlich spürbar, Bilder und Tapeten spiegeln Schweizer Motive wider. 3500 Quadratmeter neuer Teppich glänzen im Design der ursprünglich angedachten CHF 50 Banknote. Einen besonderen Fokus legten die Gestalter auf die Foyers, die sie zu modernen Hubs umgestalteten, um so den Austausch zwischen den Konferenzteilnehmern zu fördern.“

Abouttravel.ch, Oct. 2016

„Die Werke von nicht weniger als 15 Zürcher Künstlern begegnen den Gästen aus aller Welt seien es (...) der formal und farblich intensiv bewegte, langgezogene Wandteppich von Lissy Funk im Vorraum zum grossen Saal.“

Ein Hotel von Weltklasse, NZZ, Jun. 1972



Where things get confusing

„What will Hotel Zürich surpass in summer 1990 ? Itself ! New wing offering ultimate comfort linked to the renowned Five Star Hotel“¹

The footbridge connects the fourth floor of the main tower to the first floor of the north building. Originally known as 'la residence', the second building was built in 1990 as a luxurious extension. Even though this building can work as a separate hotel and had its own lobby and reception, it was planned as an extension from the beginning but built 20 years later due to political difficulties. Today, the north building contains a few meeting rooms and additional 80 rooms. Since the meeting rooms were renovated at the same time as the tower, the same furniture is used but the carpet only appears inside the meeting room rather than in the foyer. In order to access the north building, the guests are asked to take the elevator to the 4th floor and then go through the footbridge into the second building. The north building can also be accessed directly from the street, but as there is no reception, guests are still using the main entrance.

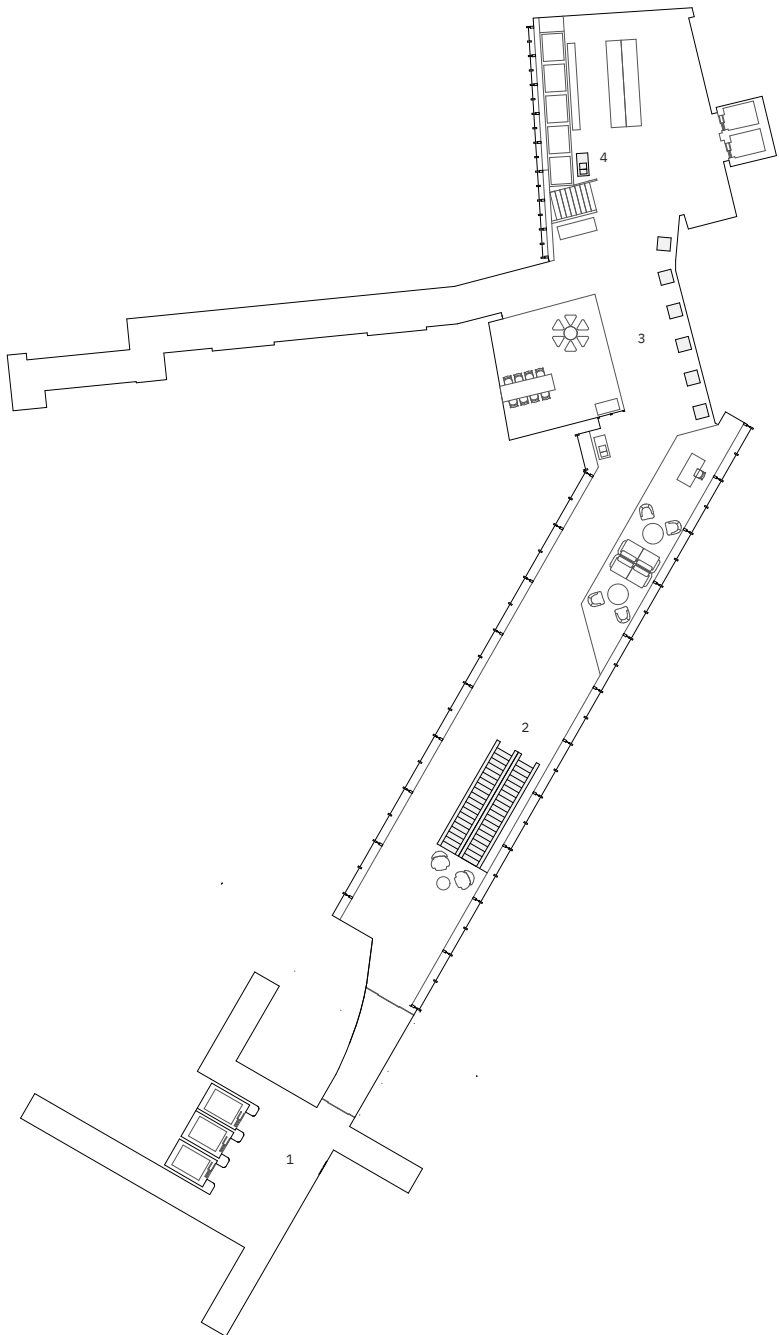
¹ Brochure for 'La Résidence', 1990



Hub 4 (Marriott website)

Footbridge

1. Info panels
2. Escalator
3. Buffet tables
4. Coffee machine

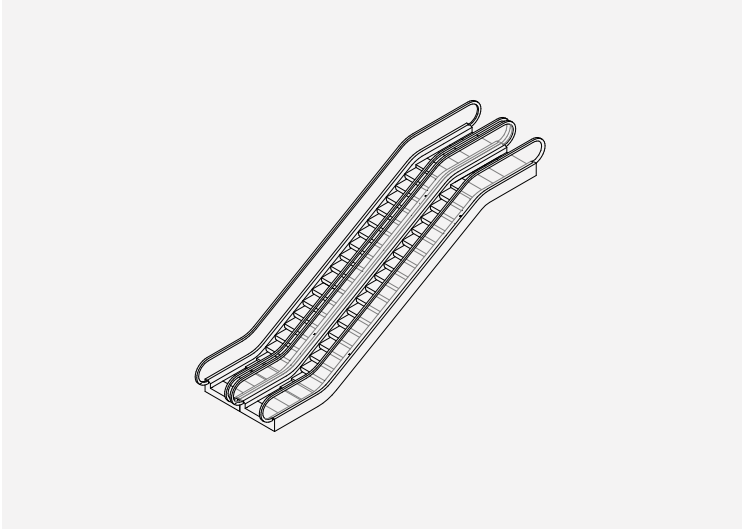


1. Extended journey

The info panels on the wall opposite of the elevators are the first things guests looking for their room will notice. That's also where they'll understand that their room is situated in another building. On booking site, a lot of reviews are written about this confusing layout. By having to go through one elevator, a footbridge and maybe another elevator, the journey between the lobby and the room is considerably extended. This also might cause some trouble when members of the same group are staying in the different buildings. Adding to that confusion are the numbering of the floor. The footbridge is situated on the 4th as well as the 24th floor, since they are actually the same floor.

2. Another path

While walking towards the north building, guests will pass by an escalator that leads down to the second floor of the main tower. The escalator allows to skip the official journey that needs the elevator and brings guests directly to the main staircase and into the lobby, or the restaurants of the first floor. This path might seem longer, but since elevators are heavily used in the hotel, no wait time is needed. According to the chief of engineering, there are not enough elevators in the building, which explains the long waiting time. This would be especially the case when a conference is taking place in the fourth floor and during break everybody is taking the elevator at the same time.

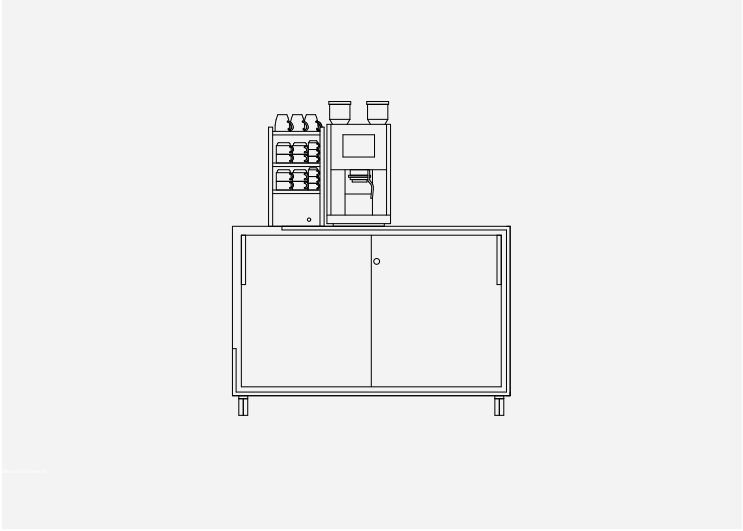
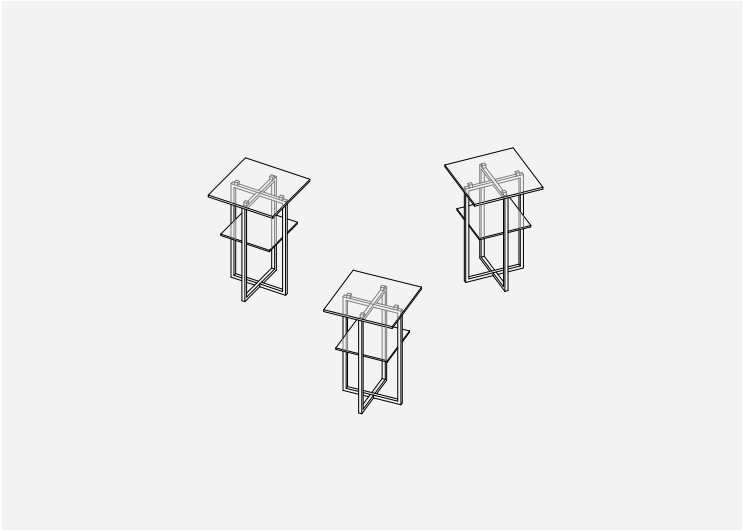


3. Leisure meets business

Upon arriving in the north building, guests might still need to wander through a crowd of business people enjoying a small coffee break or a glass of wine after their meeting. The space of transit in the second floor of the north building has indeed no clear barrier that delimitate the corridor with the lounge space or the foyer of the different meeting rooms. Buffet tables are put on the side but are ready at any time to be moved in the center of the room for a casual apero. In contrast with the main tower, the separation between private and public is blurred as there are meeting rooms as well as guest rooms on the same floor.

4. Vacation in a business hotel

Beside the different meeting rooms and along the corridors, multiple coffee machine are placed and ready to be used. However, they are only meant for business people during their break and will otherwise be always shut off. This is the same for the different lounge and working area. During weekends and holidays, these spaces stay empty. Reviews left by guests highlight the duality of staying in a business hotel that can either be too full with conference activities, or that leave of lot of space on hold for when the next workers will arrive.



Quotes

The only problem for me was that it is not easy to get around the hotel. Perhaps this is the same with any large hotel that obviously has a large business clientele. When we got in a lift we could never be sure how long it would take to get where we were going. Fortunately we discovered an escalator nearby that took us to the lobby and it was easy to go down to the restaurant.

TripAdvisor review, Oct. 2018

*„Staying here on points (my husband arranged), my issues are:
It's a conference hotel for business travellers, not suited for tourists/visitors. It's formulaic -- rooms are not special. They are decent. No bathrobes. No slippers. Mediocre concierge service -- they are here for the business traveler Aesthetically -- (insert the yawn). Lobby is non-descript.*

The building layout is weird. We had to take the elevator to level 4 which is also the 24th floor. Then walk through some kind of overly-decorated corridor to take another elevator which takes you to levers 41,42,43, 44 etc. which aren't actually 40 stories up. mathematically its not even logical. It's very strange and I have no idea how they devised the numbering system. It's very confusing but you ultimately figure out where your room is. All in all. I would say its a decent spot but I wouldn't recommend it if you are a visitor to Zurich. Stay at a boutique property with charm.“

TripAdvisor review, Jul. 2018

„What disappoints me about the Marriott Zurich? The fact that I declined their generous offer to skip cleaning my room in exchange for 1000 reward points (that I'll never be able to use) but still came home to the wadded up towels I left on the floor hung up again (not new ones.). The nasty thick carpet that is definitely a shoes on surface, and which had someone else's long blonde hair sticking out of it (my hair is brown.) The route to my room which included 2 different elevators separated by a fairly long corridor (& no one else in my party had to use, so I was constantly pressured to hurry to be on time despite my longer walk.) „

TripAdvisor review, Mar. 2018

„Worth mentioning is the lay-out of the hotel which can be confusing. It is spread out over multiple lower levels and even across a street in the back. It can also be busy/congested too with conferences/meetings.“

TripAdvisor review, May. 2018

„The hotel is a higher end Marriott - The service was very good and the room worked for 3 adults. The downside is that it is so spread out that we had to take 2 elevators and walk through an empty area with meeting rooms and a coffee machine that obviously not for us. After sightseeing for a day it wasn't I felt like doing.“

TripAdvisor review, May. 2015

„After checking in, the gentleman told us to take the elevator to the 4th floor to get to our room. What he didn't tell us is that we would need to navigate through a maze, taking 2 different elevators because the North Wing is actually a totally different building. This building also has many meeting rooms, which if you are unlucky enough to time your transit with one of their breaks, you will have to weave through crowds of people who are not concerned that you are hauling luggage to or from your room.“

TripAdvisor review, Jul. 2018

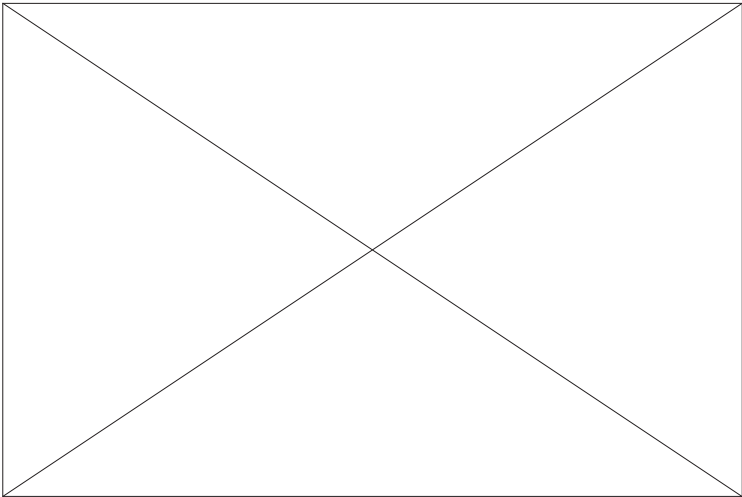


Is there anyone else ?

„I walk slowly downstairs. From the lower floors come voices, but up here everything is silent. All the doors are shut, one moves as if it were an old monastery, past the doors of monks at prayer. The fifth floor looks exactly like the sixth, one could easily confuse them.“¹

The hallway are situated from the fourth floor up until the last floor. There is in total 16 floors with guest room in the main tower, and in the north building only 6. These spaces can only be accessed by using the elevator, which can be activated by a magnetic card. This means that only hotel guest and hotel staff can freely access these floors. The hallways are a highly functional space, uses to get access to the rooms and is one of the space that is never showed on the Marriott website. In contrary to the other transit space in the building, there are no furniture or casual sofa laying around and people only transit through this space to get to their room.

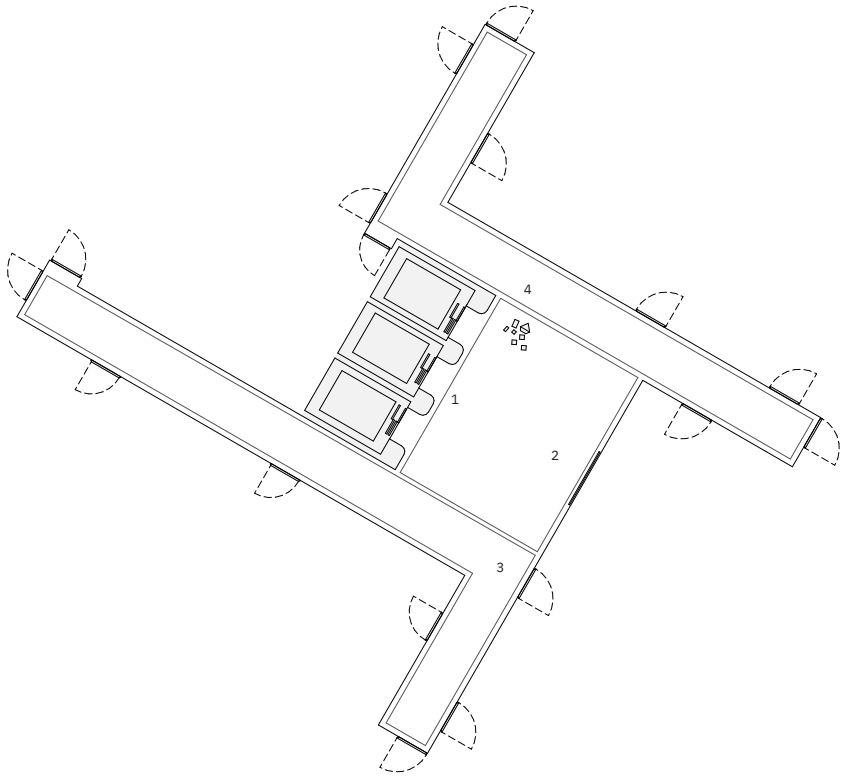
¹ *The Hotel as Setting in Early Twentieth-Century German and Austrian Literature*



Not shown on Marriott website

Hallway

1. Elevator
2. Artwork
3. Guesroom door
4. Toys

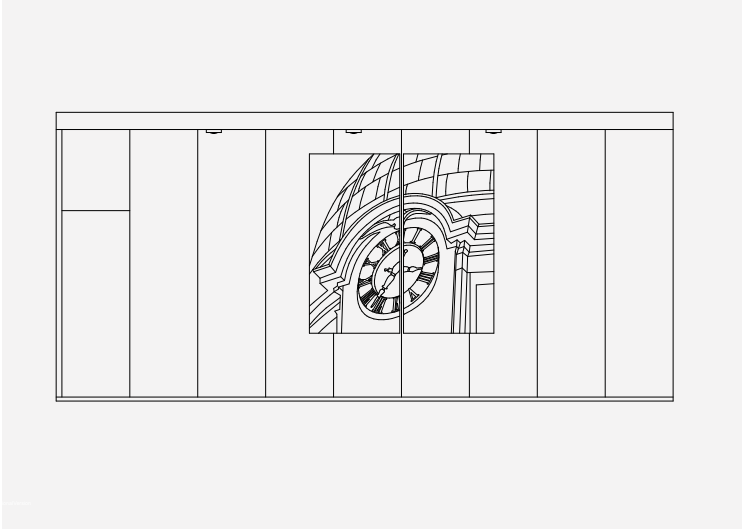
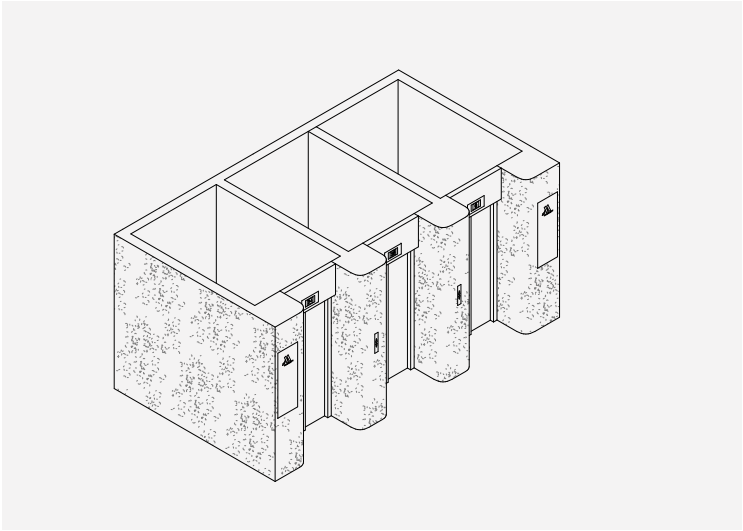


1. Unknown location

Coming out of the elevator, the guests find themselves in the middle of the hallway, with no indication of their location. The corridors are windowless and the floor numbers written above the elevator give no information about the actual height. Instead of having floor numbers going from 1 to 19, the 5th floor is actually named the 25th floor and it goes up until the 39 floor. Guests are often disappointed when entering their room and discovering the view, since they realize that they are not as high as expected. This is often mentioned in the online reviews and adds to the overall layout confusion of the large building. The higher numbering of the floor extends the impression of distance from the other semi-public activities of the hotel. In the service elevator however, floors are numbered from 1 to 19 as it shouldn't confuse the hotel workers.

2. ‚European‘ clocks

Since there are no windows in the hallway, the only things that guest can look at are the different artworks that are hung on the wall. Inspired by the location of the hotel, they all showcase tower clocks. This follows the new guest room design concept introduced by Marriott in 2005, where the decor was not standardized anymore but rather indigenous to the location of the hotel. However, the pictures are framed in such a way that only a close-up of the local building is shown. In the end the picture remains anonymous and could be used in many other places in the world.

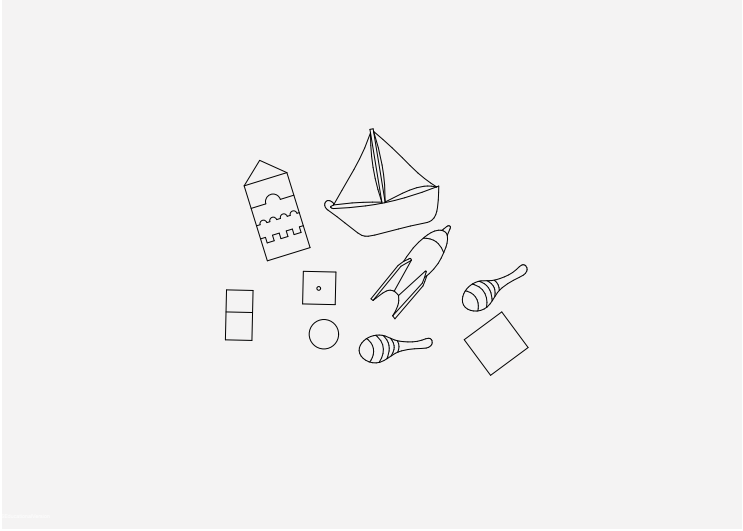
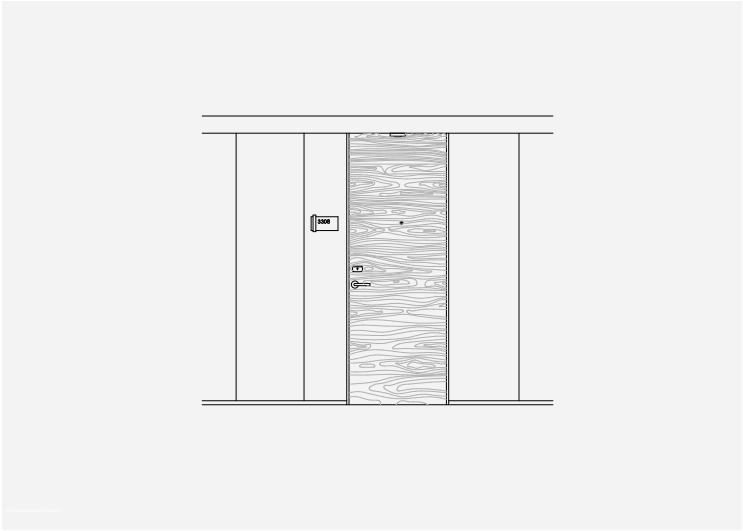


3. Loneliness

In the hallway, all the doors to the guest rooms are always shut and apart from a 'do not disturb sign', nothing indicates if anyone is staying in the next room. All the doors are the same, and only the number next to it indicates which way to go. Again, the numbers don't reflect the reality as they are assigned according to the floor number (which is also not the right one) instead of the total number of rooms available in the hotel. By having large numbers, it is impossible to estimate how many people are staying in the hotel. It might as well be thousands or none, since nobody can be seen and there is no sign of life in the hallway. The carpeted floor also drowns out the noise and adds to the feeling of loneliness.

4. Extending the room

In one of the reviews found online, a guest complained that he was disturbed by other guest staying in the room next door. According to this comment, a large family was staying in the hotel and would gather in one of the room next to the elevator. In order to make more space, some of the luggage were kept in the hallway and children were let playing in the elevator landing. They would also keep their door open. Suddenly, this corridor is used differently and becomes an extension of the guest room. This space that is normally always empty and were nobody is seen is unexpectedly activated with only a few objects laying on the floor. Reviews online often describe these interactions between guests and how the stay in the hotel is not only influenced by the architecture and the hotel staff, but also by the behavior of other users.



Quotes

„Our room was lovely and large and had all the luxuries expected of a Marriott. But the people in room next door lowered the standards of the hotel to that of a Baghdad slum! There must have been numerous persons staying in the room, including children of all ages. They kept the door open throughout the day and the odors of middle eastern cooking hit like a brick as we exited the elevators. A toddler was allowed to run the hallways and play right in front of the landing of the elevators. Our door faced the elevators and was at a right angle to the door of their room and we couldn't help but hear voices of children and adults quarreling or laughing loudly or yelling down the hallway to a child playing out in the hall. Numerous pieces of luggage, children's toys and boxes containing unknown items sat outside their door in the hallway, apparently to make more room inside for all their crowd. It looked like this group had friends ualso staying in the hotel and there were men, women and children coming and going all day and night. Outside of other doors in our hallway guests kept their strollers and children's toys. It was like living in a village slum, with neighbors calling out to each other from room to room, visiting each other and chasing after their kids.“

TripAdvisor review, Aug. 2017

„This hotel could be anywhere in the world: Shanghai, Buenos Aires or Boston... It is a modern, sterile, charmless hotel providing very standard, comfortable facilities, designed in a sober, dark, modern style. The lobby looks like a million other large-chain hotel lobbies around the world. It is a little cold and very business-like. The layout of the hotel was somewhat confusing and it took me a while to locate my room as it involved walking down long hallways and taking lifts to very oddly numbered floors (floor 4 and 24 are the same!). No supprises all in all, when you choose to stay in a large-chain hotel, you know you are going to end up in a standard, charmless property with good service and comfortable rooms, nothing more.“

TripAdvisor review, Oct. 2017

„This Marriott is a 39 floor high rise about 1/2 mile from the trains station and about 3/4 mile to Zurich old town. The common area, elite lounge and bar were attractive and differ from the standard "cookie cutter" decor found at U.S. Marriotts. As an elite member, we were provided an upgrade to a larger, corner room on the 37th floor. The fitness center had both free weights and machines. The breakfast in the elite lounge was very good. As you expect with Marriott, the staff were friendly and customer focused. My only complaint would be the bar prices were high relative to the US. For example, our Negroni cocktails were CHF 19 (~ US\$20) apiece. Ouch! Bar prices, however, just may be line with what is charged in Zurich.“

TripAdvisor review, Jul. 2019

„We were booked at this hotel as part of our river cruise, but Marriott would have been our first choice anyway. A modern, American style hotel in a convenient location, offers all the services and amenities to make Americans feel at home in Zurich. Rooms are very spacious, by European standards, and offer good bedding, a desk, a couch and good closet space. Rooms are well sound-proofed; even though the hotel is on a busy street, we heard no street sounds. We felt security was very good as well. There is a safe in the closet.“

TripAdvisor review, Nov. 2017

„My wife and I stayed here from July 2nd-10th with 6 nights on points. Zurich, and the Marriott, was our base for the length of our stay. We took a train from Zurich to visit other towns in Switzerland, and returning late afternoon. Our room, 2501, was nice, but it was actually on the 5th floor, not the 25th, as one would assume. The room was on the back side of the hotel, which had some road noise, so a room facing the river, would probably be a little quieter. We had some air conditioning issues the first 2 nights, as our room wouldn't get cool.“

TripAdvisor review, Jul. 2015



Hotel gloom

„When you open the door, there’s that rush of air, always that same kind of stale smell,” he said. “Sometimes the door shuts behind you. You’re in this semidark room. You drag your bag to where everyone sets their bag and it’s, ‘How did I get here again?’”¹

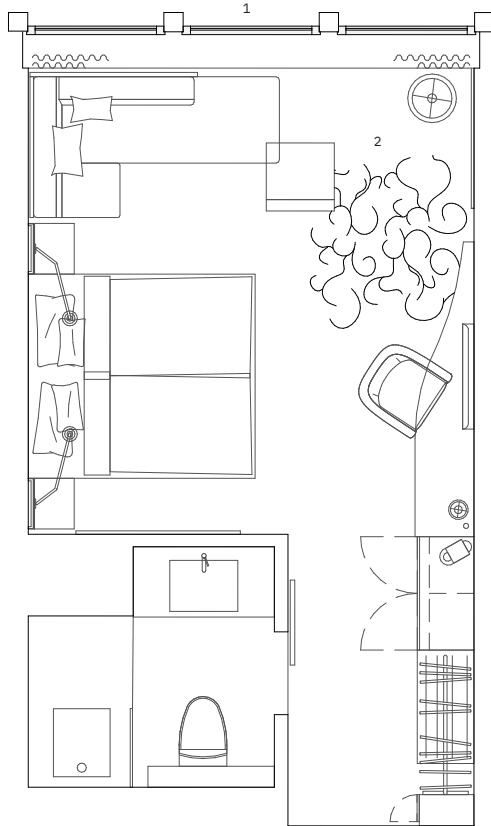
The guest room is the final destination of the guest and is the reason why he came in the hotel in the first place. It is the most private room he will get and where he’ll spend most of his time. Between the two buildings, there are in total 257 rooms and 9 suites. The rooms in the main tower are divided in different categories that have small variation of sizes. Since standards were changed between the 70s and the 90s, the once luxurious guest room are rather small according to today’s standard. According to the chief of engineering, in the smaller room, parts of the dividing walls have been removed in order to provide larger space. Since the rooms in the north building were built later, they follow today’s standard, are larger and have each the same size.

¹*How to Stay Sane on a Business Trip, NYTimes*



Guestroom

- 1. Window**
- 2. Carpet**

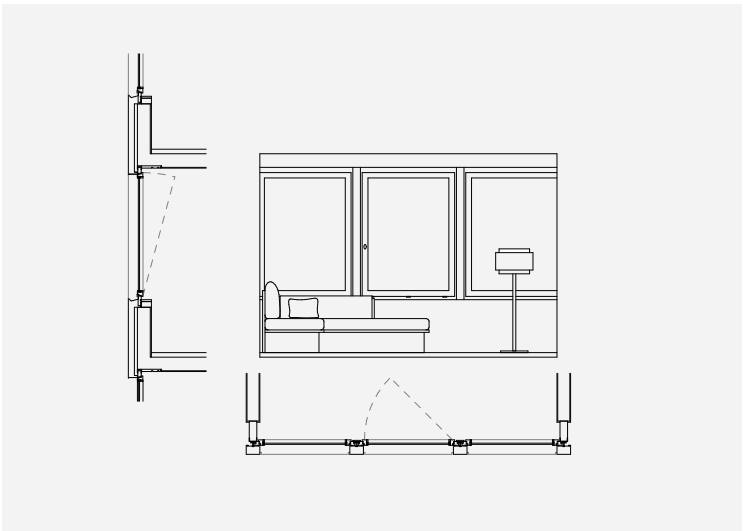
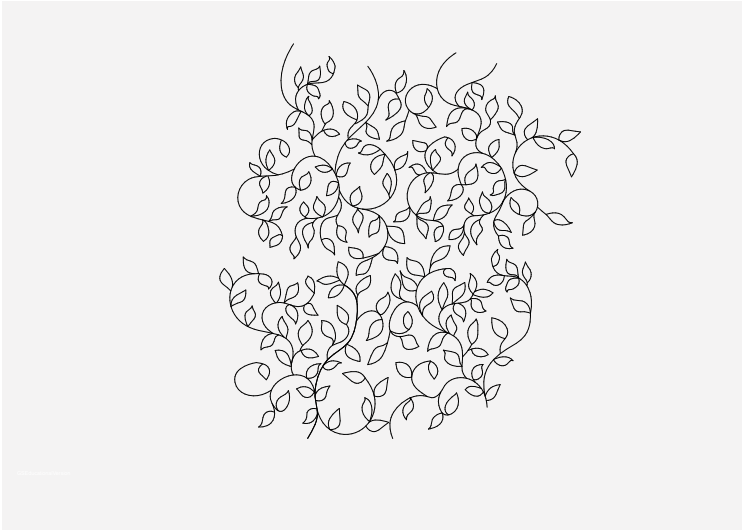


1. One hotel two design

When entering the guest room, clients will be finally confronted with the room promised by Marriott on their website. Even though the rooms are well represented by pictures, reviews online often show a disappointment between what was expected and what is there. Since the nicest rooms are in the tower and people assumed that this is the room they will get, they are not always happy to find out at the reception that they will be staying in the north building. There, the view is not as nice and the design is often referred as outdated, with the carpet and its spiraling leaf motif. According to the chief of sales, some people are still very happy with this old design, since it reminds them of the more traditional Marriott global design that they have experienced for many years.

2. No fresh air

One of the comments that often appears in the online booking website are about the windows, that are not possible to open. Guest complains that the air is stale due to the ventilation and that opening the windows would be nice. Archive photos of the tower however shows that the windows could originally be opened. When asked about the windows, the chief of engineering answered that since Marriott took over the building, the windows were shut because of company policy. Since the tower is high, Marriott doesn't want to let any accident happens and prefers to close all windows. It also save cost for the heating, because guests sometimes leave their window open during the whole day. Having closed windows also allows Marriott to put beehives on the rooftop without worrying about bees disturbing the guests.



Quotes

„The hotel rooms were tiny, the rooms didn't even have room slippers. The rooms were outdated. They charged us a decent amount- and we expected new and modern furniture- but nothing like that was seen. The staff was very very friendly and welcoming.“

TripAdvisor review, Oct. 2021

We stayed 1 night last Saturday, when we came into the room we were greeted by a strong smell of new wood or furniture. (Renovations completed!) When I tried to open a window I could not and had to ask reception for help. They sent up a maintenance man to release the security lock off the window. When I looked outside I saw 5 beehives out on a roof covered by grass and wild flowers, just outside the window on floor 25. Go figure. It was really the 5th floor. Apparently they cultivate bees and harvest their honey. Beware. The parking garage is very tight. Pay attention when moving around it. You will have to walk a while to get food if you prefer to get it outside the hotel.“

TripAdvisor review, Apr. 2015

„We were not impressed for the following reasons: The room is very old and has an old feeling to it. You cannot open the windows for fresh air, which was not great considering the 'old' smell in the room. Front desk was quite moody and it did not feel like a warm welcome (concierge was great though and had great recommendations). Breakfast at the club is VERY average... It's the same options every day and not worth the extra cost in my opinion. The international English channels sometimes doesn't work, which is not ideal. It feels a little distant from the main 'vibey' areas. The Marriott is ok-ish priced for what you get. If they had upgraded the rooms, it would be a good stay.“

TripAdvisor review, Jan. 2019

„Located closely to the station, with nice clean rooms, decent gym, good breakfast and nice service. I stayed there 3 times and never was disappointed. The rooms are typically too warm for me, and the windows do not open.“

TripAdvisor review, Dec. 2018

„Room was extremely basic. Our room was not easy to get to as you had to take elevator, cross into another building and take another elevator. Carpets old. Breakfast was ok. But I wouldn't choose to stay here again.“

TripAdvisor review, Dec. 2016

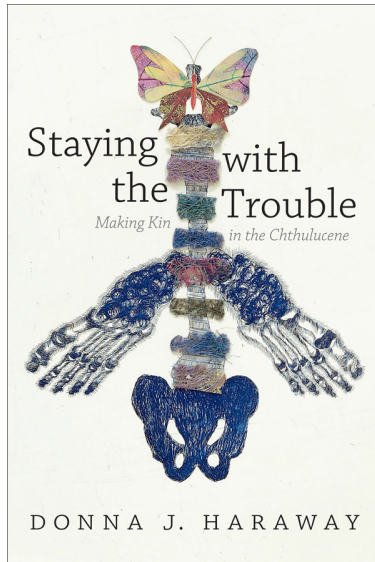
„The hotel itself looks like it's in need of a refurbishment. Not in a major-I'm-gonna-fall-apart way, but in the way it looks and smells. It's very american - my first reaction on entering was „Am I back in the US again?“ And correspondingly it's full of Americans as well. This could be good for some and a big „No' for others... The rooms are actually tiny.“

TripAdvisor review, May. 2016

„The rooms are spacious and comfortable with decent bedding, but feel like being in a hermetically-sealed box. Impossible to open the windows, even a crack, to just get a little fresh air. As I was attending a conference whilst staying here, the lack of fresh air really got to me. The bathroom was functional and very standard. The bathroom amenities were disappointing. „

TripAdvisor review, May. 2017





Staying with the trouble book cover

Beyond Marriott ?

Embracing change

In 2021 and still in the middle of the pandemic, the Marriott hotel is back with an occupancy rate close to the 80% it used to have. There is no sign given to Marriott that it should change his managing style. Business guests are still booking rooms and coming to conferences and a few people are also coming here on vacation. In a few years, the lease between the building owner and Marriott will then most likely be renewed.

When looking at the sustainability goals set by Marriott for 2025, no radical change is mentioned and goals are mostly about sustainability certifications or resourcing responsibly. This means for example changing lights to LED or upgrading ventilation or heating system. Nowhere is the renovation of the rooms mentioned, which means that the cycle of changing the design of the rooms will continue every 7 years. Since a lot of reviews were left online about the outdated appearance of the rooms, a new renovation will most likely be done in a near future, especially for the north building.

However, by looking at the hotel through the many reviews left by the users, the interviews with the chief of sales and chief of engineering, the history of the building and by experiencing the rooms as an external visitor, the building receive another layer of relationships that highlights various objects. All of them allow to see behind the immaculate images published on Marriott website and highlight situations where things differs, are ambiguous or are elements are confronted with each other. Above all, they leave open and make perceptible the potentials of the spaces to be different.

In the vision of Marriott for the year 2021, the hotel should become “Zürich inspiring place, where brilliance connect people“. But what does it mean exactly ? There might be more than one way to get to this result and Marriott could start learning from these moments of disruption and showing rather than hiding them. After all, embracing change is one of the core value of the company. It could maybe mean more than just thriving for innovation and associate with Donna Haraway’s “staying with the trouble“ motto.



Marriott Hotel vision for 2021

CULTURE AND CORE VALUES

Our Core Values Make Us Who We Are

As Marriott changes and grows, our business strategy remains firmly rooted in our values.

- Put People First:**
 "Take care of the associates and they will take care of the customers, and the customers will come back again and again." This is our founder's philosophy. It has made Marriott a great place to work for over 90 years.
- Pursue Excellence:**
 Our dedication to the customer shows in everything we do. We take pride in the details—every day, in every destination worldwide.
- Embrace Change:**
 Innovation has always been part of the Marriott story. We're driven to anticipate our customers' changing needs with new brands, new global locations and new guest experiences.
- Act with Integrity:**
 How we do business is as important as the business we do. We hold ourselves to uncompromising ethical and legal standards.
- Serve Our World:**
 Our "spirit to serve" makes our company stronger. We support the communities where we live and work.

Marriott core values

