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An Indelible First Impression –

By Design

By Anita Wiklém

Photographs courtesy of Wiklém Design

Anita Wiklém is the creative director and founding partner of Wiklém Design in Toronto. With 20 years of experience in the industry, she has built a reputation for timeless value, distinctive environments and trusted design solutions. She has won several awards internationally and in Canada for her interior design work. Visit www.wiklemdesign.com

Upon crossing the threshold into a building you instantly get a feeling. You get a first impression of what it is like to live there. And we all know that you only get one chance to make a first impression.

When we visited the Promenade II in Vaughan, the challenge was to redesign the lobby area with a close eye to cost. The remainder of the building was a transitional design – meaning some areas were traditional while others had been partially modernized. There was also a large fountain that was broken, which the client asked to be removed.

After several months of design, planning and tendering, the co-opation selected a general contractor and together we embarked on the renovation journey. We began by removing the broken water feature, the oversized planter and lattice wall, existing carpeting, railing, wall treatments, furniture and decorations. We then took down two of the four heavy columns in the lobby. This instantly opened up the space and we had what I call a “shell” to work from.

Then we cladded the two remaining structural columns and added new wainscoting and crown moulding. We did the same treatment for all the millwork throughout the lobby, then painted it a rich, creamy vichyssoise with a warm white on the ceilings to open up the area. When it came to selecting fabrics, the key was to select durable, resistant textures that were highly functional, easy to maintain and added dramatic flair to the spaces. The textiles worked well together and with the taupe and grey background hues we established as the shell.



Before



After

OUTSIDE YOUR SUITE

Introducing the sculpture was a stroke of genius because it is very timeless. As a focal piece, it has clean lines. And as an art piece, it is left to interpretation. We opted for metal and glass to update the railing and heightened interest by using a cost-effective decal frosting. The rich, dark wood complemented the transitional design throughout the rest of the building.

When the large-scale planter was removed, it left a scar in the floor. The budget didn't allow for replacement of the existing lobby floor. So we decided to square off the existing floor with black granite and installed inset carpeting that was also used in the upper lobby lounge area. This allowed for a new inviting seating area in the main lobby with more accessibility.

We decided to replace the existing lattice with a solid wall and installed a new fireplace to lend the seating area a lounge vibe. This solution also brought the added benefit of more privacy for the resident corridor behind that area.

A worthwhile game changer is updating lighting. We installed contemporary sconces on either side of the fireplace as well as the sculpture to emphasize the areas even more. We used the existing ceiling sockets and added new pot lights, retrofitting nicer lenses and energy-efficient bulbs to cast a warmer glow.

We absolutely loved working on this project – and the end result. When our install team was putting the finishing touches on the seating areas, several residents stopped and took in the new space. We were still hanging the new art and people were already sitting on the chairs and enjoying the space like it had always been there.

To me, that is the true measure of success – when a first impression is a lasting impression.



Before



After



Before

