



EXAMINING ECO DESIGN  
BY GLENN HASEK

## Alt Hotel Quartier Dix30 Adds Green Twist to 'No Frills Chic'

**G**raffiti might not be something you'd expect to find on the interior walls of a hotel. At the Alt Hotel Quartier Dix30 in Montreal, however, graffiti art adds an urban flair to the corridors on eight floors of the 14-story building. The graffiti art is the work of ARPi, a 24-year-old artist who was once homeless. The artwork complements the style of this no frills "eco-chic" hotel located on Montreal's South Shore.

Hugo Germain, general manager of the hotel, said it was owner Groupe Germain's intention to build a property that would allow them to offer guests luxury at an affordable price. Groupe Germain accomplished its goal by combining smart construction principles with green technology and sophisticated design.

Open since the fall of 2007, Alt Hotel Quartier Dix30 features a very linear and vertical feel. Viateur Michaud, who

was involved in the hotel's design as an architect with Montreal-based LeMay Michaud Architecture Design, said the developers at first wanted to build a hotel with more of a horizontal look. Instead, they took Michaud's advice and built a vertical property that will become their signature design as they add more than a dozen new Alt Hotels throughout Canada.

Where possible, parts of the hotel — much of each bathroom, for example —

Graffiti art on the walls of Alt Hotel



The inn has been through a number of owners in recent years and suffered from being run primarily in latter days as a pub. It was with some interest I heard about a change of ownership, its closure, and the new owners' ambitious plans to turn it into a boutique hotel. When the opportunity came to pop down to the coast and see the changes for myself I jumped on it.

The new owners, Alex and Katie Clarke — working with architect designer Maria Speake of reclamation specialist Retrouvius — completely gutted the building. Despite its Georgian frontage, much of the structure underneath is 16th or 17th century. With a building of this age, gutting is a bold move as one never knows what's underneath. In the 1980's one designer discovered that the plasterboard walls dividing the bedrooms in the George had become load bearing when the ancient timbers underneath gave way. It is very unusual to find load bearing wallboard... it was holding the broken ends of the timber uprights in place so that they still carried the load. Without the plasterboard removed to make possible a replanning, the framework moved!

The ground floor of the building was completely replanned. The bar was moved to a more central position, reception relocated and a new dining space created for a bistro style restaurant operation. Many reclaimed materials were used to keep faithful to the age of the building, although new oak was used for flooring because as Maria Speake said, "it quickly becomes aged in appearance with foot traffic." The boutique emphasis was not lost as new rooms with luxury roll-top bathtubs and walk-in showers were created. The 28 bedrooms has its own character and charm, as one would expect in an old inn, and each is individually designed. The layout is entirely comfortable with corridors leading to rooms going up and down stairs

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and around corners. Rooms vary in size from the palatial to the merely comfortable, with some housed in an external annex across the courtyard that would have been the arrival point for the London to Rye stagecoach in bygone years, but is now the beer garden.

The large fireplace in the bar creates a focus of comfort that competes with the bar itself as the heart of the inn, whilst a similarly large-scale fireplace burns logs in the reception lounge area creating a popular space for coffee and small meetings.

With a strong local trade using the bar and restaurant, the 'end of the line'

position of Rye becomes part of its attraction — away from the bustle of large towns yet in easy travel range of London or the Pas de Calais. The hotel is busy and is generating 'retreat' traffic as companies discover the delights of the personal service that matches the boutique charm of the interiors. With history on its side, the stylishness the inn has gained will ensure that the George continues as the heart of this small town community. **BD**

Patrick Goff is the founder of [HotelDesigns.net](http://HotelDesigns.net)

