



Meet the Designers Who Are Remaking One of Chicago's Landmark Interiors

Also this week, Grand Rapids holds its ArtPrize competition, hotel booking apps get better, and Peninsula Chicago hosts the Mid-Autumn Festival.

BY NINA KOKOTAS HAHN

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PHOTO: COURTESY OF SEBASTIAN FAENA

Robin Standefer and Stephen Alesch, the husband-and-wife team behind Roman and Williams

Unless you're a design fanatic or a New Yorker, you probably won't recognize the pair pictured above. Soon enough, we predict, Robin Standefer and Stephen Alesch will be names Chicagoans know and love. Founders of the influential New York design firm Roman and Williams, the husband and wife have been winning praise from architecture critics since they started their design firm in 2002. The news for

Chicago is that they’ve been hired to convert the Chicago Athletic Association (12 S. Michigan Ave.) into a 240-room hotel; set to open in late 2014, the yet-to-be-named hotel is being developed by John Pritzker and AJ Capital.

The story behind Roman and Williams is a good one: The couple met while designing movie sets, most famously for *Practical Magic*, then went on to start their company. They now design residential projects, including home interiors for Gwyneth Paltrow and Ben Stiller; buildings such as New York’s all-brick 211 Elizabeth Street; restaurants such as Andrew Carmellini’s new Lafayette; and their own line of furniture and lighting with MatterMade.

But it’s their large-scale work on hotels—including New York’s ground-breaking Ace, the hostel Freehand Miami, Manhattan’s cloistered High Line Hotel, and the forthcoming Viceroy New York (opening October 9)—that gives the best hint of what’s to come at the CAA. Chicagoans may not realize that the building is considered one of the best examples of Venetian Gothic architecture in the country and its interiors display an extraordinary level of detail and craftsmanship in the tiled floors, millwork, chandeliers, grand staircases, and palatial rooms with their soaring ceilings. Designed in 1893 by Henry Ives Cobb, the CAA operated as an exclusive men’s club until 2007, when the club and building closed.

In town last week, Standefer and Alesch talked about their plans: The general move, they said, is to weave hints at the athletic club’s heritage throughout a refreshed design. For example, in the rooms where CAA members once rested, the décor will be masculine (boy-scout canteens hanging on bedposts, vintage-style self-improvement books on calisthenics and brain games) yet modern (light and pretty bathrooms). The existing gym will be turned into a large ballroom and a greenhouse structure is being added to a casual rooftop space, with fantastic view of Millennium Park and the Art Institute. The huge second floor will span a sports room, pool hall, and bar, playfully paying homage to the men’s club. But not everything will survive the remodelling. One victim? The first-floor pool, which will be decked.

Make or Break Art at Grand Rapid’s Radical ArtPrize

For 19 days from September 18 to October 16, downtown Grand Rapids transforms into a playing field for ArtPrize, the city’s international art competition. Drive the two and a half hours for the chance to play artist or jury—anyone over 18 can show work within the district’s three square miles and spectators decide who takes home the \$200,000 top prize. Stop at the striking Grand Rapids Art Museum, where the competition continues with a landscape spin.

Last-Minute Booking Apps Give Travelers the Upper Hand

The early bird usually gets the worm but not when it comes to hotel reservations, where it’s possible—and increasingly commonplace—to use Hotel Tonight, Blink, and other booking apps to score the best rooms and deals. “It’s becoming clear that increasing ubiquity of mobile devices and the rise of last-minute hotel bookings are linked.” Read more in *Bloomberg Businessweek*’s “No Reservations: Now’s the Time for Last-Minute Hotel Apps”.

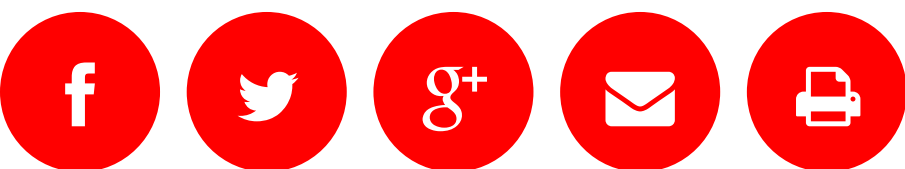
Eat Mooncakes and Dim Sum at This Mid-Autumn Festival

From September 19 through 22, [Peninsula Chicago](#) will be celebrating the Mid-Autumn Festival, an important Chinese holiday that takes place when the harvest moon is highest and brightest in the sky. The Hong Kong-headquartered hotel will offer hand-made egg custard mooncakes (sets from \$32), AfterMoon Tea in the [Lobby](#) featuring mini versions of the sweet cakes as well as dim sum (\$55), tea appreciation and dim sum making classes (from \$60), and a live two-hour demonstration by Chef Yip Wing Wah (\$80).

Obsess Over Turbulence or Wax Nostalgic for Old-School Style

Peruse fun throwback images in the newly released [Airline: Style at 30,000 Feet](#) by Keith Lovegrove, which may leave you yearning for glamorous uniforms and bone china. If merely surviving your flight is top of mind, check out the new [Cockpit Confidential](#) by Patrick Smith, a pilot and the blogger behind [AskthePilot.com](#). Smith answered many questions, such as if you need to worry about turbulence or lightening and whether commercial jet planes can really fly themselves (the answers: no and no). Read more in David Pogue's review at the [New York Times](#).

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