



# Texas Tribute

## Hotel Van Zandt is inspired by its namesake

By KATHERINE KLAHN

**M**usic and Texas are the overarching design features in the Hotel Van Zandt. In fact, the 319-room hotel was named in honor of Townes Van Zandt, a singer/songwriter who was born in Fort Worth, TX.

His eldest son, JT Van Zandt, a native Austinite, created most of the photographic artwork for the hotel's public spaces. "It makes it almost like an art exhibit," explained Chuck Moses, director of sales and marketing for Hotel Van Zandt, a Kimpton Hotel, of guest's access to the artwork.

"The research regarding Townes Van Zandt helped fill the music palette that we worked with, such as the metal detailing, wood finishes and colors from old LP covers. These all served as inspiration for the spaces all through the hotel. We then took all of that and infused in our own current sense of industrial chic," said Mark Zeff, the hotel's designer, adding that the Hotel Van Zandt created a new look and feel for Austin.

The new-build opened in November and is located in downtown Austin in the Rainey Street District, which is known for its entertainment and restaurants and bars.

The hotel features nearly 12,000 sq. ft. of meeting space and an additional 15,000 sq. ft. of public

space, including a restaurant, writer's lounge and pool deck.

While the amount of public space is big, just how "Texas" is the Hotel Van Zandt? "We spent a great amount of time working on developing a new Texan aesthetic with the use of old Texan artifacts we found," said Zeff. This included old leather saddle stitching, currency graphics from the 1800s and tooling on old revolvers that were used to create patterns and design ideas.

The vision for the hotel was to position it as a new style of hotel in Austin and add comfort to every aspect of the hotel, according to Zeff. "Both the atmosphere of the rooms as well as the entrance and all the public touch points needed to be designed to exude comfort and style," he explained of the mandate he received when designing the hotel.

"We wanted people to connect to our city in an authentic way. We took it a lot further and ran this city through the bones of the building," said Moses, who added, "It's a very musical hotel, starting with the name."

To further illustrate the musicality of the hotel, Moses explained that the hotel is adorned with vinyl records. The living room has an "old-school turntable," and there are vinyl record players in all of the suites.



Check out our video montage at  
[video.hotelbusinessdesign.com](http://video.hotelbusinessdesign.com)



## Hotel Van Zandt

**LOCATION** Austin, TX

**OWNER** JMI Realty LLC

**MANAGEMENT COMPANY** Kimpton Hotels

**ARCHITECT** WDG Architecture

**INTERIOR DESIGNER** Mark Zeff

**PURCHASING FIRM** Ramsey Purchasing

**KEY SUPPLIERS** **Lighting:** Chapman Hospitality;

Dellightfull; Urban Electric; Trainspotters **Carpet/**

**flooring:** Tai Ping Carpet; Shaw Carpet; CM Hospitality;

Doris Leslie Blau; Nomadic Trading Company; Horizon

Wood Floors **Furniture:** Casamidy; Tedeschi; Uhuru

Design; Symbol Audio; Canvas; Garza Marfa; AT-95;

Lily Jack; Four Hands **Bedding:** Maxwell Rodgers

**Linens:** Quivera **Wallcoverings:** DesignTex; Koroseal;

Rollout **Fabrics/textiles:** Architex; Fabric Innovations;

Opuzen; Kravet; Upper South Studio; Moore & Giles

**Bath fixtures:** Symmons; Sonoma Forge **Artwork:**

Scott Newton; Zachary Aaronson; Status Serigraph;

Paul Valinsky; Museum Editions; JT Van Zandt

*Photography: Eric Laignel*

Moses clarified, “Texas music is not country. It’s more just local artists born and bred throughout Texas, and a lot of that comes from Austin.”

Another mandate of the hotel was to make it distinct, according to Moses. “From the design, architecture and decor, we wanted unique pieces that are specific to the Hotel Van Zandt that you cannot see in any other property,” he said.

Zeff and his team achieved this by using organic woods and nature elements. For example, the hotel’s conference rooms “have a lot of charm,” according to Moses. The walls are covered in reclaimed barn wood from East Texas. “It gives a cool, unique Texas feel,” he said.

Moses also explained that Austin is not a cookie-cutter kind of place. “Austin is a very organic town; we’re not about chains,” he said.

According to Moses, to be Austin means to be unique. He explained, “Meeting spaces can be very vanilla. Our meeting space is unlike anything you’ve ever seen. We have Ralph Lauren peacock blue

walls with a high-gloss finish. It’s gorgeous,” he said.

From the musical accents to the Texan elements to the distinct public spaces, the design of the hotel was developed through a progression.

“We created the story of the brand from the very first presentation, and it was developed and refined as we progressed with the overall design,” said Zeff. “Developing the DNA of the brand is the most important part of our design process, and I believe that if this is not established up front, then a project like this can easily go in the wrong direction.”

As for the interior, Moses explains that each floor rotates its color palette. On one floor, the palette is steel-grayish blue; on the next floor, it’s taupe and brownish copper like brushed nickel. He added, “Every other floor changes color.”

The color scheme for the hotel is ink blue with antique browns. “The use of the antiqued teal color was inspired by old currency ink,” Zeff explained.

Zeff used new texture trends throughout the design, including hot-rolled steel and bronze tones

and a buffalo-leather floor material. “We used different metals together, which is a departure from most design schemes,” he said.

While industrial, Moses noted, “There’s no shine in this building at all, which I love because I think shine went out.” Zeff was in agreement, as trendiness was not a part of the design mandate. “The mandate was not to be trendy but still look forward,” he said, adding, “This is a brave hotel, and we don’t hold our punches.”

As for the property’s comfort and what it means to the design and to guest reaction, Zeff called it his mantra and said that it needs to be present in all areas of a hotel. “Comfort is not only tactile, it’s light as well as color, and this needs to be a constant design thread. There are parts of the hotel that you would not expect comfort, like the entrance or the bar but, as far as I’m concerned, that’s where you need it most.”

Zeff said that he expects guests of the hotel to be challenged and inspired by the design.