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# A TESTAMENT OF THE OLD AND NEW

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La Colombe d'Or Hotel  
and The Residences  
at La Colombe d'Or,  
designed by  
Munoz + Albin

## THE CENTURY-OLD LA COLOMBE D'OR HOTEL AND A SLEEK NEW RESIDENTIAL TOWER UNITE TO CREATE THE ULTIMATE PRESERVATION SUCCESS STORY.

Three years ago this spring, Gerald Hines presided over a cocktail hour for the grand finale of his lifetime. It was a project he was particularly proud of — a big-picture idea for his adopted hometown. The firm he founded in 1957 would go

on to change the skyline of Houston and many world capitals over the successive 60-some years. The plan was neither straightforward nor expected. In fact, the adjectives that applied were the opposite: daring, challenging, innovative, ambitious, unique. Perhaps that's why the brilliant, principled

developer went for it. A handshake was made with the patriarch and his son who brought the deal to him, who would both become partners in a historic landmark cherished and preserved in the heart of the Houston Museum District — one of only two surviving 1920s mansions that once lined Montrose Boulevard. This is a property that savored its greatest renown in boomtown Houston as the life of high society when it was transformed into a buzzy, beautiful, boutique hotel in the 1980s.

By now you realize we're talking about La Colombe d'Or Hotel, a passion project of hospitality entrepreneur Steve Zimmerman, owner of the Alfred C. Finn-designed Fondren Mansion, who transformed it into the lush La Colombe d'Or 40 years ago. Propelled by his son, Dan Zimmerman, he reached out to Hines' senior managing director, Kevin Batchelor, and proposed the idea of adding a residential high-rise to the mansion hotel. A friendship between the global developer and the Houston hotelier/restaurateur and their families was born, which lasted until the passing of Gerald Hines in August 2020.

### CREATING COMMUNITY 2.0

It's a Friday night in the big city, and with a swath of Houston art and social circles vaccinated, the reborn La Colombe d'Or Hotel and its Tonight & Tomorrow restaurant are humming. The handsome Rottet Studio-designed restaurant and lounge — its opulent, Deco-inspired bar among the revamped hotel's calling cards — and the first guests checked into the cosseted suites on the second floor (again designed with austere beauty by Rottet Studio), the 1923 mansion is on its way to a second

Troy Stanley's *Nom de Plume*, 2020, at the reception desk of The Residences at La Colombe d'Or, designed by Rottet Studio



Tonight & Tomorrow bar, La Colombe d'Or Hotel



La Colombe d'Or Hotel's grand staircase

century of high society.

Pater Zimmerman holds court — working the tables, regaling guests with the names of personages who stayed, dined, and made La Colombe d'Or the pinnacle of the scene in '80s and '90s Houston: Mickey Leland, Elie Wiesel, Walter Cronkite, Desmond Tutu, Mary

of the ruling talents of the 1970s and 1980s Houston scene line the walls of La Colombe d'Or Hotel. The most important vignette is arguably in the lounge area, where a vaporous Color Field canvas by Dorothy Hood (who, in the Saint-Paul de Vence tradition, traded with Zimmerman for a tab

Steenburgen and Ted Danson (who became engaged there), and Zimmerman's favorite personage, President Bill Clinton, who sent a note after his visit. Zimmerman stops at a table filled with art dealer and designer types to tell tales of his first foray into the art world via his friendship with "Madame de Menil," which began when he was a law professor at St. Thomas. A request made by Dominique de Menil of Zimmerman was immediately granted, allowing Surrealist painter Max Ernst to stay at the hotel during his Houston visit organized by the de Menils. Thus, early on, La Colombe d'Or established itself as the haunt of artists — which perhaps isn't surprising, since its namesake hotel is in Saint-Paul de Vence, where the Zimmermans own property — a charming South of France village frequented by Matisse, Chagall, Léger, Braque, Picasso, and friends. The window into the art lifestyle provided by Mrs. de Menil sparked Zimmerman to begin collecting.

The fruits of that endeavor and a testament to his friendship with some

at the restaurant) faces a Surreal landscape by Lucas Johnson, another prime painter of the era. The 350-piece La Colombe d'Or collection also has works by Menil touchstones Man Ray and Braque, the former in the lounge area, the latter a work on paper of a dove that elegantly presides over a seating nook at the mansion entrance. The latest addition to the collection is *Rock Growth 300*, a robust sculpture formed from Corten steel commissioned from French designer/artist Arik Levy, whom Zimmerman knows from Saint-Paul. Levy's sculpture has just been installed along Montrose Boulevard, at the entrance to the hotel. Setting up a dialogue with the abstract tensile energy of the Levy is *Last Tango*, an epic al fresco mural by the father of stencil street art, Blek Le Rat, which rises floors above. The striking 46-foot-tall emblem is painted on the façade of the new 34-story residential tower that adjoins the mansion.

#### ROOMS WITH A VIEW

Cue The Residences of La Colombe d'Or, the pedigreed high-rise building by Munoz + Albin — arguably the city's go-to firm for residential towers — connected to the century-earlier hotel by an airy, linear, white-steel canopied walkway. The eloquent sky-rise bears both striking silhouette and subtle, architectural details that unfold depending on the viewer's location on the block. This building also torques imperceptibly on an axis. The new tower acknowledges the scale of the Mediterranean-style mansion by its balconied windows on the first two stories, demarcating The Residence's 18 suites for hotel guests. These rooms whisper with refinement — a commission that went to Rottet Studio, the firm that designed all The Residences' interiors. Headed by international interiors architect Lauren Rottet, the Houston headquartered firm's signature understated aesthetic is deftly deployed throughout.

The new Residences at La Colombe d'Or and the reborn La Colombe d'Or Hotel — what a win for both the city's future and Houston's history, too.

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