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PACIFIC NORTHWEST DESIGN

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THE BIG IDEAS SHAPING OUR FUTURE

URBAN DESIGN:

Laneways reimagined as vibrant public spaces

Flat-packed backcountry huts, assembled virtually anywhere, by anyone

The skyscraper that brought
PHILIPPE STARCK
to Seattle



SKY HIGH DESIGN

A new hotel with interiors by
Philippe Starck, raises the
profile of Seattle's skyline.

Written by JENNIFER MCCULLUM
Portrait by NATE WATTERS
Hotel room interiors photographed
by ALEX HAYDEN

The F5 Tower (rendered in center of this image), will house its namesake tech company in early 2019, and the new SLS Seattle hotel with interiors by Philippe Starck opening fall 2017. **OPPOSITE:** The renowned designer also envisioned the hotel's Sanctuary event space, set within the historic First United Methodist Church building adjacent to the tower.



DESIGN TEAM

architecture: Zimmer Gunsul Frasca Architects LLP

hotel and restaurant design: Philippe Starck

developer: Daniels Real Estate

general contractor: JTM Construction

structural engineering: Arup and Coughlin Porter Lundeen

environmental engineering: EA Engineering,
Science, and Technology, Inc.

HOT NEW NEXT
scene



“THE FRUSTRATING THING IS THAT EVERYONE IN SEATTLE TAKES THEIR MONEY SOMEWHERE ELSE TO SPEND: PARIS, SAN FRANCISCO, NEW YORK, VEGAS. THE GOAL OF SLS SEATTLE IS TO KEEP THAT MONEY HERE AND RAISE THE GAME.” —KEVIN DANIELS, DEVELOPER



COURTESY SLS SEATTLE

COURTESY ZGF

“We had a great challenge because we’re in a very dense piece of real estate. So the building has a dialogue with other buildings. Its reflective panes pick up images of the city and the drum of the First United Methodist Church. Glass is a medium that makes all the buildings around it a bit better.”

—ALLYN STELLMACHER, ARCHITECT, ZGF ARCHITECTS

It started with the church. In 2004, Seattle’s First United Methodist Church—built in 1908 and one of the country’s oldest Beaux Arts-style sanctuaries—was watching its congregation dwindle. Church leaders agreed to sell their 801 Fifth Avenue site and move their flock elsewhere. In the church’s place, a multistory office tower would be built. When developer Kevin Daniels, then the chairman of nonprofit Historic Seattle, caught wind of the demolition plans, he leapt into a nearly 15-year-long struggle to save the historic house of worship.

“It’s been the challenge of my career,” says Daniels. Yet thoughts of Henry Yesler, Arthur Denny, and other founders of Seattle, who all attended services in the church, drove him onward. “The first time I walked through the space, knowing its history, I thought, ‘Wow, we have to save this,’” he recalls. Historic Seattle, along with both the Washington and the National Trusts for Historic Preservation, sponsored a design charrette for the site and appealed to the Washington State Supreme Court to reconsider demolition plans, and ultimately it took Daniels partnering with Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels and King County Councilman Dow Constantine to spearhead a cash-and-land proposal that the congregation couldn’t pass up. The sanctuary would remain standing, the congregation would relocate, and a new office tower would rise immediately south of the building.

That tower is now a 48-story glass-steel-and-concrete edifice that gleams in the Seattle skyline from its Fifth Avenue site. Designed by Zimmer Gunsul Frasca Architects (ZGF), the F5 Tower—named for the tech company that will occupy its 28 floors of office space in early 2019—will house a tenant the Pacific Northwest design community is delighted to welcome: the new SLS hotel. The latest member of the SBE luxury hotel

portfolio, the SLS Seattle will flaunt interiors designed by Philippe Starck and a jaw-dropping event space, set within the old church and named the Sanctuary in honor of its venerable forebear.

Daniels knew a hospitality element had to be at the project’s core. “Since the ’60s in this part of town,” he notes, “you come, you work, and you leave. In a true cosmopolitan downtown, people work and play. We’ve always had the work. Now we have the play.” The new hotel and event space required a chic after-hours aesthetic, and Starck, the renowned creator, designer, and architect, was the man for the job. Starck’s 15 year partnership with the SBE Hotel Group and its chairman, Sam Nazarian, also made him the natural choice.

With U.S. locations in South Beach, Beverly Hills, and Las Vegas, the boutique SLS hotel chain brings a sleek urbanity to downtown that might surprise some Seattleites. “Seattle has been on the edge of civilization a bit,” jokes Allyn Stellmacher, ZGF design partner and lead project architect. “It’s been a very pragmatic city for decades, but this is also a place where big ideas happen. Take Microsoft, Boeing, and UPS—their ideas helped build the culture that’s now taking shape here.”

The project was not an easy one to shape for its creators. How should a century-old sanctuary relate to a contemporary 660-foot skyscraper? How should the architects reconcile the F5’s sleek industrial exterior with Starck’s nature-inspired interiors? “I’ve seen a lot of bad examples of how historic buildings are encapsulated by modern buildings,” says Daniels, now trustee emeritus of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. “I didn’t want that to happen here.” To maintain an optical connection between the tower and adjacent historic buildings, a cantilevered base, clad in Roman travertine, allows a visual throughway to the church and neighboring Rainier Club. »

OPPOSITE TOP: Seattle developer Kevin Daniels describes his fight to save the century-old Seattle church as “the challenge of my career.” After a years-long struggle, a resolution was reached to protect the sanctuary and raise the new office tower just south of the church. **OPPOSITE BOTTOM:** The Starck-designed—and aptly named—Halo bar hovers over the Sanctuary event space.



“THE MAIN GOAL OF A HOTEL IS NOT JUST TO BE BEAUTIFUL, ELEGANT, AND CHIC, BUT TO BRING LIFE TO A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE WHO ARE FAR FROM THEIR FAMILY AND FRIENDS CAN FIND A HOME.”

—PHILIPPE STARCK, DESIGNER

Travertine stone from Italian manufacturer Mariotti Carlo cloaks almost every surface of the SLS Seattle's guest bathrooms in a glamorous interpretation of the Pacific Northwest's rugged natural environment. **OPPOSITE:** "Because the Pacific Northwest can get quite cold, we wanted these rooms to feel warm for both the body and the heart," says Starck of the interiors he created for the SLS Seattle's 189 guest rooms. »





JUMBOTSUI

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE LEFT: A midcentury-inspired chair and custom coral pleated lampshade are just two of the deliberate design choices Starck (seated at right) made in creating the aesthetic of each room. "I care about the people who will be staying in this place. I want them to feel at their best. More sexy, more beautiful, more creative... to go back home and say, 'I went to the SLS, and it's astonishing.'"

Inside the hotel, 9 ½ feet tall floor-to-ceiling windows, ensure the unobstructed passage of elusive Pacific Northwest sunlight into the interiors. "We're gray most of the year," says Daniels. "Philippe wanted these spaces to be a warm cocoon that transforms the overcast light into something energetic and buoyant." Inspired by the region's natural landscape, the rooms feature live-edge stone and wood accent tables.

This environmental consciousness extends to all aspects of the tower, which is seeking LEED Gold rating from the U.S. Green Building Council. The glass wrapping the building's exterior has a "low-E" coating that permits light to pass through the panes but blocks the solar radiation that could overheat rooms. Vertical steel beams offer superior structural efficiency, eliminating the need for approximately 2,000 tons of steel and yielding a 20 percent savings over the cost of a

typical office building. "The tower works hard to be a good partner, to have a dialogue with the surrounding buildings and its environment," Stellmacher says. "It has no columns in its corners, so you get the spaciousness of the footprint and a sense of connection to the outdoors. The architecture steps out of the way of the inhabitants' experience."

In fall 2017, those inhabitants will be invited to stay in one of SLS Seattle's 189 guest rooms, dine in its restaurant (helmed by a James Beard Award-winning chef), and socialize at the appropriately titled Halo bar, also designed by Starck, which floats above the 21,000-square-foot event space in the restored church. "In the first six months we're open, more people will be in the church than in the past 100 years combined," says Daniels. "Finally getting to share it with the public is amazing." ✱

“Seattle is the city of intelligence. The SLS Seattle is not some trendy hotel where everything will get changed in two years because it will be out of style. Stupidity is the contrary of Seattle.”

—PHILIPPE STARCK, DESIGNER

