



INTERVIEW

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# ANDREA DAWSON SHEEHAN

**DDA**  
**DAWSON DESIGN ASSOCIATES**  
[www.dawsondesignassociates.com](http://www.dawsondesignassociates.com)

BY ERIKA GAGLIARDINI

As an artistic studio specializing in Hospitality Design, Dawson Design Associates, Inc. approaches each new assignment with the goal to create spaces that provoke passion and engage our guests both intellectually and visually. We want their experience and interaction with the hotel to be both intimate and personal. As a collaborative design team, study, which recently opened an office in London, strives to push beyond the ordinary to reach the extraordinary, with the aim to create an experience that provoke strong emotions and lasting memories: the goal is to open people's eyes and minds to discover the surprise and joy of a unique hotel experience. Our interiors are our canvas. The guests, our audience.





## DIRTY HABIT, AT HOTEL PALOMAR

### How do you synthesise the project?

There's a lure of intrigue and sexuality that draws guests into the Hitchcock-inspired set lighting and amber glow of backlit bottles of alcohol. We researched Film Noir, studying the lighting, colorations of palate and overall level of contrast utilized to create the feeling of suspense, danger, sinister for the evening performance. We channelled Hitchcock and his infamous ability to create dangerous and tension-filled set atmospheres. As the lights go down and the night rolls in, drama and colored lighting; illuminated in greens, yellows, reds, create a psychological trick that instills a sense of darkness and Gotham. Transforming the space from its day atmosphere into its seductive alter ego. Initially inspired by the Escher-type pattern of the existing lobby floor, the new Palomar and Dirty Habit are all about the idea of illusions. The atmosphere needed to be raw, edgy and original. Not your average speakeasy that we've all seen. Our goal was to capture the feeling of venturing into an illegal distillery, crawling down into the basement, into the unknown mechanical guts of the building. Concrete, exposed pipes, black steel, the broken quality of the stone on the front bar with its dramatic black veins, like it's been hit with a hammer, create this true look into the hardness & rawness of a building. But, the beauty of it is in the juxtaposition of the rich, warm wood of the bar top bordering that broken, intense marble; the use of traditional, beautiful elements like oriental carpets; the soft blends of purples, greens, and greys. Creating a tension and balance that is just enough to make you feel safe. We faded out the color saturation of all materials so that when we turn the lights down, they fade to a worn shade of grey. In addition we added pale amber and green lens to some of the lights to great a unhealthy glow. . . . That suggests dark corners and private, secret conversations. Setting the scene. During the day we opened up the windows to let the light shine in on the elegant carpets and furniture and use bright clear lights. Respectable, and though not entirely friendly, definitely more healthy. During the day we want a certain level of comfort and warmth, during the night – tension with a large with a layer of rawness and sexuality. When the lights go down and the city draws us out, who do we become? Everybody has a dark side, we all have our dirty habits. . . . Some people are just better at hiding it than others. Stylish, cynical and provocative, Dirty Habit is an experience that gives people an outlet for that other side of their personality; the dark side.





**Was there a specific demographic that you had to design for?**

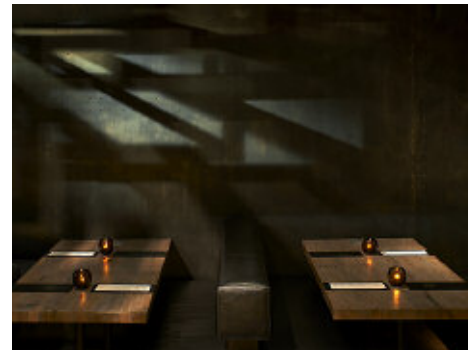
DDA is known for our reputation of always inviting and, in some cases, challenging the guest to participate, fully engage themselves in the experience – like they do in a video game. Creating a fusion of real life and fantasy. The essence of the DDA Brand, if you will. San Francisco is filled with artistic people who want to push the boundaries. Discover places that let the individual express themselves. The IT industry is filled with designers who are constantly pushing the boundaries of reality by using ‘ virtual reality’ as a forum to play. When one plays a video game one can become whoever they wish. They become their Alter Ego in the virtual world. Dirty Habit was designed for the people who are always looking for an authentic experience. More than a bar or restaurant, it’s a venue for those trying to find something real, somewhere they can escape, something they can connect to. They’re trying to get away from the trendy, decorated, pretty popular spot. They’re tired of the superficial, contrived environment and are looking for somewhere to become a part of the experience.



## What were some specific pieces, or materials used, that helped reinforce your design concept?



The exposed pipes and machine quality of the space has a flavour of a hidden distillery, a darkness, a tinge of sinister. The large surreal footed table is a playful nod to Escher and the lobby experience. All tables have legs. Is it sculpture or is it furniture? We use fragmented mirrors through out to alter their view of themselves and their surrounding environment; what you see is altered and distorted... from the chandeliers in the lobby made of broken mirrors, to the series of angled mirrors behind the back bar. Black steel, exposed rivets, paired with the dark woods and soft pallets of purple and greys in the rugs.



## PROJECT SHEET / SCHEDA PROGETTO

Name creation / Nome realizzazione:

**DIRTY HABIT**

Place / Luogo:

**SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA**

Address Location / Indirizzo:

**12 4TH STREET, SAN FRANCISCO, CA**

Year of construction / Anno di realizzazione:

**2014**

Customer / Committente:

**PEBBLEBROOK HOTEL TRUST**

Interior design / Progetto architettura d'interni:

**ANDREA DAWSON SHEEHAN**

**DDA DAWSON DESIGN ASSOCIATES**





**ANDREA DAWSON SHEEHAN**

**Art Director & Principal**

Andrea Dawson Sheehan is passionate about the hospitality industry. For the past twenty-five years she has been working on a diverse range of projects both nationally and internationally, hand-in-hand with all firm clients as a strategic partner developing the best position for their hotels.

Established in 1987 in Dallas, Texas, Dawson Design Associates, started with an initial focus in restaurant design. She has evolved DDA into a specialty firm, utilizing the principles accumulated over years of designing successful, high-profile boutique hotels. Raising the bar of design excellence meant creating an experience, not just a stylish room. Her unique approach to design and original methods of managing a dynamic team of high-talent creative individuals is widely recognized.