

WALKthrough

bath/spa

firms: *dmac architecture; v starr interiors*
site: *chicago*

grand slam

Enclosing the tennis lounge at the Midtown Athletic Club are panels of low-iron glass sandwiching a photograph of V Starr Interiors president Venus Williams. ➤





It was 1997 when Venus Williams last spent time at the Midtown Athletic Club. She was in Chicago for the WTA tournament, practicing with sister Serena, both teenage professional tennis players. Some 20 years and four Olympic gold medals later, Venus returned to the site, but in an utterly different capacity. The club has since been renovated and expanded to include the Hotel at Midtown, and V Starr Interiors, of which Williams is president, designed the tennis lounge and a guest suite.

In addition to star power, the project also signals a sea change in hospitality: a new focus on wellness. "It's a flip," architect Dwayne MacEwen says. "The hotel is the amenity to the club." The principal of DMAC Architecture, which oversaw the 250,000-square-foot, six-story structure, is referring to its 96 percent fitness-related/4 percent hotel function breakdown, a first of its kind.

Actually, the 55-key hotel component came late in the game. "Everything was planned when Steve called asking how many rooms could fit on top," he says of Midtown CEO Steven Schwartz, whose father built the original tennis club in 1970. "We realized there was a need in the neighborhood," the neighborhood being an industrial corridor on the fringe of the city, well placed between it and O'Hare International Airport.

The program that had already been in place was to rejigger the club. Originally primarily for tennis, the purview has drastically widened. There's now a full-size basketball court, a George Forman III-designed boxing ring, yoga and spin studios, an indoor lap pool, steam rooms, and a 20,000-square-foot fitness floor with bright-green artificial turf marching down the center.

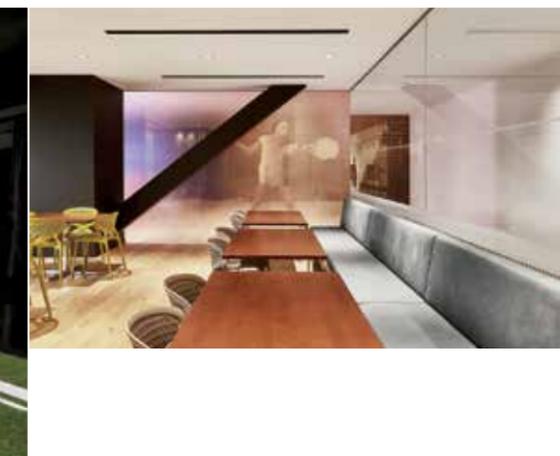
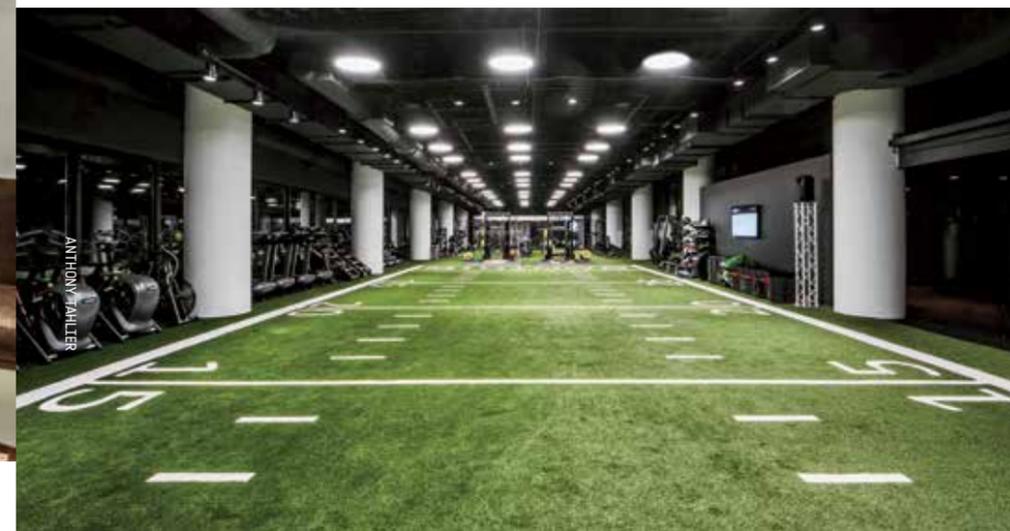
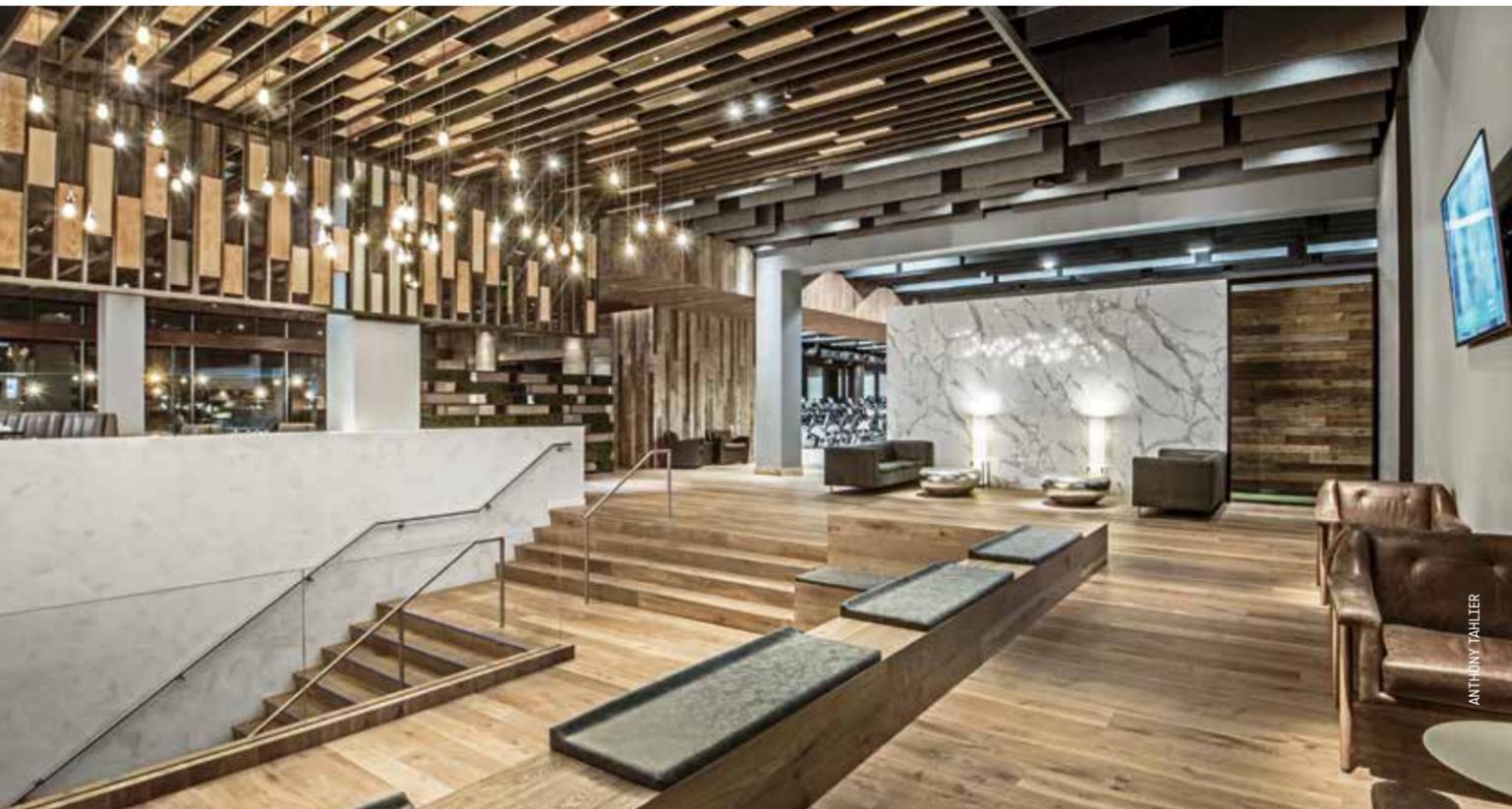
Bright yellow is a highlight of the tennis lounge, a flexible courtside space serving players and spectators. "We love color, we love energy, we thought, *What can we do that we haven't already seen?*" V Starr vice president Sonya Haffey recalls. "And we kept saying that we wanted the tennis-ball hue." So, up went thousands of actual tennis balls along the lounge's entire rear wall.

For his part, this was MacEwen's first hotel project. "Because we had no preconceived notions, there was a real rigor to our process," he states. "People walk in and say, *What is this place?*" referring to the second-floor lounge accessed by a monumental 10-foot-wide stair—it is a health club, after all. But since it's also a hotel, the lobby-cum-social space is warm, woodsy, and resortlike. Likewise, walnut and engineered European oak pervade the standard guest rooms further upstairs, each with a mural nodding to the area's warehouse past. ➤



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Clockwise from above: Inside the tennis lounge, one wall has a digitally fabricated plastic framework fitted with 2,305 tennis balls, and another an acrylic on canvas by Serena Williams. Arik Levy tables serve its built-in banquette. A 30-yard stretch of artificial turf is the centerpiece of the fitness center by DMAC Architecture. Engineered European oak floor planks flow through the lounge, where the canopy incorporates oak and copper fragments from the demolition of the original 1970 tennis club. In the living room of the Hotel at Midtown suite by V Starr, a decorative column above a structural I beam forms an abstract V.





From top: A mineral-composite panel in the suite bedroom mimics draped fabric. DMAC dotted a steam room ceiling with fiber-optic fixtures.

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ANTHONY TAHLER

WALKthrough bath/spa

From top: Calacatta marble and walnut veneer team up in the suite bathroom. Board-formed concrete beams run above the club's 100-foot lap pool. Millwork in a standard guest room is walnut.

The vibe is more pampering in the suite by Williams and team, its all-white, dream-inducing bedroom juxtaposed by a moody living room, the dark palette intended to calm after a strenuous workout. But there's a touch of grit, too: An exposed diagonal I beam was coated in a Cor-Ten spray. A second beam in the same finish was added above it, forming a V. —Annie Block

FROM FRONT BIANCO GLASS PRODUCTS: GLASS PANELS (TENNIS LOUNGE). BERNHARDT DESIGN: TABLES, SOFA, LOUNGE CHAIRS, SIDE TABLES. BEAUFURN: STACKING CHAIRS. 3DISCOVERED: BALL WALL. KRAVET: BANQUETTE FABRIC. SURYA: RUGS (TENNIS LOUNGE, LIVING ROOM). PINNACLE ARCHITECTURAL LIGHTING: PENDANT FIXTURES (FITNESS CENTER). PROMOUNDS: FLOORING. DESIGN FORM FURNISHINGS: CHAIRS (LOUNGE). BLU DOT: SOFAS. COVERS UNLIMITED/CHICAGO WOODWORKS: BENCH CUSHIONS. ARCHITEX: BENCH CUSHION FABRIC. TECH LIGHTING: PENDANT FIXTURES. VECTOR CUSTOM FABRICATING: CUSTOM CANOPY. FIANDRE: WALL TILE. MDC WALLCOVERINGS: CEILING BAFFLES. CRATE AND BARREL: TORCHIERES. MONDO COLLECTION: SOFA, CHAIRS (LIVING ROOM). CFC CUSTOM FURNITURE LA: CUSTOM COFFEE TABLE. KOROSEAL: WALL COVERING. SPRAY ON RUST PAINT: BEAM SPRAY. TOM DIXON: PENDANT FIXTURES (LIVING ROOM), SCONCES (BATHROOM). RH MODERN: SIDE TABLES (LIVING ROOM), BED, BENCH, SIDE TABLES (BEDROOM). MODULAR ARTS: WALL PANEL. WEST ELM: PENDANT FIXTURES (BEDROOM), LOUNGE CHAIR, SIDE TABLE (STANDARD ROOM). LUX ELEMENTS: PREFAB PANELS, CEILING (STEAM ROOM). UFO LIGHTING: FIBER OPTICS. KNAUSS: HOSE. DAL TILE: FLOOR TILE. STONE SOURCE: WALL TILE. CERAMIC MATRIX: TILE (BATHROOM). BRIZO: SINK FITTINGS, SHOWER FITTINGS. LACAVA: SINK. ARPER: OTTOMAN. TROPITONE FURNITURE COMPANY: CHAISE LONGUES (POOL AREA). SAINT-DAMASE HOTEL FURNITURE: CUSTOM CASEGOODS (GUEST ROOM). ADVANCE INTERIOR DESIGN: DESK CHAIR. CONTECH LIGHTING: RECESSED DOWNLIGHTS. BLOOM LIGHTING GROUP: CUSTOM SCONCES. AREA ENVIRONMENTS: WALL COVERING. CARNEGIE: WINDOW TREATMENTS. THROUGHOUT BENJAMIN MOORE & CO.: PAINT. HAKWOOD: WOOD FLOORING. RUZIKA COMPANY: LIGHTING CONSULTANT. ROCKEY STRUCTURES: STRUCTURAL ENGINEER. WMA CONSULTING ENGINEERS: MEP. NORCON: GENERAL CONTRACTOR.

 interiordesign.net/vstarr18 for 10 Qs With Venus Williams

