

avenue



14 MEN ABOUT TOWN

Our hand-picked handsome devils

中餐菜单解读

(How to Read the Chinese Menu)

GIRLS' NIGHT OUT

Where the women are

LOCAL FIRM MAKES GOOD

How Farmboy got the art contract for the W Hotel, Seoul

SPECIAL REPORT

The Climate-Change Olympics: Drier, Warmer, Colder, Windier
What's up for us in 2005

MIND MAKEOVER

A major exhibition brings artist Maxwell Bates home

NEW: Advice from Sheldon Walker

Jesse Williams see Male Call page 42

Canadian Publications mail product sales agreement PM 4003091
Return Undeliverable Canadian Addresses to:
RedPoint Media Group Inc. 1902K 11 St. S.E.
Calgary, AB T2G 3G2



HOW A FARM BOY BECAME A SEOULMAN

You'll find the gorgeous W Hotel in Seoul full of Western Canadian art. The story of how it got there is a lesson in tenacity

By TODD TOWERS

Photograph by BRENT MYKYTYSHYN

To understand how Farmboy Fine Arts won the bid for the new W Hotel in Seoul, South Korea, you have to know how we lost the bid for the W Hotel in Mexico City.

Five years ago, I wanted to create a stronger brand image for Farmboy Fine Arts, my five-year-old company that designs and manufactures art and design work. I decided to focus my efforts on W Hotels, an international chain that is the pioneer in the concept of boutique hotels.

Like any good farm boy (I grew up on a ranch outside of Red Deer), I started by asking neighbours and friends for help. Through Karen Scarlett, who owns Pretty Twisted Jewellery and who grew up close to my family homestead, I got in touch with the New York architects working on the W Hotel in Mexico City.

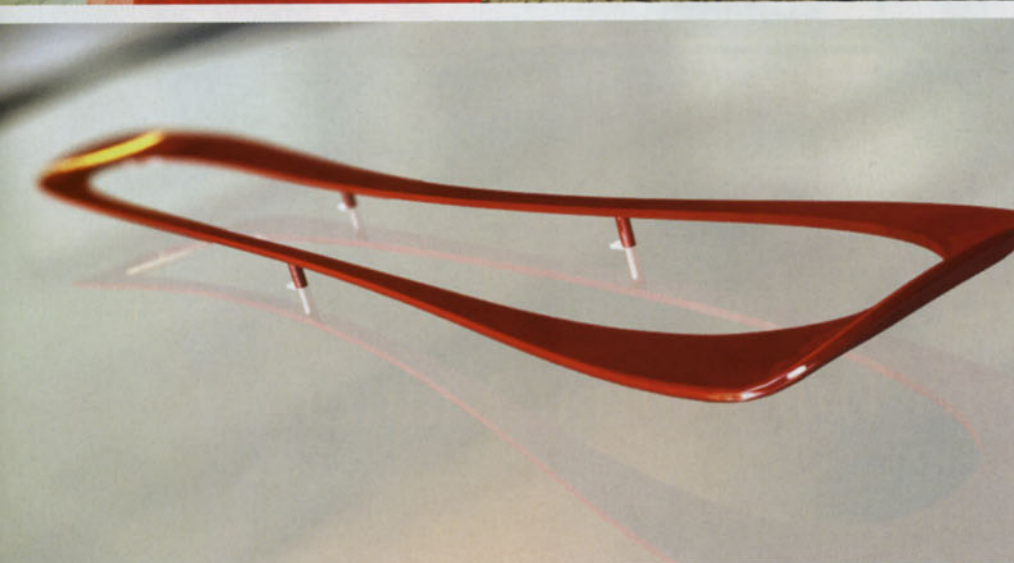
I was invited to submit a bid to provide artwork for about 200 rooms.

I did a little research and discovered that Higgins Purchasing Group, based in San Francisco, was in charge of purchasing furniture, fixtures and equipment for the hotel. I decided that it would be best for me to present Farmboy's bid in person, so I drove non-stop to San Francisco and made a cold call to Higgins Purchasing Group. I don't remember what I said, but when I got back to Calgary there was a fax waiting for me, inviting Farmboy to put in a proposal to bid on the art portion of 64 hotels over the next five years.





Like any good farmboy (I grew up on a ranch outside of Red Deer), I started by asking neighbours and friends for help



THE SPOON

The sexy red spoon (top and left) is made of rolled aluminum; the red lacquer was applied at an autobody shop. The design was based on the idea of two people spooning together. It adorns the media room.

Designed by Patrick Conaty/Farmboy; produced and manufactured by Alex Caldwell Designs.

BONSAI TREES

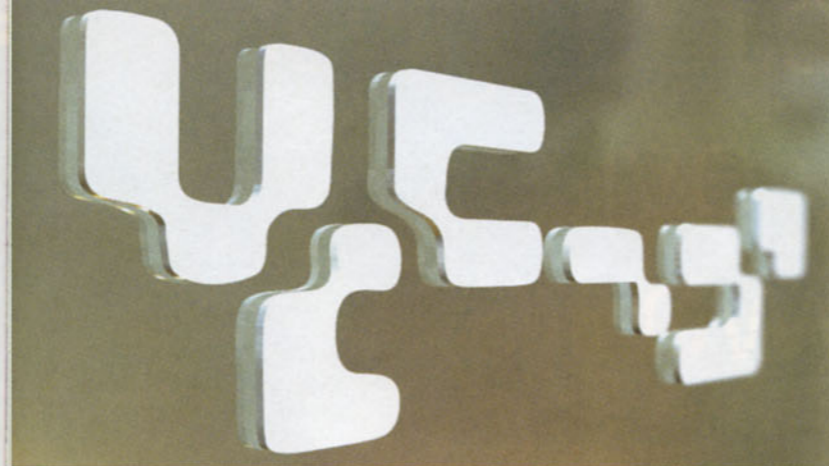
These digital images in the hotel's spa room help create a soothing atmosphere.

Designed by Patrick Conaty/Farmboy; produced and manufactured by ABL Imaging.



We didn't get the Mexico job, but a few months later I received a call asking Farmboy to bid on the new W Hotel in Seoul. With the help of Patrick Conaty, who was then our intern from the Alberta College of Art & Design and is now our lead designer, we put together a package that was highly design-oriented and contemporary. After what felt like an eternity, I was notified that we were on the short list; a few weeks later we were awarded the bid. It was a joyous moment for our company.

In terms of its layout and design, the hotel felt like something out 2001: A Space Odyssey,



St. sue
Dre: 11f

CODE The six white modular sculptures are made from crushed wood, which is glued together and covered with white lacquer. The sculptures hang in the Wonderful Room, a.k.a. the standard suite.

Designed by Patrick Conaty/Farmboy; manufactured by Concepts in Wood.



W FLOWERS The W flowers are spider-mums, shot with a digital camera and a macro lens. In the artist's mind, the flowers are cryptic and provide an organic Zen-like experience. The photographs hang in the presidential suite, executive suite and some of the spa rooms.

Designed by Patrick Conaty/Farmboy; produced by ABL Imaging.

yet there were plenty of warm design details to work with. There were also some interesting cultural considerations. We did some research into the cultural connotations of particular colours and how they are perceived by Koreans. Red is universally accepted as the colour of passion and warmth; in Asian cultures it also has a regal quality.

Michael Parker, an interior design and colour expert in Calgary, gave us some insight into the reaction to particular colours. He shared with us his view that people will rest longer in a room that has a red focus; they can connect to a more passionate sensibility within themselves while surrounded by it. We also learned that yellow is both the first colour people notice and the most difficult for the eye to adjust to. This is why we utilized it in the elevator corridors in small doses. It helps people find the elevator and serves as an accent to the other colours in the area.

Because W is such a design-forward brand we wanted to work with colours that had a lasting cultural response within a contemporary palette. We had two months to complete the hotel's order, and worked from March to

Inside the W Hotel Seoul

Getting there: Air Canada flies into Seoul via Vancouver. It's an 11-hour journey. You'll be transported from the airport courtesy of W Hotel.

Room cost: Approximately \$500 per night. But the most expensive room is the eWOW Suite on the 13th floor at about \$5,500 a night. Check out the website to choose your room.

Currency: \$1 equals approximately 898 Korean won.

What to eat: Try dishes that reflect Korean and Asian culture.

- Kitchen: Bibimbap "W Style" (approximately \$12). Bibimbap is a bowl of hot rice served with a variety of vegetables (toraji, bell flower roots, gosari, bracken, bean sprouts, and spinach). An egg may be also served on the top.

- Namu Restaurant: Wagyu beef, sancho crust (approximately \$22). Wagyu is a breed of cattle naturally predisposed to produce beef that is densely marbled. The crust is made from seeds providing a strong anise, citrus, and pepper flavour. It is used to counter the fatty tastes of the meat.



- Room service: Udon tempura (approximately \$13) Tempura coating made from wheat flour, salt and water.

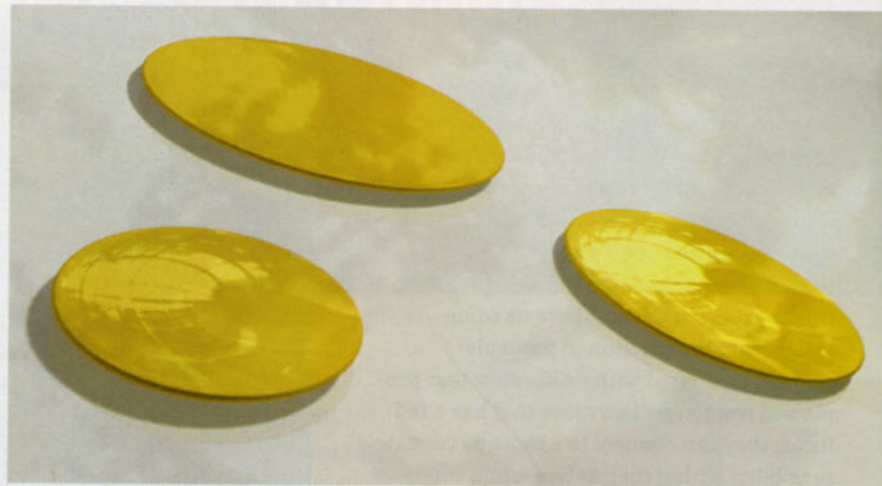
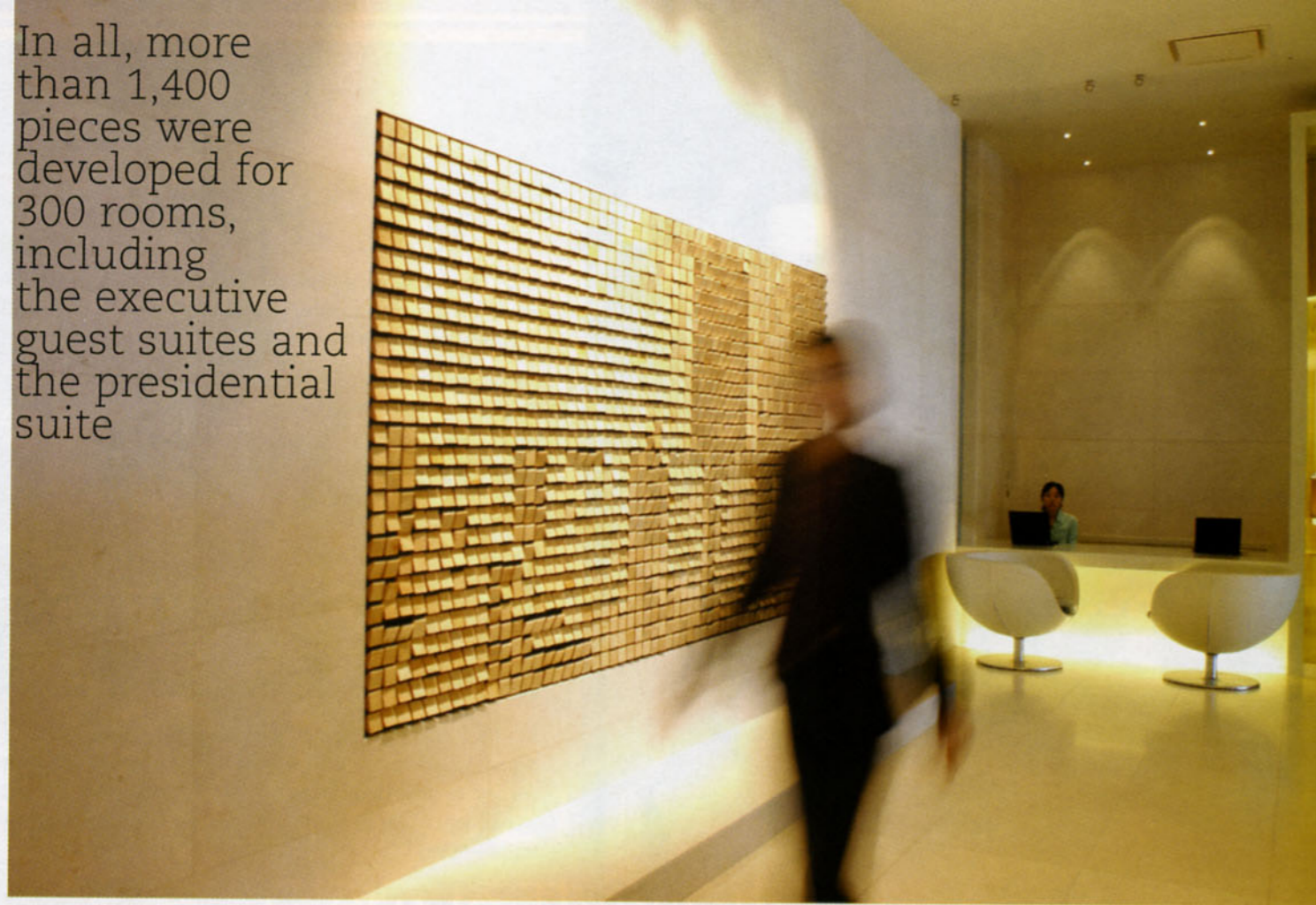
There's also a selection of international fare such as prawns with angel hair pasta, and glazed duck breast with barley, sesame and dried mandarin (approximately \$29).

Ask for: Take a look on the website (www.who-tels.com/seoul) and see which rooms suit your artistic sensibility.

W Seoul-Walkerhill
t +82 2 2022 0117

Courtesy W Hotel

In all, more than 1,400 pieces were developed for 300 rooms, including the executive guest suites and the presidential suite



mid-May last year. After delivering that initial order, we were asked to develop two other series of work. They were delivered last June, in time for the grand opening of the hotel.

In all, more than 1,400 pieces were developed for 300 rooms, including the executive guest suites and the presidential suite. We worked with local talents such as Alexander Caldwell, who fabricated all our metal sculptures; Mike Gardiner at Concepts in Wood, who manufac-

tured several lacquered wood sculptures; Paul Stady at Isetta designs, who co-designed some of the sculptural work; and ABL imaging, which produced all of our digital photography. This project has truly opened my eyes to the world art market and has solidified my belief that good art, like good design, is global. It doesn't matter if you are in Calgary or Seoul, a common vision for contemporary art and design can be found. 📍

W CIRCLES These hydro-cut aluminium pieces are in the elevator corridors on six of the hotel's floors. Each installation uses a different finish, from high gloss to matte.

Designed by Farmboy; manufactured by Alexander Caldwell Designs.