An Inspiring Respite

Finally, a self-described “urban sanctuary” that lives up to its billing. Though located in the most hopping part of Manhattan’s Chelsea neighborhood, the new High Line Hotel sits within the tranquil, cloistered grounds of the General Theological Seminary, a venerable Episcopal institution that dates from 1817 and occupies a prime block fronting 10th Avenue. Formerly an apple orchard, the property was part of a vast estate that stretched from what is now Eighth Avenue to the Hudson River and belonged to Clement Clarke Moore, a wealthy gentleman who in 1822 penned the Yuletide classic “‘Twas the Night Before Christmas.” A few years ago, the seminary sold a few of the red-brick, English Gothic-style buildings on its campus. What were once dormitories are now the High Line Hotel. While retaining handsome original features such as stained glass and elaborate fireplace mantels, the design firm Roman and Williams came up with a look for the property’s 60 rooms that blends eclectic Americana with European style. Little of the vintage furniture matches. All rooms are equipped with terrariums and Model 202 rotary phones manufactured by Western Electric in the 1930s (now updated with digital technology). There is a bar-café in the cozy lobby, and while the hotel lacks a restaurant, its soaring, ornately paneled 3,300-square-foot refectory seems destined to become Manhattan’s next buzzy event space. “Former seminarians and priests have been popping in and pointing out the rooms where they used to party,” says Tyler Morse, a co-developer. “You have to remember, these are Episcopalians. It’s a much more liberal situation than with, say, the Catholics.”

—James Regnato