

OPL 101

At Denver's newest independent hotel, luxurious linens are key

BY DAVID BODETTE

DENVER — If you've ever spent the night—or simply ventured inside—a boutique or luxury hotel, the aesthetic touches and décor likely made an impression. From tablecloths in the restaurants to plush terry robes and the subtle pops of color on down comforters, each element is carefully selected to enliven the senses, while creating a first-class experience.

Lisa Litke knows better than anyone the impact thoughtfully procured elements can have in providing guests with a memorable stay. Litke is director of purchasing for Commonwealth Hotels Collection, a hotel management company that oversees hundreds of hotels nationally.

"Coordinated design elements provide that 'wow' factor from the time visitors and guests walk in the front door, all the way to their rooms," she says. "They tell a story that translates throughout the entire hotel."

Litke has helped with purchasing efforts for dozens of hotels during her career, but perhaps one of the most exciting has been one of Commonwealth's newest properties, The ART: A Hotel, here in Denver. The independent hotel opened in mid-June, yet preparations to bring it to life began more than two and a half years ago. Architects, designers, buyers and managers were all

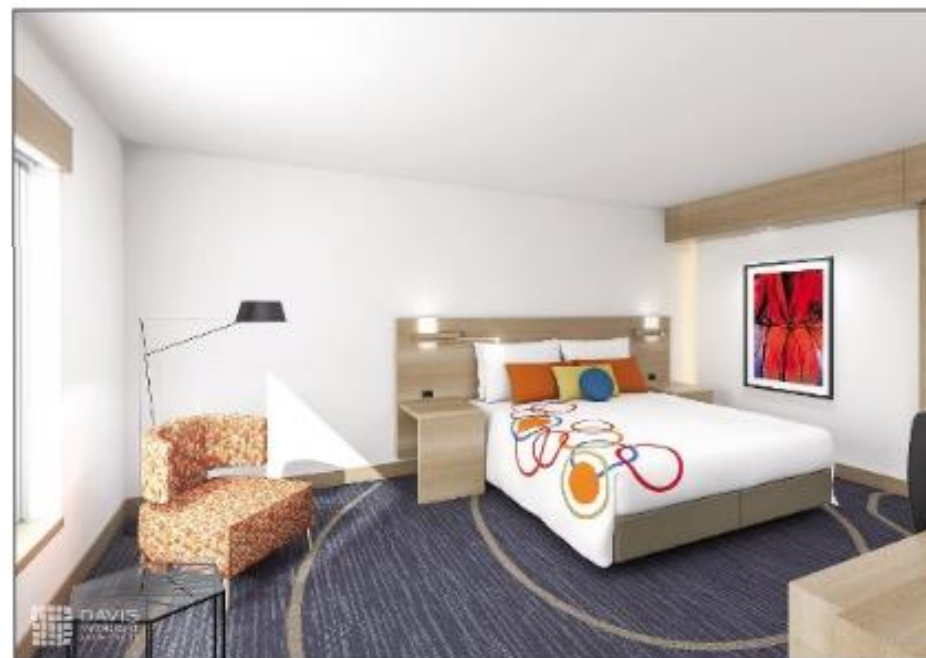
these premium materials.

"We have built a modern hotel filled with the best materials money can buy," Snyder says. "There was no question we would equip the laundry room with dependable machines that will protect their life spans, while also allowing us to easily meet very specific processing guidelines."

These guidelines include maximum-temperature recommendations during both washing and drying, specific wash formulas and desirable pH-level ranges. The recommendations are followed in order to maintain the integrity of the fabrics and the investment. For example, the hotel's bath towels should be dried at no more than 160 F, while bedding should be heated to no more than 140 F. Thanks to the hotel's advanced laundry equipment, meeting these requirements isn't burdensome.

PRESERVING LUXURY

Equipped with three high-performance washer-extractors and three industrial tumble dryers, The ART's on-premises laundry (OPL) has capacity to wash 325 pounds of laundry and dry 415 pounds at any given time. And, because these machines are networked to the equipment distributor, hotel managers have peace of mind that a laundry expert is clued in to the operation, even from many states away.



Linens used in guestrooms are processed in order to preserve the luxury of the items. (Photos: The ART: A Hotel)



responsible for ensuring The ART was built and outfitted with materials that would ensure a luxurious, unforgettable guest experience.

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—MARK MOORE, REM COMPANY

INSPIRED DESIGN

Located in the heart of the local museum and cultural district, the décor inside The ART complements its namesake and surroundings. In addition to the common areas that double as art galleries, each guestroom floor is inspired by a particular artist, whose style translates throughout each room and into the hallways. The room décor is curated to match the experience, with luxury touches and amenities that complement the artwork, playing off the artist's color scheme and tone.

Multiple vendors were utilized to ensure each element of the hotel provides a one-of-a-kind, multi-sensory experience. This includes satin sheets and pillowcases, terry towels woven from the finest cotton, and even table runners and napkins imported from France.

According to Gordy Snyder, president of Commonwealth, it was critical to build and outfit a hotel laundry that would protect the investment in, and lifespan of,

"From my computer in Kentucky, I can view information about each machine's performance and cycle usage, to ensure staff are selecting the proper cycles that won't damage the premium linens," says Mark Moore, vice president of REM Company Inc., a distributor of UniMac® laundry equipment. "I also receive error codes, in the form of an e-mail or text message, should a machine detect improper usage."

For example, if a maximum-temperature guideline is exceeded, Moore or designated staff at the hotel immediately receive a notification. They can also view information such as machine utilization and operating expense and use the information to advise housekeeping supervisors on ways to improve efficiency.

"The ability to customize cycles and track machine usage, along with having an expert distributor to lean on for guidance, is invaluable," says Snyder. "It allows us to be more efficient in the laundry room, leaving more time to focus on providing superior service and accommodations to our guests."

Another critical feature to preserving the hotel's investment in quality linens is over-dry prevention technology on tumble dryers.

This technology prevents the over-drying—and thus degradation—of linens. The dryer stops precisely at the desired dryness level, leaving just a small percentage of moisture. This keeps fabrics soft and plush rather than becoming rough and stiff from being excessively dried. This reportedly can result in 31% less fiber loss when compared to machines without the technology. Snyder says this technology also improves staff productivity, because it prevents staff



Every textile in The ART has been selected to provide a multi-sensory experience, hotel management says.

from making educated guesses about dryness level. They can process laundry and linens much more quickly when cycle times are exact.

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**—GORDY SNYDER,
COMMONWEALTH HOTELS**

Another notable benefit relates to the hotel's bottom line and level of guest satisfaction.

"You take tens of thousands of dollars worth of linens and destroy them in two months time, and you're out of business," Snyder explains. "Our laundry equipment maintains the luxury touch that will still impress guests a year or more from now."

CURATED EXPERIENCE

Whether you're a weekday business traveler or Denver local stopping in to enjoy the hotel restaurant or lounge, it's easy to see—and feel—the thoughtful touches that go into setting a luxury hotel apart from the rest.

"There is a substantial difference between the investment we make when purchasing items for a property in the luxury hotel segment, versus one in another," says Litke. "We're attracting travelers looking for a specific experience and premier accommodations. In this case, the goal is to provide something to be admired at every turn."

While guests might not understand the vital role the laundry room plays in maintaining this atmosphere day in and day out, those in the hospitality industry know it deserves admiration entirely of its own. ALN

David Bodette is general manager of The ART: A Hotel, Denver. He has more than 30 years of experience in the hospitality industry. For more information on UniMac, visit www.unimac.com/OPL101 or call 1-800-587-5458.