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STRATEGIST

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THE BEST BET

This is the view from room 1013 of **the Standard**, André Balazs's new High Line-straddling hotel (from \$195 a night; 848 Washington St., nr. W. 12th St.; 212-645-4646), designed by Todd Schliemann of Polshek Partnership Architects with décor by Roman and Williams.

It's spectacular, as you can see, and thanks to the floor-to-ceiling glass, all 337 rooms have perspective-delighting views over the city. This might seem an odd time to open any hotel, much less the 39 scheduled for this year, but there are benefits to the room boom. For more on the Standard, turn the page; for other new hotels, see page 40.



THE STANDARD
FOR THE CULTURE-
AND-FASHION CROWD THAT WILL
FLOCK TO THE HIGH LINE



A Delicate Colossus

The Standard Hotel is a big, brawny exhibitionist with a surprisingly sensitive touch.

BY JUSTIN DAVIDSON

SOME BUILDINGS are coy about showing what holds them up. The Standard Hotel flaunts its musculature—its naked concrete piers ripple like a bodybuilder's legs, heaving the glass-walled structure 60 feet in the air. Those shapely supports hit the ground in a sensitive part of Manhattan, a knot of cobblestones and weathered brick that still release an occasional smell of butchered meat. It's not a tough area anymore, but it is pleasingly rough to the touch. So is the Standard's concrete, textured with the grain of wooden planks. That's how a big new building can fit neatly in a historic neighborhood—not by donning antique-y cornices, but by interpreting the spirit of a place.

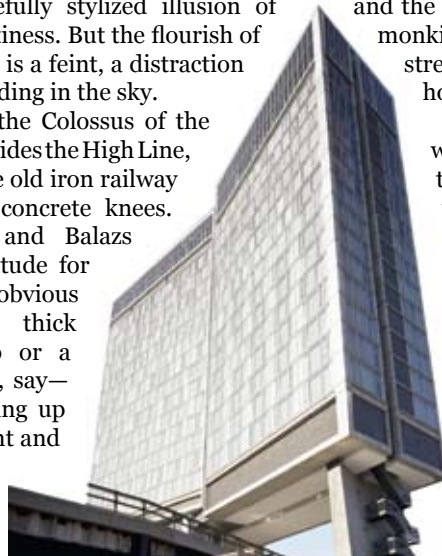
Designed by Todd Schliemann of Polshek Partnership Architects for André Balazs, the

Standard doesn't apologize for its stature. At 265 feet tall, it's hardly a monster, but it does present a raised fist to the low-slung meatpacking district. Get close-up, though, and the building nearly disappears. At street level, a bar and a future beer garden occupy a one-story shed costumed like an old warehouse in recycled brick. Like the rest of the neighborhood, this structure offers a carefully stylized illusion of old-time grittiness. But the flourish of make-believe is a feint, a distraction from the building in the sky.

Up there, the Colossus of the Hudson bestrides the High Line, squeezing the old iron railway between its concrete knees. Schliemann and Balazs deserve gratitude for avoiding the obvious horrors—a thick modern slab or a needle tower, say—and for putting up such confident and considered

architecture. The long form bends at the center, like a guest book propped open to reveal the names inside. (The best vantage point from which to read this volume will be the High Line, a voyeur's paradise.) Once inside, the reason for the angles becomes clear: to organize the panorama. Some toilets face the towers of midtown, some showers offer Hudson River views, and the outer walls of sheerest glass turn monkish cells into aeries. Below, the streets and the High Line answer the hotel's zig with their zags.

Not many guests, I imagine, will find their way to the fire stair that drops out of the building's underbelly. But if Cézanne were a contemporary New Yorker, he might set up an easel here. The hotel's taut lines and hard surfaces frame the cubist cityscape: warehouse roofs and criss-crossing streets in the middle distance, the vertical brushstroke of the Empire State Building beyond. What a fine way to arrive in Manhattan, descending on foot through the open air.



My Night at the Standard

BY
SARAH BERNARD

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I'VE LIVED in New York all my life, but I love checking into a hotel as if I haven't. Mostly I love the new views, but also the way the experience tricks me into noticing things I usually ignore (like rivers!). When the Standard opened very quietly in late December, I had to try it; the fact that it would still be mostly empty only increased my excitement. I'd imagined some sort of luxury train carriage in the sky, and I wasn't entirely wrong. Though I'd booked a superior queen room for \$195 over the phone, a clerk dressed like a chic Pan Am stewardess upgraded me to a \$395 Hudson Suite with floor-to-ceiling glass windows on three sides. Even the Department of Sanitation pier five stories below looked like an art installation. The people outside seemed luxuriously distant—or at least far enough away that bathing in the all-glass

shower, which stood in the middle of the all-glass room, felt more day-spa discreet than meatpacking-district flasher. (Thankfully, the toilet had a room of its own.) As with every André Balazs-owned property, the staff is uniformly young, beautiful, and hip. But—big surprise—they're also unbelievably competent. The concierge hooked me up with a last-minute reservation at Pastis and called the restaurant to make sure that I'd arrived safely. (There is no food service at the hotel yet, but if you stay in for the night, a staffer will fetch you some takeout.) If I had to nitpick, I'd say the lights above the bed buzzed a little, there was not full-length mirror, and the water from the shower seeped dangerously close to the carpet. But noticing such things would require taking your mind off the views, and what would be the point of that?

