

## Luxury hotel design from the ground up - three insights from Sydney's Pullman Penrith

Paris or Penrith? The 5-star Pullman Penrith opened in August 2023, bringing a luxury hotel experience to Western Sydney for the first time. With its 153 rooms, modern European restaurant and stylish lobby bar, the Pullman Penrith has quickly established itself as a go-to destination for locals and visitors alike.

The striking architecture and interiors were designed by Sydney-based practice TURNER and curated by operator Accor, working with project manager Census.

TURNER senior associate Janene Fowlstone was lead architect and described the project as enjoyable from start to finish. "It's rare to have the opportunity to design a 5-star hotel in Sydney from the ground up," said Fowlstone. "A blank canvas, a visionary client in the Penrith Panthers, a collaborative operator and a great team of architects, designers and consultants allowed creativity to flourish."

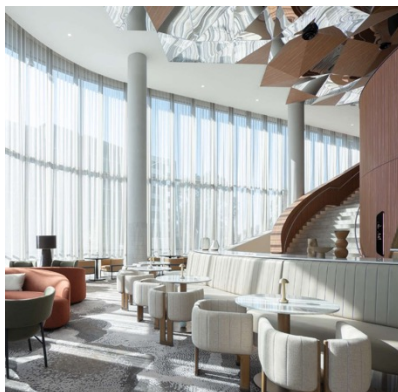
The hotel makes an impressive addition to Accor's premium Pullman portfolio and raises the bar for Penrith. Three design strategies underpinned the project's success and streamlined its delivery.

### 1. Make overlay easy for the operator

Unusually, the Pullman Penrith was designed and documented by TURNER and under contract with builder Richard Crookes Constructions before operator Accor was appointed. Despite the lack of an operator brief, the TURNER interiors team created the perfect canvas for Accor's Pullman overlay.

Combining good planning with elements of surprise, the design ticked all Accor's boxes. A classic architectural palette of timber and sandstone created a neutral background that would lend itself to many hotel brands. The Tori lobby bar and mezzanine level Marcel Bistro aligned perfectly with Pullman's aspiration for the hospitality experience and lobby activation. The overall design hit the note for quality and differentiation, making it easy for Accor to overlay its cosmopolitan Pullman brand.

Immersion sessions with Accor were used to workshop key brand attributes and fine-tune the Pullman Penrith's personality whilst ensuring the project remained commercially viable for the client. Engaging design element such as the reflective ceiling panels and sweeping staircase established a unique identity. Contrasting form, geometry and materiality unite in contemporary interiors that respond to the location and are refined yet welcoming.



*A sweeping staircase, reflective ceiling panels and sheer window dressings established a sophisticated, contemporary design identity.*

The General Manager of the hotel, Glen Erikson, said, "The design of Pullman Penrith has created the ideal balance between feelings of contemporary sophistication and indulgence with a sense of calmness and warmth that align perfectly to our brand. This has all been achieved simultaneously with operational fluidity."



*Pullman's planning needs were met, alongside the desired brand attributes of calmness and warmth.*

## **2. Create unique moments - make the guest journey memorable**

From the outset, the design intent was to create a guest journey of unique and memorable moments. Transitional spaces and elevated food and beverage combine with curated art to invite curiosity, discovery and surprise.

"Transitional spaces encourage you to pause and linger, whether to appreciate the outlook or an artwork or meet your friends," said Fowlstone. Close collaboration between the architecture and interior design teams amplified the design potential. Sightlines were opened to the external landscaping and Blue Mountains beyond, and the design teams seized opportunities to inject moments of drama.

Fowlstone cites moving up the staircase to the Marcel Bistro, which provides an aesthetic and sensory experience thanks to the expansive height and glazing and the mirrored panels above.



*The grand staircase transports guests from the Tori lobby bar to the Marcel Bistro and is a defining moment of the Pullman Penrith experience.*

The playfully furnished lift lobbies are conceived as multi-functional places that can be programmed for VIP events and celebrations, removing the need to allocate space to an executive lounge.



*In the lift lobbies, double-height ceilings and glazing create spaces to linger and can host events and functions.*

Food and beverage are central to the guest experience and local amenity. Since opening, the Marcel Bistro has become a popular neighbourhood venue for dining across the week. The design inspiration for the bistro and the Tori lobby bar pays homage to iconic modernist architect Marcel Breuer. Breuer's only Australian building is the Torin factory in Penrith, and this connection adds an unexpected layer of local design history and pedigree - Penrith meets the Bauhaus.



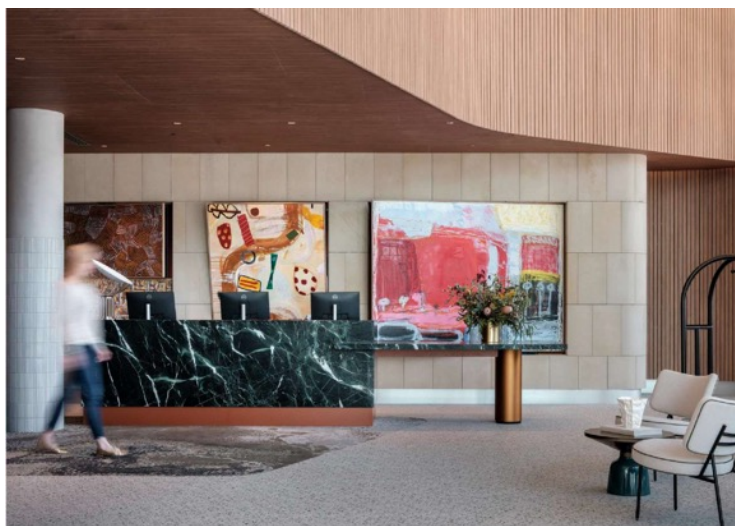
*Penrith meets the Bauhaus at the Marcel Bistro, which features the iconic Cesca cantilever chair designed by Marcel Breuer in 1928.*

A highly curated artwork collection adds a further layer of identity. The arrival zone features a sculptural installation designed by TURNER titled the Nepean Looking Glass. Symbolic of the Nepean River, its sinuous form winds from the entrance wall across the ceiling of the lobby space, making a striking first impression.



*'The Nepean Looking Glass' forms a distinctive arrival feature.*

Artworks on the sandstone wall behind the monolithic reception desk and elsewhere in the hotel are integral to bringing the Pullman signature to life.



*Artworks create a distinctive backdrop for the arrivals desk. (Artists: Top left - Gloria Petyarre; bottom left - Wayne Eager; centre - Graham Fransella; right - Olivier Rasir).*

Glenn Erikson said the design achieves its intent. "Before guests have experienced our service and tasted our food, their senses have already been stimulated by the design of our spaces. Success is so dependent on our guests feeling a sense of place and belonging, so it is important to create that perfect first impression."

### 3. Integrate wellness - align interiors and technology

With the growth of wellness as an influential design trend, the TURNER team paid close attention to an integrated wellness experience at Pullman Penrith.

Architecture and interiors are nature-inspired to create a sense of balance and calm. The curved, organic form of the buildings takes cues from the nearby Nepean River, using mirror-glass and metallic soffits to evoke light reflecting on water.



The building form evokes rippling water.

This theme is translated seamlessly into the interiors, using materials, colours and shapes influenced by the layered rock and plants of the Blue Mountains that sit at the hotel's doorstep.



Marcel Bistro - natural colours and shapes evoke the nearby river and mountains and merge with the organic architecture.

An innovation is Pullman Penrith's sleep therapy menu, designed to help guests achieve an optimal night's rest. Digital tablets in each room allow room lighting, colour and sounds to be customised. An extensive pillow menu is offered alongside face and eye masks, aromatherapy pillow sprays and sleep-enhancing teas.



The luxurious guest rooms come with technology and service offerings to encourage a restful stay.

The TURNER team predicts the focus on personalised wellness will evolve at pace as medical technology becomes better at analysing individual needs. "Wellness and hospitality are merging to create a new form of design - something our team is excited to explore and drive forward," Fowlstone concludes.

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**Images**

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