

Central Glass International Design Competition:  
Conversion of Existing Architecture for Living in the City

Problem statement:

*"The works of the past always influence us, whether or not we care to admit it, or to structure an understanding of how that influence occurs. The past is not just that which we know, it is that which we use, in a variety of ways, in the making of new work.... The typology argument today asserts that despite the diversity of our culture there are still roots of this kind, which allow us to speak of the idea of a library, a museum, a city hall or a house. The continuity of these ideas of type, such as they are, and the esteemed examples which have established their identity and assured their continued cultural resonance, constitute an established line of inquiry in which new work may be effectively grounded."*

Competition outline:

*Given the longevity of architecture in the city, there are an increasing number of buildings still fit for use despite having outlived their functional role. Particularly without regard to progress in IT, this tendency is notable among small-and medium-scale office buildings. Moreover, buildings beloved by the people of a neighborhood, buildings that deserve preservation, or warehouses in good locations, can be considered for the revitalization of urban memories. On the other hand, even among people who want suburban residences, within the diversification of residential types there are many people who desire to commute back and forth to the city.*

*Taking such situations positively, it could be said that schemes for the conversion of existing buildings in order to live in the city center will become an important new role for architects.*

*These residential forms would of course include use as mass housing, but various other usages, such as the long-term stay model or small hotel, can also be considered. Even mass housing is not limited to families and those living on their own; many new models continue to be requested, such as the SOHO model and the room-share. The increase of these models of living places may also be useful for the activation of the city.*

*Application should each choose existing buildings for their entries. In establishing ways to convert these into rich urban residences, concrete proposals are preferable to the presentation of abstract concept and ideas.*

Our built environment, provides a vital link to our past through assisting in celebrating our achievements, and offers a vision for our future.<sup>1</sup> When the original use of a structure changes or is no longer required, as with older buildings from the industrial revolution, architects have the opportunity to change the primary function of the structure, while often retaining some of the existing architectural details.<sup>2</sup> Finding the right building that would suit our desire to rejuvenate local and international designers, brought us to Victoria, British Columbia, where the former Janion Hotel was abandoned for over a century. The Janion hotel was particularly compelling, not only due to its location and structure but its history and meaning it had to the community. We wanted to revive its urban memories, bringing local and international designers together and giving them a place that will inspire creativity and restore their minds and bodies. Preserving the existing century old Janion building and converting its use from a hotel to a rich urban long-term stay model seemed appropriate in keeping with the existing program and function. We wanted to create a place that would inspire design and provide wellness amenities to ultimately re-active the waterfront and the city of Victoria. Our main goals were to preserve this historical landmark were achieved by minimizing the impact we had to the existing structure and adding a contemporary layer that provides value for the future. The Work +Design Well Center considers contemporary adaptive re-use, residential and wellness resort examples – Gladstone Hotel, Waterwall residence and Viligious Mountain Resort.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.deh.gov.au/heritage/publications/adaptive/pubs/adaptive-reuse.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adaptive\\_reuse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adaptive_reuse)

'Adaptive Reuse: Preserving our past, building our future', highlights how our built heritage can be conserved through the successful marriage of existing heritage structures and cutting edge architectural design.<sup>3</sup> Bypassing the wasteful process of demolition and reconstruction alone sells the environmental benefits of adaptive reuse. Environmental benefits, combined with energy savings and the social advantage of recycling a valued heritage place make adaptive reuse of historic buildings an essential component of sustainable development.<sup>4</sup> In keeping with sustainability we also provide features within the building that further benefit the environment such as the water wall, which harvest's and reuses rainwater, along with using local building materials and products.

### **The Gladstone Hotel:**

"We felt there was a need for independent design space in the city to accommodate architects, designers and artists who fall between the cracks of contemporary art and the marketplace."<sup>5</sup>

The Janion is very much a part of the city of Victoria's culture and the waterfront community. We chose to revive it so that people from all over the world could visit and stay for an extended period of time. Uniting people from both outside and inside the community and allowing them to experience what great designers of the area have to offer was a fundamental principle driving the Gladstone project that we chose to adopt for our project. We chose to keep the authentic and convincing quality much like the Gladstone, where the façade was almost completely untouched.

115 yr old Gladstone hotel is Toronto's oldest continuous operation hotel. It is not only a historical building but an iconic architectural artifact. Susanna Robinson commissioned architect George Miller, who also designed many other public buildings in the city, as well as a large number of formerly grand residential buildings in the Parkdale neighborhood. The Hotel was designed in the Richardsonian Romanesque style - in the period, a popular Victorian style for public buildings such as train depots, churches, and libraries. The architectural style of the Gladstone is characterized by the rough-cut stone and brick and by the dramatic arches over the windows and porch entrances. The Hotel tower is also characteristic of the style. The cupola was removed in 1930 due to disrepair. The elevator is one of the last hand-operated elevators in Toronto and will be restored during the initial leg of the current renovations. Zeidler Partnership and Eb Zeidler are the architects for the historic restoration of the hotel.<sup>6</sup>

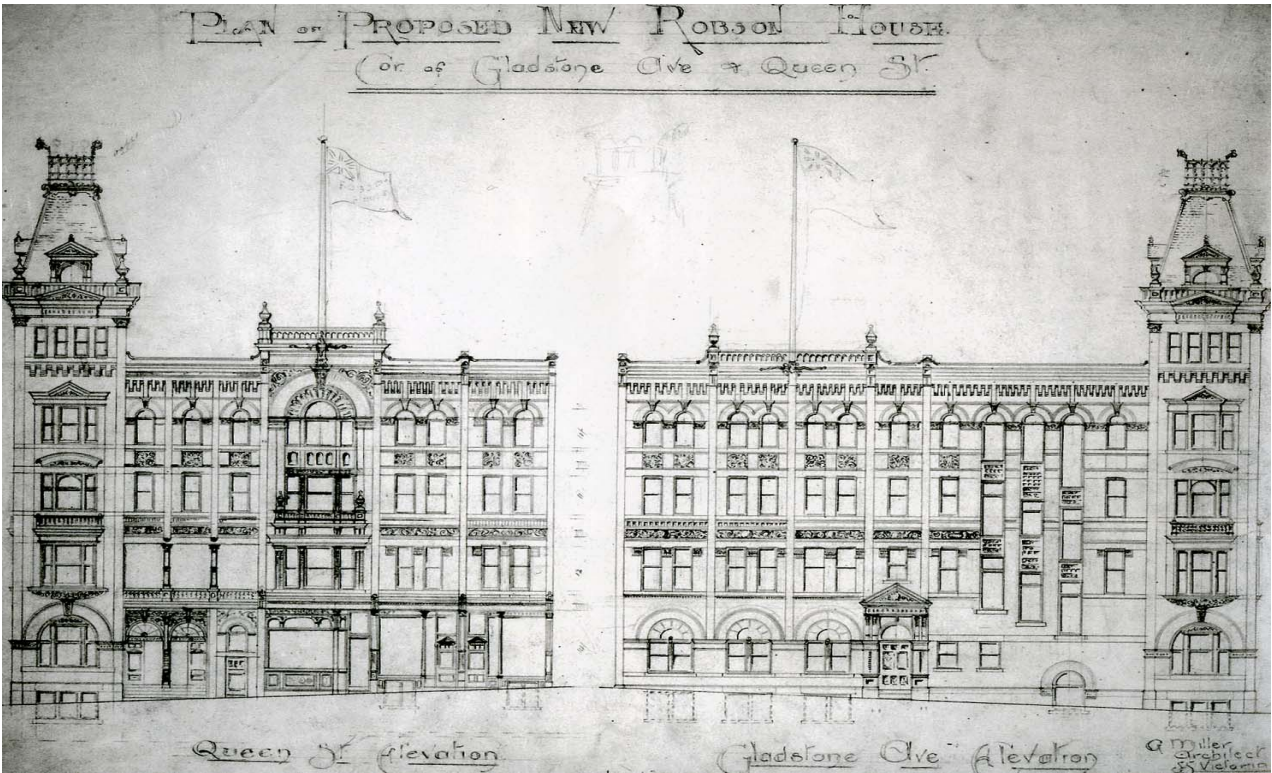
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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.deh.gov.au/heritage/publications/adaptive/pubs/adaptive-reuse.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.deh.gov.au/heritage/publications/adaptive/pubs/adaptive-reuse.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Cameran, Kristi. May 2005. "Up in the Old Hotel: Working with artists and Toronto Developer gives a historic building a new life." Metropolis. p.70

<sup>6</sup> Jen, Leslie. September 2005. "Gladstone Hotel." Canadian Architect. pp.24-29



In keeping with a similar program and clientele as that of the Gladstone Hotel in Toronto where guests have instant access to Victoria's diverse art scene. The Gladstone Hotel is a unique, urban hotel with artist designed hotel rooms and suites, short-term artist studios, exhibition and conference spaces, and versatile event venues. Local Toronto artists have individually designed each of the Gladstone's guest rooms. For our rooms, we chose to incorporate products designed by local architects Stephanie Forsythe and Todd MacAllen of Forsythe + MacAllen Design, such as Molo's softwall system.



Local artist designed rooms

Studio space

Our landmark Historic hotel is located Toronto's Parkdale community. The Gladstone is a place where artists show their work and perform and more importantly a place where artists and regular neighborhood patrons come just to hang out. From cabaret performances to film screenings, art exhibitions to wedding parties the Gladstone host's events for a vast range of artists and community groups. The clientele is truly an eclectic mix of grass roots emerging creative types, prominent elite artists, social innovators, and regular folk.<sup>7</sup>

#### **Waterwall Residence:**

In keeping with Victoria's vernacular, environmentally conscious architecture and considering British Columbia's climate, we felt that employing a water wall would be appropriate in the core spa. A great deal of inspiration for our spa came from this urban residence by Stephen Jolson Architect. He employs the use of a water wall, which he describes, "when you are reading in bed and looking out through the water you could be anywhere. There is no sense of living in the city. It's an oasis."<sup>8</sup> Surrounding the spa with waterfalls on either side gives users the feeling that they are removed from the urban context and in another sublime world. The water walls are similarly composed of 15 mm of glass splayed outwards at an acute angle. When it rains water comes down the wall through perforations in the roof that are controlled by sensors. Rainwater is then harvested and re-circulated to keep a constant flow when the conditions are dry. We felt that this was particularly appropriate given the Victoria climate is quite damp throughout the year. The water wall also creates an interesting condition on the outer layer, where it is completely open to the living spaces of residence. Here patrons can enjoy the visual, sonic and tactile quality of the water running down the glass.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.gladstonehotel.com/history.htm>

<sup>8</sup> Crafti, Stephen. 2005. H2O Architecture. Images Publishing Press: Australia. p.196





### **Vigilius Mountain Resort:**

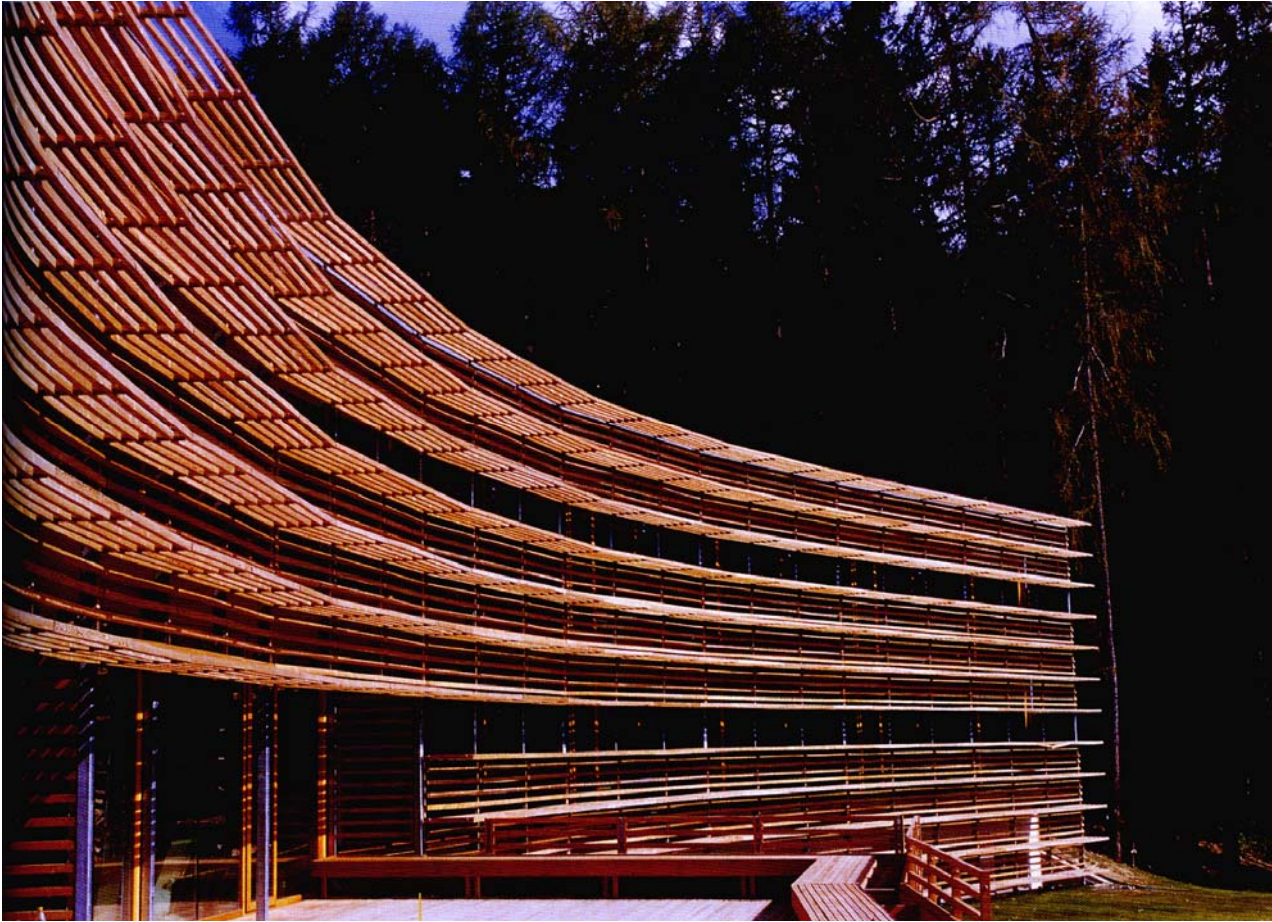
A unique combination of historical architecture, contemporary interiors and spa facilities breeds a new type of spa hotel that has been emerging as an international, a serene solution to the ultra-speed and psychological compression of metropolitan life. This has been described as, the “release from homogeneity of contemporary environments and redress the dominance of automation and a political antidote to the rigors and destructiveness of urbanity.”<sup>9</sup> This holistic philosophy matches the most passionate spiritual spas, one being the Vigilius Mountain Resort in South Tyrol, Austria. There is a mantra of evolving new energy, of understanding humanity through the observation of nature and of uncluttered openness that will lead to insight.<sup>10</sup> We found this particular spa to be quite inspiring due to its wide range of program and architectural style. Its design has an external linearity and an emphasis on glass and simple interiors - library, indoor pool, and bedrooms benefit from an interrupted view of the mountains though huge amounts of glazing, while inside the rooms, the clay partitions is the only internal wall, which provides some privacy in the bathroom. Balance between comfort and contemplation.

Design of the spa is a stress free natural setting that can be reached exclusively by cable car. The spa consist of, nine treatment rooms, the pool, a sauna and meditation room, reflexology, massage, shiseido treatments, manicures, pedicures, facials and solarium. Screens provide blurred vision - a visual and physical barrier, sun and wind barrier leaving behind the outside similar to the water wall that we have employed.

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<sup>9</sup> Watson, Howard. 2005. Hotel Revolution. Wiley Academy: Great Britain p.

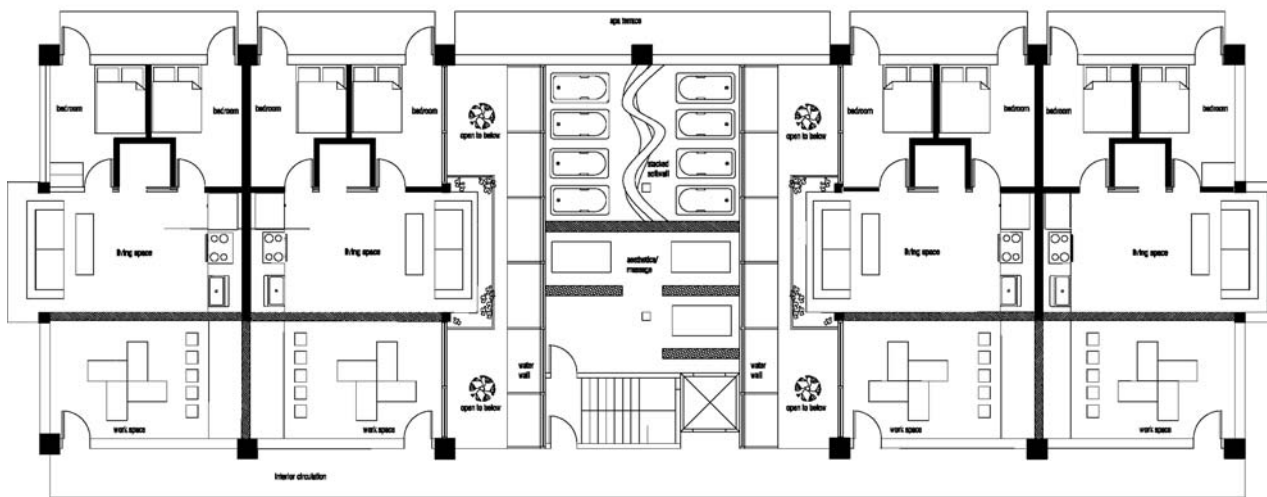
<sup>10</sup> Watson, Howard. 2005. Hotel Revolution. Wiley Academy: Great Britain p.134



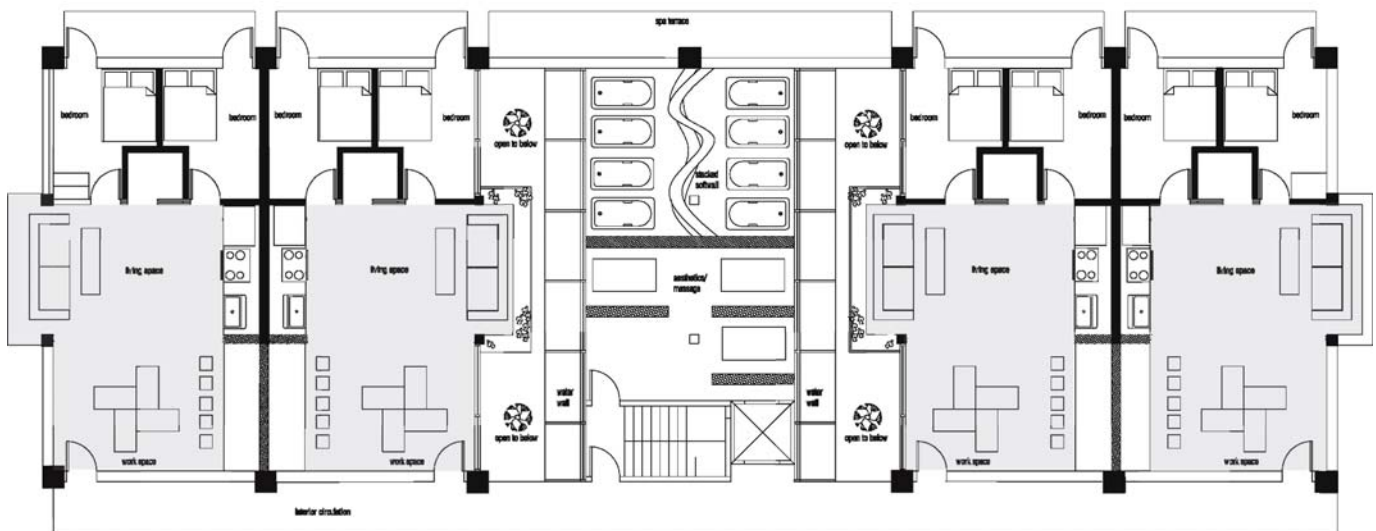
**Molo Softwall:**

The contemporary layer we have added to this building is the spa element, which has been appropriately placed at core of the building, setting the overall tone for the user's experience. We retained the entire original load bearing structure along with the façade. All building materials were local, including the major feature, which was Molo's softwall™ system. We had the desire to create privacy with a lightweight, durable material that could easily manipulated by all and that was not permanently fixed.

We chose to incorporate softwalls™ in many locations throughout the building for quality of light, acoustic quality, temporal nature or the desire for privacy. In each of the individual rooms softwall™ is a major element of our design where they provide temporary division between working and living spaces.

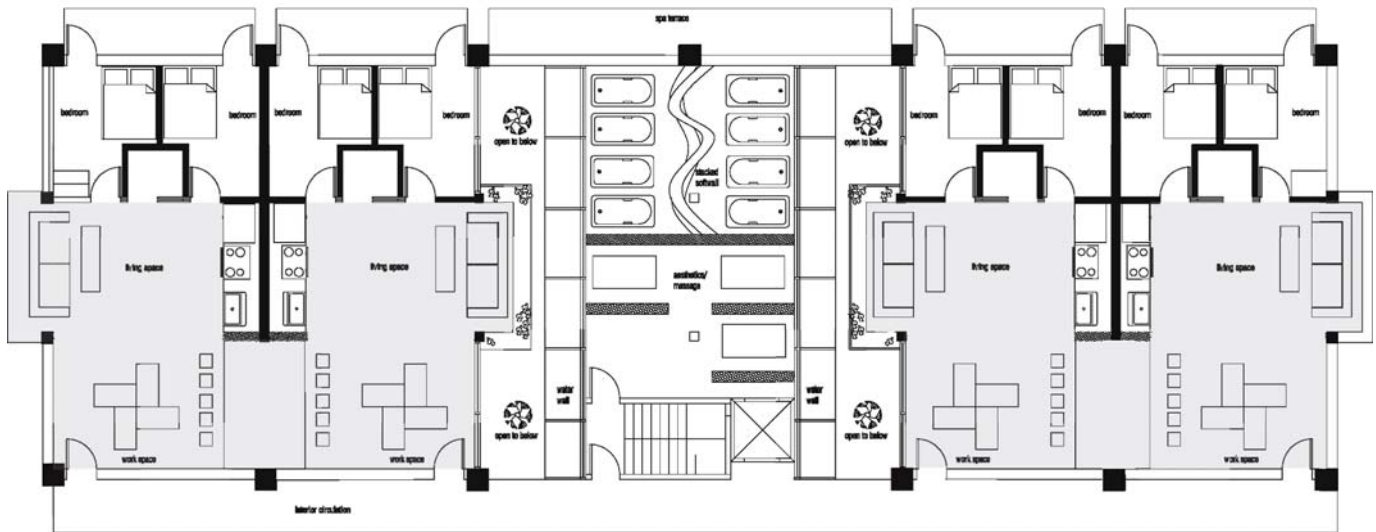


softwall closed



softwall open - configuration 1: living + work space combined





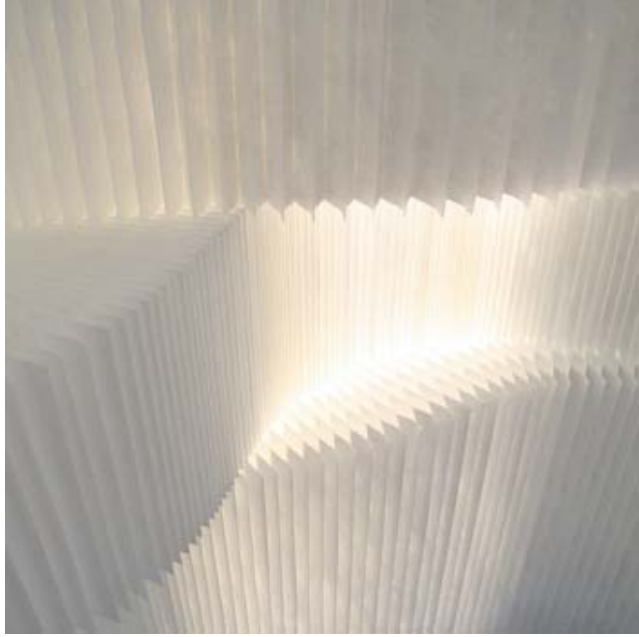
softwall open - configuration 2: living +work and dining area combined

The paper softwall™ is a beautiful, lightweight, freestanding wall that can be arranged into almost any shape, or easily compressed into a compact sheaf and stored away. Softwall™ dampens sound and can both absorb and transmit light. The paper softwall™ is made from 400 layers of honeycombed translucent white, fire-retardant paper, bounded by natural wool felt ends. The thick felt ends fold to create handles when the wall is open, and form a casing when the wall is compressed. Paper softwall™ is modular, as the felt ends have Velcro™ fasteners which can link walls together. The paper softwall™ is delicate, yet its honeycomb design makes it surprisingly resilient to normal handling. It is modularly expandable, folding out from only 3 centimeters to 7.5 meters.<sup>11</sup>

Soft™ is a product line conceived of the desire to dynamically partition open space into more intimate and ephemeral surroundings, in a flexible and temporal way. When light falls onto the softwall™ from windows or light fixtures is absorbed and contained within its layers, giving off an inner luminosity similar to a block of snow or ice. As illustrated above, Softwall™ can be used to make any large open space more intimate or dynamic. The inner honeycomb structure serves to dampen sound. Softwall™ is available in various heights and can be stacked if desired.<sup>12</sup> Appendix 1 provides further information about Molo's softwall™.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.molodesign.com/>

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.velocityartanddesign.com/molo\\_sw78.html](http://www.velocityartanddesign.com/molo_sw78.html)



## Bibliography

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[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adaptive\\_reuse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adaptive_reuse)

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Cameran, Kristi. May 2005. "Up in the Old Hotel: Working with artists and Toronto Developer gives a historic building a new life." Metropolis. Pp.70-72

Crafti, Stephen. 2005. H2O Architecture. Images Publishing Press: Australia.

Jen, Leslie. September 2005. "Gladstone Hotel." Canadian Architect. pp.24-29

Watson, Howard. 2005. Hotel Revolution. Wiley Academy: Great Britain

product specifications  
spring 2006

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## soft

softwall		softwall is a lightweight, freestanding partition made from a flexible honeycomb structure. softwall expands from less than 2"(5cm) to just over 20'(6m) in length and can be used in any curved formation between 8'(2.5m) and 20'(6m).		
product		dimensions	color	product code
textile softwall		<b>6' (1.8m) tall x 12" (30cm) wide</b> <small>shipped in box 36" x 15" x 6" weight: 20 lbs</small>	white	SWT-S6W
paper softwall		<b>4' (1.2m) tall x 12" (30cm) wide</b> <small>shipped in box 24" x 15" x 5.5" weight: 12 lbs</small>	white	SWP-S4W
		<b>6' (1.8m) tall x 12" (30cm) wide</b> <small>shipped in box 36" x 15" x 5.5" weight: 18 lbs</small>	black	SWP-S4B
Chénel paper softwall (not yet available)		<b>6' (1.8m) tall x 12" (30cm) wide</b> <small>shipped in box 36" x 15" x 6" weight: 21 lbs</small>	white	SWCP-S6W
			black	SWCP-S6B
custom height paper softwall		<b>up to 10' (3m) tall x 18" (45cm) wide</b> <small>shipped in box 60" x 20" x 6" weight: 45 lbs for 10' softwall</small>	color	SWCP-S6C
			white	SWP-C1W
			black	SWP-C1B

**textile softwalls/ softblocks** are made from a highly durable non-woven textile material (spun polyethylene fiber sheets) which is tear resistant and water resistant. The material is lightweight, bright white and translucent. textile soft products are easy to handle and maintain, and forgiving of relatively rough handling and demanding applications

**paper softwalls** are made from a fire-retardant tissue paper material - the white version is translucent and black version is opaque. paper softwall is delicate, yet its honeycomb design makes it surprisingly resilient to normal handling. paper softwall should not be allowed to get wet, or be used in a rough environment.

\* All **softwalls** provide acoustic dampening.

## soft

softblocks		softblocks are flexible honeycomb building blocks that can be stretched horizontally from 2"(5cm) up to 12'(4m) long. They can be used alone, or stacked together, to create functional surfaces or partitions of varying heights.		
product		dimensions	color	product code
sets of 3 textile softblocks		1', 2' & 3' tall x 12"(30cm) wide	white	SBT-SETW-12
		1', 2' & 3' tall x 18"(45cm) wide		SBT-SETW-18
individual textile softblocks 12"(30cm) wide		1'(30cm) tall	white	SBT-1W-12
individual textile softblocks 18"(45cm) wide		2'(60cm) tall		SBT-2W-12
		3'(90cm) tall		SBT-3W-12
		4'(120cm) tall		SBT-4W-12
individual textile softblocks 18"(45cm) wide		1'(30cm) tall	white	SBT-1W-18
		2'(60cm) tall		SBT-2W-18
		3'(90cm) tall		SBT-3W-18
individual textile softblocks 36"(90cm) wide		1'(30cm) tall	white	SBT-1W-36
		2'(60cm) tall		SBT-2W-36
	<p>A special vase insert is available for softblocks that allows for fresh flowers to be integrated into the display surfaces.</p>			

**textile softwalls/ softblocks** are made from a highly durable non-woven textile material (spun polyethylene fiber sheets) which is tear resistant and water resistant. The material is lightweight, bright white and translucent. textile soft products are easy to handle and maintain, and forgiving of relatively rough handling and demanding applications

