

DEPARTURES

The Waldorf Astoria New York's Grand Ballroom Returns to its 1930s Splendor—Take an Exclusive Look Inside

Jordi Lippe-McGraw, 3.23.21



Courtesy Waldorf Astoria

The Waldorf Astoria New York closed its doors in 2017 for a complete restoration and although it won't open until 2023, we've been getting peeks of the progress like the interiors of the residences and the art collection. Now, they're exclusively unveiling what Waldorf Astoria New York's Grand Ballroom will look like—and it's an art deco wonder.

The iconic ballroom has hosted some of history's most famous events since 1931: Prince Rainier III of Monaco and Grace Kelly held their engagement party in the space; President John F. Kennedy hosted a birthday gala; and the Viennese Opera Ball and Rock & Roll Hall of Fame induction ceremonies were also held here. While the space has undergone several renovations over the last century, the development team opted to embrace this long history and return the ballroom to its 1931 grandeur.

“Waldorf Astoria New York’s Grand Ballroom is a truly unique place with a profound history and art deco design that is irreplaceable. It has hosted the world, from Queen Elizabeth II to Mick Jagger,” said Frank Mahan, associate director at Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM). “In 1931,

Shultze & Weaver’s intent for the space—a singular space with a luminous ceiling that floats above—couldn’t be fully realized due to contemporary technological limitations. But now, not only are we preserving the space, we are finally able to bring to life the original architects’ vision. We can’t wait to see the next generation of New Yorkers and global celebrations in the reinvigorated Grand Ballroom.”



Courtesy Waldorf Astoria

Wanting to stay true to this vision, the team made decisions like removing the central chandelier. Later, that piece was added to provide supplemental lighting, but the 1931 design called for an eye-popping central ceiling medallion. This will be revealed for the first time in decades. Other details include dramatic crimson curtains draped on the main stage and from the balcony seats and shimmering gold detailing throughout.



Courtesy Waldorf Astoria

Since the Grand Ballroom is a designated New York City interior landmark, the development team worked closely with the Landmarks Preservation Commission to ensure the ballroom space's heritage is preserved for generations to come.

Once opened, the ballroom will be one of the largest in New York City with over 15,000 square feet of space and room for over 1,000 people. The tiered floor design makes the room versatile for all events, including weddings, concerts, and galas. And it will soon be available for advanced bookings before its early 2023 opening.

The hotel is opening a few months later than planned due to COVID-19.

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