

A True Sense of New York

An Interview with Guenter H. Richter, C.H.A., Managing Director, The Setai Fifth Avenue

EDITORS' NOTE Prior to assuming his current post, Guenter Richter spent three years as General Manager of The Regent Hotel Bal Harbour in Florida. For six years before this, he led as Managing Director of The St. Regis Hotel, New York, and before that, as General Manager of the Swissôtel New York, The Drake. From 1986 to 1998, Richter served as Regional Vice President of Operations with Grand Bay Hotels and Resorts and its owner, Carnival Hotels and Casinos. He has also served as Vice



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President of Operations and General Manager for a series of hotels in the Rosewood Hotels & Resorts portfolio. Before that, he served three years as Vice President and General Manager of The St. Regis under Sberaton management. He launched his career at Hilton Hotels Corporation. Richter was born and educated in Germany.

PROPERTY BRIEF Slated to open November 2010 and designed by architects Gwathmey Siegel & Associates, The Setai Fifth Avenue (setaififthavenue.com), a Capella Managed Hotel, soars more than 60 stories above Manhattan's Fifth Avenue. The Setai Fifth Avenue offers 157 guest rooms and suites, and 57 Apartment Suites, including three Penthouses – all of which are among the largest accommodations in the city. There will be an additional collection of condominium residences on the tower's top floors. The hotel will feature a second-floor restaurant, two stylish bars, a full-floor spa and salon, a fitness center, space for executive meetings and social events, and around-the-clock services distinctive to Capella Hotels & Resorts.

The Setai Fifth Avenue is a new property coming to the New York City market. With a number of high-end luxury properties focused on the same market, how challenging will it be to differentiate The Setai Fifth Avenue from its competitors, and how will you define what makes the property unique?

We have an opportunity to bring a true sense of New York to our guests with Capella's signature services, including the attention of personal assistants. A hallmark of The Setai Fifth Avenue is its proximity to many of Manhattan's revered landmarks, neighborhoods, and business corridors, including leading fashion, publishing, financial, and entertainment centers.

With the majority of our rooms at 700 square feet and up, the size of The Setai Fifth Avenue's guest rooms will be a significant draw. With its striking architecture, the hotel's beautiful limestone exterior wraps around expansive, faceted windows that project onto the street and afford fantastic light and views.

The hotel's food and beverage outlets include Ai Fiori, a new Mediterranean-style restaurant by famed chef Michael White – his first in-hotel restaurant – as well as a bar

with its own Fifth Avenue entrance, Bar on Fifth. We also offer an expansive Auriga spa and a Julien Farel Salon that will offer traditional, ultra-luxurious shaves among its many services.

Will you provide an overview of the range of accommodations at the property and the focus that you have placed on your suite offerings?

Understated elegance will define the guest accommodations, from walnut paneling to textiles that evoke the fine weave and neutral tones of a bespoke menswear suit. Low platform upholstered beds by Duxiana will be dressed in Pratesi linens, and expansive, faceted windows will project over the street, affording sweeping views of the city and flooding the rooms in natural light.

Six guest rooms will have stylishly furnished private terraces, and the terraces on the eleventh floor will offer incredible views of the Empire State Building.

The hotel's apartment suites will continue the same design scheme and finishes as the guest rooms, but each will have a separate bedroom, living room, and a well-furnished kitchen with generous cabinetry, a full-sized refrigerator, stove, and other appliances, all by Miele.

The three penthouse apartments, at approximately 1,905 square feet, will each be one-of-a-kind. Finished in rosewood and white marble, and accented with original artwork, they will feature two bedrooms with the option to connect up to two adjoining one-bedroom suites for a total of four bedrooms, and four-and-a-half baths.

How much of a focus will the property place on corporate meetings and social events, and would you highlight those facilities?

The hotel will cater to high-level executive gatherings and exclusive social events with close to 3,000 square feet of dedicated meeting space on the third floor. The banquet and meeting salons

will accommodate up to 300 for a reception and 150 seated, or can be divided into three separate spaces ranging from 513 to 1,064 square feet. A separate 405-square-foot boardroom, with its own foyer, will accommodate 14 guests.

Acoustically engineered for sound insulation, The Setai Fifth Avenue's meeting rooms will be outfitted with the latest audiovisual technology. We plan to host book launch parties, fashion shows, and intimate annual corporate meetings, among others.

Many leading properties today have placed a major emphasis on offering high-end spa/fitness facilities. How much of a focus has this been for you, and would you provide an overview of these facilities?

Capella Hotels & Resorts has developed a very unique brand called Auriga, named after the brightest star in the Capella constellation. The brand is founded on four signature treatments designed to reflect the varying energies of the lunar cycle. Each Auriga spa draws on the unique strengths of its local environment and our offerings are as diverse as our destinations. Auriga borrows from both time-tested ancient practices and the latest contemporary findings. Our treatments are a blend of regional customs, indigenous herbs, and authentic healing practices. New Yorkers will find subtle surprises within Auriga at The Setai Fifth Avenue that have great relevance to the Empire State.

You have a strong ownership group at the property. How critical has the owner relationship been to your success in the development and opening of the property?

Bizzi & Partners Development has been an incredibly supportive ownership team and has worked hand in hand with the Capella management team to open this hotel. Their involvement on critical design and concept decisions has given the hotel staff great confidence in our product.

As you look to the opening of the property, what are the key priorities you are focused on to make sure that you have an impact and build a loyal clientele for The Setai Fifth Avenue?

The biggest priority for a Capella managed or branded hotel is personalized guest experience. That is the core principle on which Horst Schulze founded the brand. It will be key for each personal assistant to display excellence when dealing with guests – going above and beyond the call of duty to make guests feel at home. This way, we'll ensure a loyal clientele. ●