



The Portland Marriott Downtown Waterfront features headboards with integrated custom artwork.

Head Turners

Modern headboards make a bold visual statement in the guestroom

Located on the banks of the Willamette River, the Portland Marriott Downtown Waterfront gives travelers a taste of its surrounding environment in Oregon. The newly renovated guestrooms, which offer views of Mount Hood, feature custom graphic artwork integrated into the headboards that capture the surrounding area's biking influence and logging history—accentuated by LED strip lighting.

"The grain pattern of a cut log slice morphs into a bicycle wheel, providing a unique design element and an area to add a pop of color to the space," said Lisa Haude, lead designer and president of Paradigm Design Group, a hospitality interior design firm based in Houston. "It also created a bold statement piece in the new room where warm walnut wood tones marry with cool and warm gray tones."

Creating a bold visual statement in the guestroom has become the defining characteristic for a number of headboards. Many of the latest designs provide a warm, inviting atmosphere achieved through scale, materials and framing. And, in some cases, they act as a piece of artwork that bridges a connection to the identity of the lodging property.

Most recently, Paradigm Design Group conceived custom headboards for the Hilton Garden Inn Kauai in Hawaii, scheduled to open in March, which offer an artistic interpretation of the property's location. "Strips of Koa veneer in natural/clear-coated finish are displayed in a native tattoo pattern that creates a statement and references the history of the island," said Haude.

Some headboard designs deliver other methods to create a statement in the guestroom. "My favorite

headboard trends make statements in compelling, simple ways," said Jayna Kline, senior interior designer, rowland+broughton, an Aspen, CO-based architecture and design firm. "A printed textile hung behind the bed from ceiling to floor as custom artwork creates a completely unique sense of place. Fabricated similar to drapery, it is quick to install and washable to boot."

Headboards made with the same materials as architectural wall panels spanning the entire bed wall create an intriguing visual scene, Kline noted. "To really define the room, take it a few steps further with an all-encompassing millwork wall that joins nightstands, headboard and lighting together," she said. "For the most memorable experience, design the millwork to continue past the wall, wrapping up and across the horizontal ceiling plane."

Designers can use focused lighting and glowing backlights with the headboards instead of relying on table lamps, Kline recommended. "The trend is heading back to rooms that create respite as the public spaces become more functional," she added.

For maximum visual impact in the guestroom, designers have turned to upholstered headboards with bold fabrics, creating an artful, interactive environment for guests in the space, according to Stan Shockley, CEO of Blue Leaf Hospitality. Additionally, panel headboards with built-in, floating nightstands offer a clean, minimalist presence in the guestroom.

"We are also seeing the use of tropical materials in a clean, contemporary way," said Shockley. "This type of rattan bundling is a technique which has been used in rattan furnishing since the 1950s."

Some of the latest custom headboard designs take into regard the use of space in the guestroom. These include incorporating nightstands and their back panels into the headboard along with the bed base, according to Mikki Isackson, SVP, operations, Bryan Ashley.

"I have seen luggage storage space incorporated into the bed base, as well as LED task lighting to give the room a warm ambience," said Isackson. "More than just a simple, single headboard, the latest custom headboards take into consideration the many needs of today's travelers. They incorporate USB ports and outlets, ambient LED lighting, reading lights and storage space for luggage."

Offering a procurement perspective, Bill Langmade, president of Purchasing Management International, L.P. (PMI), has seen an increase in built-in FF&E products, such as large headboard walls, along with fewer pieces of furniture in the guestroom.

Paradigm Design Group's Haude observed that the hospitality industry's current movement toward a more residential, boutique look in the guestroom has influenced the demand for large-scale headboards.

"As a result, we are seeing the utilization of the headboard as a unique element and statement piece in the room," she said. "One can safely say that size matters. Given the amount of space that the bed and headboard occupy in relation to a typical guestroom, choosing a large headboard that grabs the guest's eye and unifies the design of the room overall is a great way to make the most of your square footage."

(For headboard ideas, see page 14.)