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## High times for Lower East Side

BITE OFF THE BIG APPLE AT NEW YORK'S HIPPEST NEW DOWNTOWN ADDRESS, SAYS JANE MULKERRINS

**M**ANHATTAN'S Lower East Side has a long and colourful history, one that encompasses Bill the Butcher roaming the streets in the era of The Gangs Of New York in the mid-19th century and the mass immigration that followed. Italian, Irish and Jewish families lived together in tiny, cramped apartments as the city boomed in the early 20th century, and the likes of Madonna and the hip art crowd moved in to the area in the 1980s.

Hotelier and restaurateur Sean Macpherson, who owns the Ludlow along with his partners Ira Druker and Richard Born, first visited the area in 1984.

'Along with layers of history, there was a grittiness and nervous energy,' he says. 'You had a sense something could break out any minute, whether it was street art or a riot. I'd come from LA and there was nothing like it there.'

Today, the area is a hipster playground, teeming with bars, restaurants, clubs and art galleries but still retaining the essence of its edgy cool. And, after six years in the making, the new Ludlow Hotel aims to capture all that.

The 184-room hotel (including 20 suites), with its solid brick facade and factory-style windows, is a pastrami sandwich's throw from the famous Katz's Deli. The industrial exterior may not impress everyone but inside there are oak-panelled walls and marble mosaic floors in a light-filled lobby atrium designed to be a very public space.

'We'd like it to function as a living room for the neighbourhood,' says Macpherson. There's also an open-air courtyard out back, a rare bonus for downtown Manhattan.

The Lobby Bar is already gaining a reputation as a destination drinking hole with outrageously good cocktails and Dirty French, the eagerly anticipated restaurant from three of the city's most celebrated chefs, opens this week.

Rooms from £195, ludlowhotel.com



ANNE SCHAEFFER

New York style: Panoramic views from the terrace of one of The Ludlow's rooms (above), The Lobby Bar (below left), inside one of the Skybox Lofts (below)

