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It was called the Wave, but hanging over the entry of this oceanfront Miami hotel was an old Art Deco sign, flickering intermittently to light up the mysterious name Lord Balfour. When it came time to rechristen this tired property, Malcolm Berg, founder and principal of Coral Gables, Florida-based EoA, looked to the enigmatic lord for inspiration. Eventually it became the hotel's new name.

"A little research unearthed a gentleman of remarkable depth and reach, not shy to speak his mind and to do so with progressive wit. It was important to us, however, to ensure that the property not become a museum to Lord Balfour, but rather a tastefully cheeky homage to a great man. We wanted it to feel lordly but fun, elegant but unpretentious," Berg says.

Delving into Lord Balfour's past, Berg and his team imagined a modern-day version of the charismatic, unconventional

British statesman. Historic elements were maintained, but layered with a "gritty charm" that meshes with South Beach's sensuous personality. In this evocative drama, Berg and his team made the lord's mistress a centerpiece. "She's the symbol of internal conflict—of public versus private, propriety versus indecency, of repression versus uncompromised expression," he notes.

Because Lord Balfour was a prominent writer, the lobby has a decidedly literary air. "Since the front desk became the bar, we felt the need to draw guests' attention to the new reception desk at the end of the main room. To that end we created a processional ceiling feature, which emulates an unfolding script, unraveling in accordion-like baffles, each backlit metal panel hovering overhead and etched with his writings," Berg explains. These tidbits of text include, "A good speech, like a woman's skirt, should be long enough





3. In the lobby, accordion-like baffles of backlit metal etched with Lord Balfour's sayings cloak the ceiling.

4. Guests can find soap in the butler's hands playfully protruding from the shower.

5. The airy Lord Balfour suite, complete with a bamboo floor, leather couch, and provocative artwork.

6. Dining takes place in the company of a steel bustier photograph.



to cover the subject and short enough to create interest." Richly hued and textured materials play an integral part of Berg's design narrative. A carpet runner, for example, bears images of colorful flowers, "patterns directly extracted" from the mistress' naked shoulder, while the backbar is cloaked in fabric reminiscent of a lord's coat.

Strewn throughout the property is artwork, riddled with saucy references to class and propriety. Consider the oversized, peekaboo images of Lord Balfour's mistress taunting in guestrooms, or provocative nods to wire undergarments and forged steel bustiers. To exemplify vanity, a butler's hands holding antique silver mirrors pop up in the bar and reappear in the showers, protruding from the wall with raised palms holding soap.

Capturing Lord Balfour's complexity and self-indulgence—"understanding the tension between public and private persona, abiding to social formality while openly flaunting a rebellious defiance to social norm"—says Berg, proved bigger than any construction challenge. **hd**

edgeofarchitecture.com; lordbalfourmiami.com

Lord Balfour Miami

Owner

Cometsa, a joint venture between Green Comet II and Etsa

Management Company

Trust Hospitality

Architecture and Interior Design Firm

EoA, Coral Gables, Florida

Architecture Project Team

Malcolm Berg and Viviane Savornin

Interior Design Project Team

Malcolm Berg and Leslie Schultz

Purchasing Firm

Merchandising Associates

Upholstery

Green Hides, Valley Forge Fabrics, Magilite, Brentano, and Casamance

GUESTROOM

Hide Chair

Lee Industries

Wallcovering

Expose Yourself

Headboard and Bench

F&R Interiors

Side Table

Phillips Collection

Lighting

HB Architectural Lighting

Mirror

Foundation Art

Drapes

Bramson House

Desk

DBC Millwork

Chair

Charter Furniture

Pillow Fabrication

American Upholstery

LOBBY

Carpet

Crossley Axminster Custom Carpets

Sofa

LCE Interiors

Chairs

Brand Standards Furnishings

Dining Chairs and Stools

Beaufurn

Hand Sculptures

Harry Allen

Silver Mirrors

Sourced by Merchandising Associates

Marble Table

Global Views

Ceiling Sculpture

C&R Metals