

A photograph of a modern, two-story house built on a hillside. The house features dark, vertical wood cladding and large glass windows. It is partially elevated above a stone wall made of rough-hewn stones. The foreground is covered in green grass, and the background shows a clear blue sky.

2025 Design Awards



A Celebration of the City

Hotel Perle offers large groups a place to revel in the many delights of New Orleans

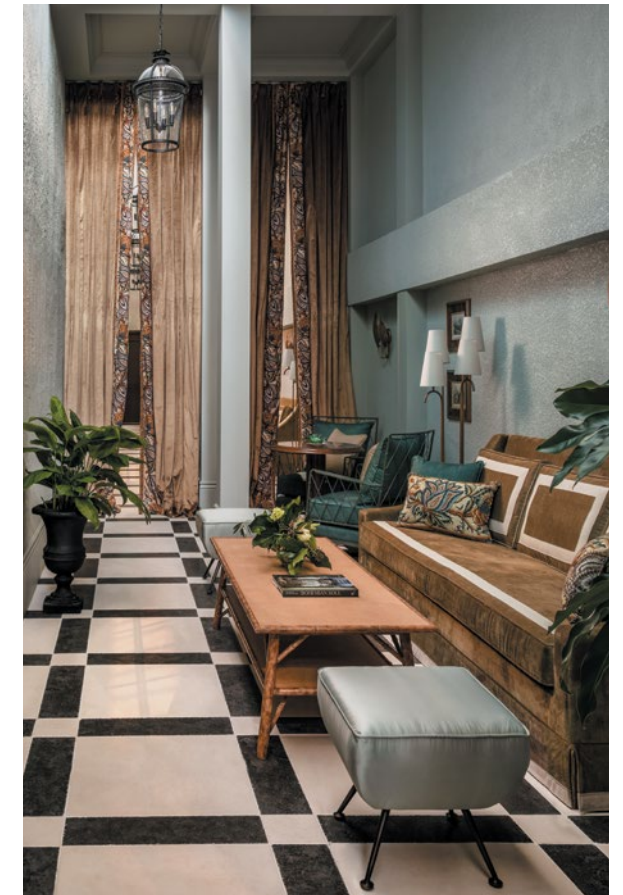
By **LINDSEY SHOOK** Photography by **JACQUELINE MARQUE**

ANYONE WITH a big family or gaggle of friends that enjoys traveling together knows that it can be difficult finding the perfect hotel that agrees with everyone's preferences or budget, and Airbnb doesn't always feel luxurious. Enter Hotel Perle, an innovative and indulgent new concept that opened in the Big Easy—a destination that is known for entertaining large groups.

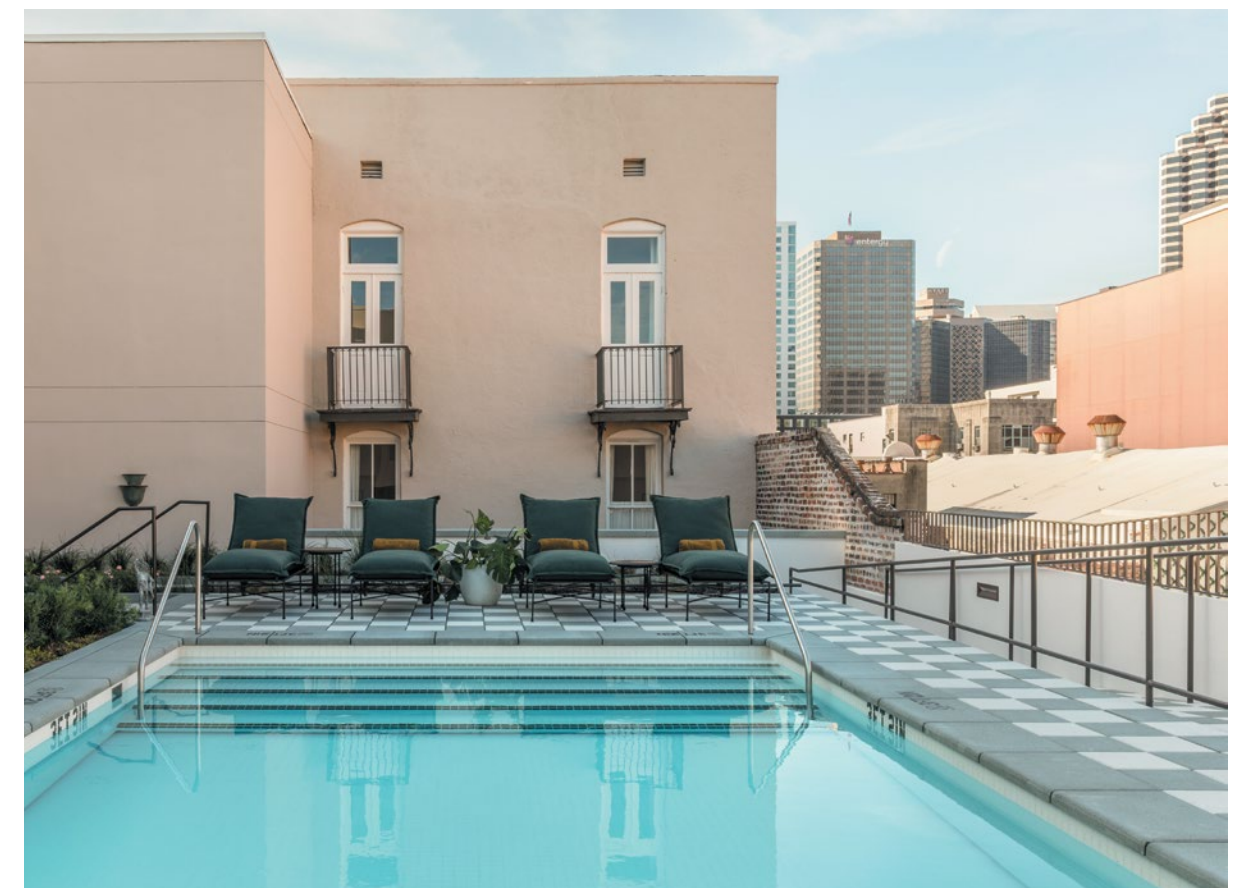
The concept of group stay in a boutique environment was at the heart of Urban Properties' mission when purchasing the property on the iconic St. Charles Avenue. Originally built in 1916 as the Alberta Hotel, the building—like so many others—has lived several lives. Those include a decrepit descent in 1929 to an

hourly rental motel, then a transition in 1985 to an office building, which led it to the hands of Urban Properties' partners, who carefully restored the building to a group-stay hotel that now offers 10 two- to seven-bedroom suites. They engaged Rome Office architecture and NYC-based Ward + Gray to aid in the transformation. "The developer found us through our hospitality work and approached us with their concept," says Staver Gray, cofounder of Ward + Gray. "We thought the concept was really smart and filled a gap in the market and we also loved that they were looking for a bespoke New Orleans-inspired design narrative instead of something too prescriptive."

ABOVE: A custom sofa covered in blue velvet sits below art on the back wall that was commissioned from Atlanta-based artist Rebecca Jack. All glass lighting was custom designed by Ward + Gray based on French antique fixtures and fabricated in Italy. The amorphously shaped rug is 100 percent hand-knotted wool with a distressed effect.



CLOCKWISE: The full kitchen offers the perfect place for guests to entertain big groups; custom limestone and Belgian Bluestone floor tile by Ward + Gray complement the drapery, sofa pillows, art and antiques that were sourced locally at an antique store on Magazine Street; Summer Classics lounge chairs with custom cushions covered in Sunbrella Heritage Alpine surround the pool. The pavers are by Hanover in their Tudor finish.



STAYCATION



ABOVE: In a guest suite, a tall vintage mirror that was sourced locally at an antique store on Magazine Street in New Orleans complements custom furniture and a signature decorative ceiling plate in burnished brass paired with a simple ivory silk on the shade.

BELOW: In the bunk room, a petite vintage side chair sits below vintage art sourced from an antique dealer in France via Etsy. The ceiling light, carpet, and rattan armoire are also a custom design by Ward + Gray.



Lucky for them, inspiration and style abound in every corner of that city. The initial reaction was to the rainbow palette of homes that line the cobblestone streets, which would be a key driver in the overall direction.

“We would go on long walks every time we were in town and photograph these beautiful historic homes,” recalls Gray’s partner Christie Ward. “We were particularly inspired by the Creole cottages, a succession of pastel-colored houses that were our inspiration for the guestrooms, each of which are enveloped in a different pastel tone. The jewel tones found in the living rooms and public spaces of the hotel are also an homage to the city’s opulent history as a center of trade in the 18th and 19th centuries.”

The furniture and interior details also embrace an eclectic blend of eras and styles. Eighty percent of the furnishings are custom and the other 20 percent are vintage and were mostly sourced locally in New Orleans. “For bespoke pieces, we looked to incorporate design elements from French antiques including antique mirrors, wrought iron and intricately carved pieces inspired by Louis XV and Louis XVI-era antiques,” says Gray. “We then mixed these statelier pieces with Creole and Caribbean materials like rattan and wicker.” The standout moment in each room is a custom ceiling mural featuring a séance-like dance, which incorporates both spiritual and ritualistic objects inspired by voodoo art that are drawn in a fluid French Expressionist style. Ward recalls, “The idea we wanted to celebrate is that New Orleans isn’t a singular design movement—it’s a blend of many ideas and aesthetics, which results in a collected, colorful design language.”

Known for its flourishing art scene, the team sourced artwork that reflects the local cultural diversity. They looked to fine artist Rebecca Jack to create bold pieces that echo the feel of New Orleans’ energy. “We hope that guests visiting Hotel Perle will feel an authentic connection to the city of New Orleans and will fall in love with it as we have over the course of the project,” Ward proclaims. “Our aim always is for the design to harmonize with the environment to impart a feeling rather than a specific aesthetic.”