

FLORIDA DESIGN'S

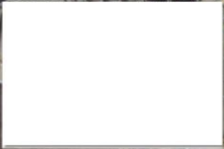
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ABOVE: Floor-to-ceiling windows allow light to flow into The Betsy hotel's bright and airy lobby, where tropical colonial decor prevails, echoing the regal estate-like look of the exterior, above right. Dark wood, whirling fans, plantation-style shutters, potted plants, and comfortable yet stylish furnishings add an Old World feel to the space.



THE BETSY SOUTH BEACH

Distinguishing itself from the bold, geometric lines of its Art Deco neighbors, this Colonial-style boutique hotel is South Beach refined.

TEXT BY KELLIE GREEN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MORIS MORENO, MIAMI, FL

When one thinks of Miami Beach, the geometric patterns and curved, clean lines of the Art Deco movement come to mind. But situated amidst its mid-century counterparts located on North Ocean Drive, one staple of Miami Beach stands as the lone southern belle — The Betsy hotel — with its classic colonial architecture of towering columns, expansive front porch and signature shuttered windows. Designed and created by L. Murray Dixon, who built most of Miami's famous Art Deco buildings as well, the property originally opened in 1942 as the historic Betsy Ross Hotel. It became The Betsy in the spring of 2009 after a complete renovation by award-winning Miami architectural firm Beilinson-Gomez, making this boutique hotel a fresh interpretation of Miami's past.

From the Florida-Georgian architecture of the exterior to the tropical elegance of the interior, The Betsy is a benchmark for those seeking comfortable luxury in South Beach. This boutique hotel features a casual beach ambiance designed by Diamante Pedersoli and Carmelina Santoro, who brought a unique vision with clean lines, rich textures and a relaxed sophistication using a bright, breezy palette of cool white mixed with colorful accents. "Our goal was to make The Betsy completely comfortable yet create an undeniable mark which would make it stand out from other hotels in Miami," Pedersoli says.

continued on 46



BLT Steak, the hotel's signature restaurant, combines the traditional elements of a cozy French bistro with a modern style. Guests can enjoy a meal inside or al fresco on the restaurant's 80-seat patio on Ocean Drive.

THE BETSY SOUTH BEACH

continued from 45

The exterior's colonial design continues inside with a blend of dark woods, whirling fans, coffered ceilings and plantation-style shutters that act as dividing walls and separate the lobby and guest reception from BLT Steak, the hotel's signature restaurant. Comfortable yet stylish seating arrangements sit over the historical terrazzo flooring, accented with natural fiber area rugs. Antique world globes, zebra-framed mirrors, safari pictures and potted plants complete the Old World theme.

The Betsy features 63 rooms and suites, where each and every room combines the technology of today with the seamless grace and architecture of yesteryear. The result is a contemporary yet tropical design that wraps each guest in exquisite detail. Every room features dark-black walnut hardwood floors; white lacquered dressers, cabinetry and desks; plantation-style shuttered windows; stately four-poster beds; and richly textured linen draperies and pillow shams that are bordered in matching color. Chairs of various fabrics and designs further distinguish the color accents, while raffia-covered ceilings, furnishings and headboards lend unique texture. "Four different color schemes are used to define the clean, white rooms: fields of lavender in Provence, sunbathed Tuscan ochre, vibrant coral of the sea, and fresh Spring green," Santoro says. "These inspirations came from the brilliant colors found in nature."

continued on 48

THE BETSY SOUTH BEACH

continued from 46



Every room features dark walnut hardwood floors, white lacquered furnishings and stately four-poster beds. Linen draperies and pillow shams are bordered in matching color, here and below, while black-and-white architectural portraits of seaside areas by Richard Bluestein adorn the walls.

Offering luxury amenities and the latest technology, each room features Frette linens, plush robes and slippers, and fresh orchids. High-tech amenities include high-speed Internet, an iPod docking station, LG plasma TVs and a DVD/CD player. Luxurious baths wrapped in marble continue the modernity with spacious walk-in showers and bespoke design vanities. Mirrors incorporate high-definition LCD TVs and simulate natural light. Malin+Goetz luxury apothecary products boast modern hydration technologies and natural botanical extracts.

BLT Steak, which stands for Bistro Laurent Tourondel, was designed by Michael Bagley and mixes the traditional elements of a cozy French bistro with a stylish, urbane setting. In addition to prime steaks and seasonal blackboard specials, this classic steakhouse also offers fresh fish, generous side dishes, an extensive wine list and must-have desserts that provide the perfect finish.

From the Zen-like retreat of the pool area to the rooftop solarium elevated three stories above Ocean Drive, guests of The Betsy can relax in luxurious style. For a trip back in time with all of the amenities of today, call The Betsy at 305/531-6100. **M**

