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GLOBAL INFLUENCE



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More than ever, travelers today are looking for authentic experiences, and as such, are seeking out hotel properties with a strong sense of place where they can enjoy the local flavor. Those with wanderlust for all that the Mediterranean has to offer will find that and more at the new Kempinski Beirut, located in the heart of the Lebanese capital. The mesmerizing waterfront resort, designed by hospitality interior design firm Hirsch Bedner Associates (HBA), features 153 modern, warmly decorated guest rooms, public and event spaces, and a collection of locally produced art that is both forward-thinking and rooted in the country's heritage.

"When we began the project, we took inspiration from natural elements such as the cedar tree forest, the endless sunshine and blues of the Mediterranean Sea, as well as places of cultural significance, like Mount Lebanon and the Byblos ruins," said lead HBA designer and partner David T'Kint. "Various aspects of the Lebanese culture are reinterpreted through the design to create a continuous thread throughout the property."

Beige flooring at the hotel's entrance has been cut to include a Rub el Hizb pattern, the eight-pointed stars derived from the traditional Muslim symbol. From the top of the nearly 33-foot-high ceiling, a shimmering water wall flows, capturing the essence of ancient ruins and symbolizing the mountains and the water that flows through them.

The walls on the right side of the lobby are fully clad with gray wood celebrating the region's majestic cedar tree forest. Wood planks of various widths capture the texture and natural form of the celebratory tree in Lebanese history, and intricate arabesque motifs are carefully etched into several wood planks adorning the walls.

The lobby bar is wrapped in an intricate, Mashrabiya-inspired screen, modernizing a traditional Arabic architectural element. Surrounding the bar is a casual area with small seating arrangements accented by scattered rugs in warm teals and browns, also reminiscent of the cedar tree and Lebanese sky.

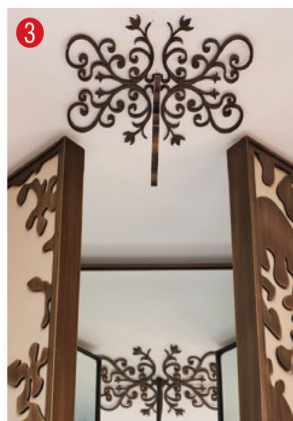
Guest rooms and suites are decorated with a combination of strong lines and geometric patterns, with architectural lighting highlighting the feature wall above the headboard—a direct reinterpretation of the cedar tree flower. Furniture handles are derived from the seed of the cedar tree, and are a continuous element throughout each room.

The hotel also features an original, contemporary art collection by Lebanese artists living in the country or abroad, creating an emotional link between the interiors, the location, and the culture. A 23-foot-tall chandelier constructed of clear and amber-toned glass

The new Kempinski Beirut resort pays homage to local art and culture while defining the future of luxury in the Mediterranean.



ARTFUL



1. A 23-foot-tall chandelier constructed of clear and amber-toned glass spheres reminiscent of the Lebanese Diaspora hangs in the lobby. **2.** A nearly 33-foot shimmering water wall is inspired by the Lebanese landscape and ancient ruins. **3.** Intricate arabesque motifs are carefully etched into several wood planks adorning the vast walls. **4.** The ceiling in the bar and lounge features insets of oval mirrors creating a sense of lightness.



5. Carefully carved screens between seating areas create semi-private retreats and pay homage to traditional practice. 6. Dozens of figures perched on the guard rails of the lobby and guest room corridors reinterpret the Lebanese diaspora. 7. Area rugs in arabesque patterns and bright tones reflect the sun and sea. 8. Lebanese artist Doris Bitar created the backlit, built-in feature piece behind the concierge. 9. The design team took inspiration from natural elements such as the cedar tree forest, the endless sunshine, and blues of the Mediterranean Sea. 10. An oversized, perforated metal light bulb was sourced by Kafka Goes Pink, a Lebanese supplier of unique handmade crafts.

spheres reminiscent of the Lebanese Diaspora hangs in the lobby, reflecting the movement of people in and out of Lebanon over the years. The interior façade features dozens of figures perched on the guard rails supporting this same concept. The soft edges on which they sit have a profile inspired by the architectural detailing of the Byblos ruins.

interiors+sources recently caught up with T’Kint to find out more about this new resort and what role art and culture played in its thoughtful design.

interiors+sources: How did the project team interpret and integrate Lebanese culture throughout the interiors?

DAVID T’KINT: We looked at many aspects of the Lebanese culture and worked on finding ways to express these in a way which is unexpected, not obvious, and not found in other properties. There are many examples of this work throughout the hotel, one of them being the cedar tree—the national symbol of Lebanon—which is also in the center of the country’s flag. The forest is interpreted through a wooden feature wall of gray tones and random widths. The bark is also used as an accent in some pieces of furniture. The seed is the inspiration for custom-designed handles as well as the signage.

i+s: How did the artwork contribute to the project’s success?

DT: Artwork is a key component of the interiors and is an integral part of the layering and detailing. There would be no soul without a curated artwork collection which tells the same story as the interiors narrative, albeit in a less “designed” approach.

i+s: How many pieces were commissioned in total?

DT: Not that many, as we worked mainly on sourcing existing original pieces from artists. A big commission was the work done by Baal Creations. [Editor’s note: HBA worked with Gilbert Debs from Baal Creations for all of the figures installed throughout the lobby and all guest room corridors, which reinterpret the Lebanese diaspora.]

i+s: How do these pieces of art fit into the broader design narrative of the hotel?

DT: All the pieces from this curated collection are by artists living in Lebanon or Lebanese artists living abroad, in line with the design narrative to pay homage to the country’s culture and heritage. Some of them are directly related to some specific elements of the interiors; however, some of them are not at all related as we believe art should remain less controlled than design. **i+s**