

DISPATCHES



Sara Ruffin Costello, with design assistants Laine Thomas (right) and Maggie Boggs, in the former church she converted into an event space.

New Orleans Renaissance Who says modern minimalism is all the rage? These designers and architects are capitalizing on the city's more-is-more aesthetic. *by Lindsay Talbot. Photographs by Paul Costello*

DESIGN GETAWAY



THE LAZY LOUISIANA sun is casting lattices of light through streets lined with pastel Creole cottages and camelback shotgun houses in the Faubourg Marigny, the creative residential enclave just northeast of the French Quarter. When I pull up to a peach-and-mint gingerbread house that has CONVENT stenciled on the door, I realize I've arrived at the Hotel Peter and Paul, which includes an 1860s church designed by noted New Orleans architect Henry Howard, a red-brick rectory, and an old schoolhouse. It spans the entire block. The complex sat abandoned for 13 years until the Brooklyn firm ASH NYC came upon it in 2014. "When we first saw it, there were boards still nailed to windows, paint was alligatoring up the walls, and graffiti was scrawled all over the exteriors," says design director Will Cooper.

The transformation took five years: "I started my research by studying Creole trade routes that came from Cuba and North Africa up to the Mississippi," he says. From there he looked to Europe for inspiration—from the Alhambra in Spain and Cy Twombly's palazzo in Rome to late-18th-century Gustavian design. Now the hotel's 71 guest rooms are appointed with Madeleine Castaing-esque canopied beds, gingham-covered settees, and arches and tiles that bring to mind Marrakech. Meanwhile, inside the

Above: An interior in the French Quarter decorated by Brockschmidt & Coleman. The furniture, mostly French antiques, was purchased in local shops. Below: Architect Lee Ledbetter in the courtyard of his Uptown house.

Rectory is a pair of parlors with Italianate fireplaces and windows draped in swaths of gold linen and orange-vine florals—as well as a sunroom reminiscent of Monet's dining room in Giverny. "I think of this hotel as a love letter to New Orleans," Cooper adds wistfully. "As with our other two hotels—the Dean in Providence and the Siren in Detroit—our mission is to do something for the community, by creating these little cultural hubs, high-design destinations, and beacons of hope."

The Hotel Peter and Paul's old-world style—a refreshing contrast to the mid-century modern and Scandinavian minimalism craze—is indicative of the larger design renaissance happening throughout the city. New Orleanians are known for being as colorful and distinctive as their city—and there's a new group of hoteliers, shopkeepers, interior decorators, and architects celebrating this tradition. Trading minimalism for maximalism, they're leaning in to the city's



DEPARTURES

73

DEPARTURES

74