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W Hotels: Clodagh interview

TRAVEL

People have more sex in hotel rooms than anywhere else, posits Manhattan interior designer Clodagh, so it makes sense to design with sex in mind. For one of her latest projects, the W Fort Lauderdale, she positioned the beds for a positive feng shui effect and added a strip of light nearby for subtle night-time illumination. The strip is gelled for a soft, flattering glow so that, as she quips, 'everyone can look absolutely fantastic even if they don't have a great tan.'

INFORMATION

Website
<http://www.starwoodhotels.com/whotels/index.html>

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Her design brief was simple. W wanted an 'urban resort', a luxury hotel which epitomised the designer brand but spoke to the stunning beachside location. For Clodagh that meant comfort, style, and

fun. 'I think life should be a joy,' she says, 'and when you travel you want to have fun.'

As a jury member of Material ConneXion, a resource centre for new and advanced materials, Clodagh was eager to incorporate some of the latest offerings into the Fort Lauderdale project – things like foam aluminums, unique microfibres, resins, and concrete embedded with lenticular mirrors.

She also created over 200 custom pieces of furniture for the hotel suites and condos including a 15ft sofa-bench in the lobby using reclaimed wooden beams from an old factory building she found in Brooklyn, along with the interiors for the three Randy Gerber bars downstairs. Clodagh is originally from Ireland. 'I know about bars,' she says.

Concrete features often – warmer than stone but with a 'visual weight' that tells people to ground themselves. 'And it dings well,' she says, which is important for guests to properly relax. 'I'm all about easy living, and even though we designed an incredible corporate floor with spectacular meeting rooms, I wanted people to get the feeling that it's easy, easy living. I'm a total comfort freak.'

Design touches range from the elaborate – a grand central staircase that steps up through the centre of the pool, and a 27-foot falling water feature at the hotel entrance – to the subtle, like the custom-made photographic paper covering the hallway ceilings with pictures of happy swimmers.

'Mies [van der Rohe] said that God is in the detail,' she says. 'That's true, but in a hotel context, God is really in the wows. I want people to go into my design and remember something truly special.'

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