

hospitalitydesign

bask in luxury

restraint vs. decadence

beauty on the Nile

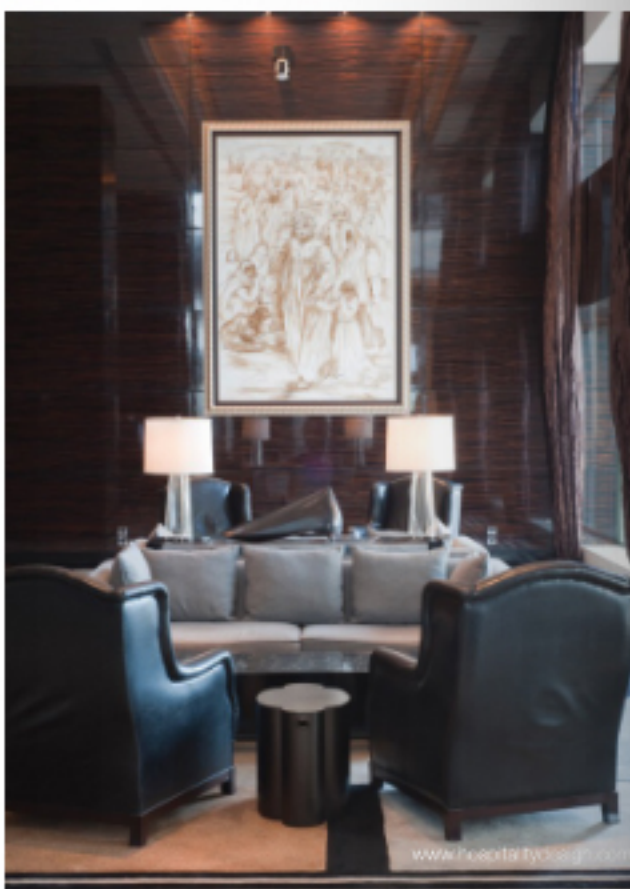
A contemporary take on
Egyptian history in Cairo

Before its spate of current unrest, Cairo was experiencing an economic, touristic, and hotel boom. Indeed, on both sides of the Nile, some half-dozen 5-Star hotels have opened over the past five years. One of the newest is also one of the largest—the 552-room Fairmont Nile City.

Located on Cairo's famous Corniche el Nil street on the city (rather than Pyramid) side of the Nile, the Fairmont was almost a decade in the making for the designers at HBA's London office. Totally new build—and attached to a large-scale office and shopping component—the hotel takes its inspiration not from ancient Egypt, but from the classic Art Deco aesthetic of Egypt's late Colonial era in the 1920s and '30s.

"We looked at the history of Egypt and liked the Art Deco direction," explains lead designer and project manager Kirsten Kutner. "The idea was to take out the cliché-like typical 'Egyptian' motifs and replace them with something more contemporary, more cosmopolitan."

Kutner's vision had to be executed amid the very real challenges of working in Egypt. Along with the typical hold ups and delays, sky-high Egyptian import duties meant most of the materials had to be local. What Kutner found in the country was both surprising and inspiring. A native brown limestone called Miele Brown was sourced from domestic quarries and used as a key motif of the hotel's predominantly masculine aesthetic—seen in much of the flooring and accented by an imported polished brown granite. "The Egyptians really have beautiful stone that can be milled to a quality that easily matches foreign imports," Kutner says. "So the hotel was really a labor of love for the builders."



From top: The Gold Lounge's library at the Fairmont Nile City; a dramatic piece of art is the focal point of the Naga Grill dining room. Opposite page, from top: Three bronze "worker" sculptures stand in the reception area; the city Oryx Lounge.



Leather as much as stone continues that masculine aesthetic in the guestrooms, most dramatically via black leather floor-to-ceiling headboards. They're accented by camel carpets and gold shagreen walls along with chrome and glass lamps. Kutner's team also developed a more "feminine" design scheme for a second series of rooms, here anchored around camel and teal. Here, too, a floor-to-ceiling leather headboard centers the room, this time in cream with a Deco-styled mirror in the middle.

Beyond the guestrooms, the public spaces are large-scale and reflect Cairo's increasing sophistication. The ballroom, for instance, continues the Deco theme with metallic leather wall panels and luxe velvet drapes. The reception area holds a trio of massive "worker" sculptures, rendered in bronze by local artists and sourced from a local gallery. And looming over it all is a three-story water sculpture developed by English sculptor William Pye. For Kutner, however, her favorite space is actually one of the most intimate: the bijoux mezzanine-level Onyx champagne bar with nine-foot windows and cream-colored chairs in a predominantly ebony-hued room. www.hbdadesign.com; www.fairmont.com



Above: Even the headboard in the Nile Suite bedroom gives guests a glimpse of the Nile. Opposite page, clockwise from top left: A staircase leads to the second floor of the Gold Lounge; river-side seating in the lobby lounge; cream furnishings and wood floors and walls make up the Gold Lounge; and communal dining and the main dining room of Saigon Bleu.

Fairmont Nile City
Cairo

Owner and Purchasing Firm Nile City for Tourism and Hotels

Architectural Firm AAU, Brussels

Interior Design Firm HBA London

Interior Design Project Team Inge Meese,

principal; Kirsten Norman (formerly

Kutner), lead designer and project

manager; and Danzantina

Tsoutsouka, senior designer

Contractor JV Besta Orascom

Lighting Consultant MBLD

Engineering ANU, Dar Al Handasa,

Shaker Consultancy Group, and Orascom

Engineering

Kitchen BASCO

Fairmont Gold Lounge Stairs

Wallcovering Maya Romanoff

Gold Lounge Library Artwork Zamaiek

Art Gallery

Custom Bronze Sheers Mobilia Fontain

Lobby Atrium

Water Feature William Pye

Lobby

Custom Bronze Sheer Mobilia Fontain

Feature Artwork and Monumental

Bronze Sculptures Zamaiek Art Gallery

Wallcovering Behind Reception Desk

Maya Romanoff

Mapa Grill Restaurant

Lighting Siraj Lighting

Feature Artwork Zamaiek Art Gallery

Drapery Rubell

Mile Suite Bedroom

Slack and Tub Kohler Co.

Fixtures Dornbracht

Artwork Zamaiek Art Gallery

Onyx Lounge

Custom Bronze Sheer Mobilia Fontain

Artwork Zamaiek Art Gallery

Rooftop Pool

Accent Fabric Perennia's

Pool Tiles Walker Zanger

Saigon Bleu Restaurant

Pillow Fabric Jim Thompson

Seat Cushion Fabric Salsco Hestlein

Rugs Oriental Weavers

Lighting Siraj Lighting