



Pitch black floors and glossy navy blue walls help set Vol. 39, the hotel's visually arresting bar, apart from the rest of the lobby.

HOTEL DESIGN

THE GRAY HOTEL BY BELECO



Rows of custom sconces were designed by Beleco to spotlight the beauty of the lobby's historic ceiling.

Some partnerships result in pure design alchemy. The Gray Hotel in Chicago is a combination of the Kimpton hotel and restaurant brand's playful ethos and the mischievous spirit of Los Angeles interior design studio Beleco, who together transformed a former Beaux Arts office tower into an inviting hotel.

The studio, whose name means "beautiful" in Esperanto, a language invented in the late 1800s with the aim of creating a more harmonious world, animates that philosophy in its design. The space is imbued with an irresistible allure while deftly maneuvering around the constraints of working in a landmark building.

Inspired by the structure's location in the midst of the Windy City's financial district, Christian Schnyder and his team took their cues from the tweeds,



TOP: Fashioned from doilies, the two-foot diameter globes, which hang on the window side of the guest rooms, can be seen from the street, providing a tease of "moonglow" to passersby. **BELOW:** Feminine and masculine elements are interwoven throughout the rooms.

wools and pinstripes of men's suiting. Whimsical and unexpected details—an explosion of flowers in an armoire's interior, a lampshade created from doilies, the curvaceous swirls of a lace pattern-inspired rug—are woven into a controlled palette of tailored blues and blacks.

Subtle cultural and historical references layer in glamour and humor in equal measure: a sign in the bathroom that instructs "Keep calm, it's just garlic" alludes to the town's name; the color of the guest room draperies pulls from city's flag; the shimmy-shake of a fringe chair from McGuire conjures up a flapper's dress; Vol. 39, the hotel bar's name, is a nod to the salvaged books that decorate the space but used to reside in one of the building's law firms. "I always say we're creating the set design for the comedy and tragedy of life," says Schnyder. A riveting spectacle indeed. — *Abigail Stone*



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