

Per L'Ora by Jaqui Seerman

By Abigail Stone
Photography by the Ingalls

A TRUNCATED TIMELINE and a slender budget test an interior designer's skill and expertise. Those who can meet these goals while also producing an award-winning design can consider themselves virtuosos. Jaqui Seerman's work on Per L'Ora, an Italian restaurant integrated into the lobby of Hotel Per La in Downtown L.A., confirms that she's in that league.

Seerman's well-considered changes effected a dramatic transformation on the dark, moody, open-plan restaurant and bar located inside the former Nomad Hotel. French architect Jacques Garcia had paired the neoclassical building's coffered ceilings, majestic columns and marble floors with dark mahogany furniture upholstered in floral and jewel-toned velvets. "I'm a big fan of his work," Seerman shares. "That space had been seared into my memory as very iconic, very beautiful and very un-Californian."

But Jeremy Selman of HN Capital Partners, who invested in the property with the Sydel Group, was ready to revamp the forgotten hotel and wanted a completely new look. "He kept repeating 'light and bright,'" Seerman remembers. "The challenge was how to incorporate what was there—we had to use the existing furniture and couldn't touch any of the walls—while making it feel like it had been refreshed."

Inspired by the architecture, the tropical print that once covered the seating just inside the 7th Street entrance was camouflaged by cream slipcovers complete with deep ruffled skirts. "It was a minimal change, but just enough to make a big impact," Seerman remarks. "It made the room feel more like a sunroom than a salon." Sheer, flirty café curtains were substituted for the theatrical dark green drapes, Carrera marble replaced the original mahogany tabletops and wallpaper in a graphic terra-cotta-and-cream print brightened the room's bookcases. The client requested a communal table and Seerman answered by designing a custom glossy marigold oval that brings the room into focus.

In the bar, a custom marble top and playful globe-shaped light fixtures invigorate the area while also complementing the whitewashed ceiling and arched frames of the bar's mirrors. For the finishing touch, Seerman commissioned a bas-relief wallpaper for the under bar that allows the hunter green leather barstools to pop against the lightened backdrop.

"Now you can see all the beautiful architectural details of the interior that were lost in the dark," says Seerman. "Though it was definitely a challenge, it was fun figuring out what we could touch and how we could change it while still respecting the original design."



ABOVE: The custom communal table, fabricated by local artisans in a glossy marigold, and asymmetrical dining chairs, upholstered in a blue mohair whose color nods to the room's coffered ceiling, are the only pieces of new furniture in the dining room. New wallpaper by Garance Vallée for Élitis animates the room's bookcases. **LEFT:** Seerman whitewashed the bar's ceiling and mirror frames, highlighting the room's details. Pre-existing green leather bar stools pop against the bas-relief wallpaper by MJ Atelier, which covers the under bar. The Fusion marble bar top is from TriStone. **BELOW:** With its arched feature wall now washed in white and inset with hand-painted drapery panels by Jessalyn Brooks, a plaster semicircular desk fabricated by Voila! Creative Studio and custom chairs in the style of Royere, the reception area is now bright and welcoming. The pendants are by Fred&Juu, the sconces are by Edition Modern and the seagrass rug is from Marc Phillips.

