

El San Juan

Alia Akkam • September 20, 2017



Another new Curio Collection by Hilton hotel is El San Juan in Puerto Rico. The 388-room property opened in 1958, and was a hotspot for entertainers of the time. Jeffrey Beers, founder and CEO of New York-based Jeffrey Beers International, says his only directive was “to bring the El San Juan back. This hotel was the epicenter of San Juan for a long time, and we wanted to add a new chapter to its glorious history in an artistic way.”

Local artists and craftsmen were key to this new look. Consider the globe sculpture by Luis Torruella set in the fountain of the new porte-cochère and entry, where the presence of travertine and a trellis are also hallmarks. In the dramatic lobby, the original stone flooring and ornate millwork ceilings were preserved because “it would have been a shame to do away with what has become a backdrop to the hotel’s pedigree and history,” says Beers. New backlit onyx reception desks were seamlessly layered into the vignette, while the centerpiece of the VIP area is Rosario Fernandez’s photographs of models donning vejigante masks, accompanied by intricate glass backlit alabaster chandeliers, handtufted rugs, and sheer curtains that suggest a residential feel. Further anchoring guests in the lobby is the Wine Bar, starring a chandelier comprising 850 brass rods capped with fluted glass, an energetic counterpoint to the already existing Gold Bar, where the original mosaic marble was restored. Meanwhile, a mirthful, convivial atmosphere is on display at Caña by Juliana Gonzalez, where diners share food at communal tables and the atmosphere is heightened by simple, rustic steel and oak, as well as black and white photography of Puerto Rican farming scenes.

The indoor and outdoor spaces appear to merge, which was important to Beers. “The hotel was a bit closed off before, and I felt strongly about opening it up and giving it an indoor-outdoor feel,” he says. A similar “relaxed, understated, and modern” aura is found in the guestrooms and villas through walnut headboards, travertine tile flooring, white beams, and patterned ceramic tiles in baths. The villas are a highlight for Beers since he says they truly express the location and the vibe of the “hotel’s restored glory.”