

WORDS BY TERRI PETER

HOTEL VERTIGO SAN FRANCISCO



Thomas Schoos has created the interiors for Personality Hotels' renovation of the historic hotel where Alfred Hitchcock's 1958 film 'Vertigo' was set.

Opened in February 2009, Hotel Vertigo will be familiar to Hitchcock fans, who may recognise it as the Empire Hotel from the 1958 classic film 'Vertigo', but this extensively refurbished design hotel on lower Nob Hill, San Francisco, caters to more than just film buffs. The ambitious three year, \$5 million renovation of the six storey hotel is nearly complete and will feature new interiors in the bar, lobby, restaurant and all rooms. The 120-room property has been a hotel since the 1920s when it housed a Prohibition-era 'speakeasy'. This newest renovation has seen the interiors go from run-down and floral to high-concept and graphic thanks to interior designer Thomas Schoos.

Hotel Vertigo is part of the family-owned Personality Hotels Group headed by Yvonne Lembi-Detert, a local interior designer turned entrepreneur. Personality Hotels is the largest privately-owned boutique hotel operator in San Francisco, with seven distinctive properties, all in renovated historic buildings. Thomas Schoos, a German-born, Los Angeles-based designer is known for his theatrical designs for nightclubs and restaurants as well as homes for American movie stars such as Jessica Simpson and Will Smith. Currently working on hotels in Dubai and Thailand, Schoos also provided designs for the transformation of another Personality Hotels group property, the Hotel Frank. Hotel Vertigo's glamorous, double-height lobby has

a grand staircase, once used by the scriptwriters on Vertigo as inspiration, with large windows onto the street. Airy and luxurious with original 1920s columns and gleaming white Carrara marble floors, the lobby is an impressive space, with a long white leather sofa running the length of one wall. There is history here and the hotel plays on the Vertigo theme at every chance. Hitchcock films are screened on the wall and 'Madeline' biscuits (named after a character in the movie) are offered to guests at check in. Staff wear bespoke grey uniforms subtly inspired by the film. Eccentric design touches include kitsch porcelain dog and cat figurines that sit in the windows facing onto the street, like faithful pets

waiting to greet returning guests. Guestrooms feature a vibrant palette of white contrasted with bright orange accents, such as crisp white 300 threadcount Italian linen bedding with orange piping. "We have already had inquiries into how to purchase our chairs, mirrors and duvet sets," says General Manager Peter Friedman. In the bathroom, guests find a custom dark walnut vanity with crocodile-skin patterned bathroom tiles and a bath with oversized rain showerhead. Low vintage chairs in the bedroom have been re-upholstered in glossy vinyl stitched with the hotel's logo. Sheer orange drapes complement Thomas Schoos's signature plaid window coverings. Highlights include vintage

looking decorations in the rooms, such as ornate white mirrors and horse-head lamps on the glossy white lacquered nightstands. The penthouse is named Number Thirteen (a number very rare in hotels) in honour of Hitchcock's very first, yet uncompleted film. The five suites are named after characters in the film: The Carlotta, The Midge, The Gavin, The Madeleine and The Scottie. The view down the main staircase from the top floor is appropriately vertiginous. "San Francisco is a melting pot of cultures and varying global influences. Throughout it all, however, it retains its sense of neighborhood charm and comfort," says Schoos. "We aimed to bring a sense of international appeal into a space that still feels like home."

EXPRESS CHECKOUT

HOTEL VERTIGO
940 Sutter Street, San Francisco,
CA 94109, USA
Tel: +1 415 885 6800
www.hotelvertigosf.com

- 101 guestrooms
- Tyler Florence Restaurant (opening Autumn 2009)
- + Meeting space

HOTEL FRANK SAN FRANCISCO



PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF PERSONALITY HOTELS

Thomas Schoos has redesigned San Francisco's Maxwell Hotel as Hotel Frank, using bold graphic prints contrasted with rich textures and fabrics.

The transformation of Personality Hotels' historic hotel in Union Square, San Francisco is complete, with the final stages of the ambitious \$10 million renovation project finished in March 2009. The hotel, built in 1908 and until last year known as The Maxwell, has been completely renovated with designs by celebrity interior designer Thomas Schoos. Schoos' key concepts are bold, graphic prints and luxurious interiors with rich textures and fabrics. Located next to San Francisco Westin Hotel, a city landmark that is currently undergoing its own \$40 million renovation, the Frank offers 153 guestrooms in arguably the city's most sought after tourist neighbourhood.

Schoos is known for his plush, glamorous interiors at restaurants such as Table 8 and Tao in Los Angeles. With Frank, he doesn't disappoint. From the outside, there is little evidence of Schoos' bold transformation of the hotel, but when guests step into a stylish, laidback lobby area with textured sofas covered in crocodile print vinyl and bold monochrome custom carpeting, the classic, distinctive look embodies the intent of the new Frank. "The clean and modern look of houndstooth has withstood the test of time, and continues to re-emerge in fashion and design which meshed well with the simple, yet distinctive, concept envisioned for the hotel," says Schoos. In the large guestrooms, the houndstooth carpeting

creates a bold and graphic backdrop. Soft emerald-green furnishings, such as the elongated headboards and the sheer green curtains, add an accent colour. The rooms are minimal and flexible, allowing guests to sleep, entertain, work and relax in a luxurious environment. Sofas covered in the same signature green or white leather furnish the rooms, creating areas to lounge and relax. Schoos has designed a two-sided, flatscreen TV / mirror rotating on a central pole which inventively divides the room. The renovation included new additional soundproofing in the walls enabling the historic building to perform to modern expectations. Standard room amenities include complimentary high speed wireless throughout the

hotel (surprisingly a rarity in San Francisco) a pillow bar (guests might not even have known they needed one), 32 inch flatscreen televisions, and iPod docking stations. On the walls, vintage 1930's artwork is displayed in teak frames. Schoos explains: "Each photograph is off-centre and cut at an atypical angle, literally representing fragments of San Francisco's past." The two penthouse suites have been radically renovated, with roof decks affording skyline views of the city, and large areas for entertaining. Rooms have been swapped around, walls moved and removed to create an open plan feeling that is also cosy and inviting. The Skyline Loft features space for entertaining, dining and a large roof deck. Like a more extreme version of the other rooms at Frank, the penthouses are opulent and spacious, decorated with original art and glass sculptures. Schoos has retained selected original features such as the grey

stone fireplace for cosy winter evenings. The more private areas are just as theatrical, with an enormous walk in shower, and a bathtub on a marble pedestal in the corner of the bedroom. The Urban Loft also has luxurious open spaces for dining and lounging and the living room provides an additional sleeping area if required with a pull out sofa. A low wall with quilted green headboard divides the bedroom and bathroom areas allowing an open plan layout. There is plentiful natural light throughout, with a new skylight in the bathroom over an enormous stand-alone tub. There are two large terraces, with rooftop views of the city, the second, made totally private by the slightly unsettling adjacency of a ten storey high blank concrete wall that is the back of the Westin St Francis. In the heart of the city, Personality Hotels has recycled a charming historic hotel into a fashion-forward, luxurious boutique hotel proving newness isn't everything – Frank has soul.

EXPRESS CHECKOUT

HOTEL FRANK
386 Geary Street
San Francisco, CA 94102, USA
Tel: +1 415 986 2000
www.hotelfrankst.com

↳ 153 guestrooms
+ Penthouse Lofts & 'F' Room
meeting room, opening soon