

A THEATRICAL ENTRANCE AT COCO REEF BERMUDA

The most dramatic hotel lobby in the region

The first few steps one takes into a hotel represent the opening sequence of a vacation, or maybe a love affair or even a crucial meeting. First impressions always speak volumes but the minute you step through the entrance doors of Coco Reef Bermuda, you know instinctively that you are entering a very different Bermudan resort

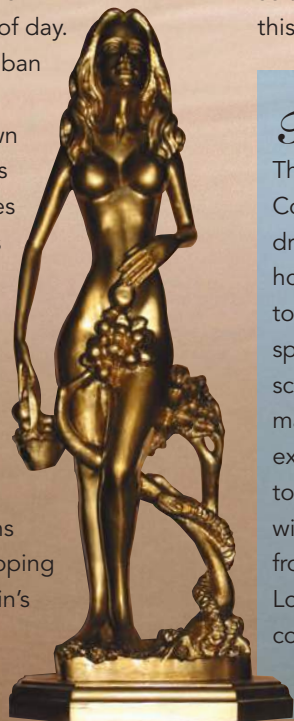
For the lobby of this beachfront resort in one of Bermuda's prettiest locations vies with the likes of Paris George Cinq or the Ritz Madrid for the sheer impact created by its breath-taking lobby

Dominated by a 68 foot high atrium and a central Marble fountain, four huge arched mirrors reflect a wealth of artefacts from all over the world including classical sculptures, handmade stone murals, large plinths, French Louis XIV sideboards, antique clocks and Grecian style urns. Over 80 magical chandeliers and sconces, made of the finest crystal and gold, twinkle like jewels in the tropical sunlight, changing from sapphire to ruby and emerald colours depending on the time of day.

Bold contemporary Cuban paintings of huge eyed women's faces look down on Spanish marble floors while historical seascapes and still life oil paintings in ornate frames adorn the surrounding walls creating an eclectic and powerful mix of old and new, traditional and modern.

Gold-plated statuettes of mermaids and nymphs peek out into a jaw-dropping tableau that is an Aladdin's cave of treasures.

Hotel lobbies,



especially in this part of the world are often anonymous affairs, there to deal with the practicalities of registrations and transactions: corridors for guests to pass through as they head to the beach, the bar, the bedroom or the boardroom and the real purpose of their stay. Yet Coco Reef Bermuda has made the lobby itself a statement that creates an opening sequence signalling just the beginning of delights yet to come

The drama created continues when eyes travel to the back of the lobby where the visitor experiences their second heart stopping moment as they see three huge arched windows looking out to sea and revealing the hotel's greatest natural asset, it's picture perfect coral beach touched by lapping blue waves, the colours of which are reflected in Coco Reef's signature colours of sand and coral pink which create the palette on its walls, exteriors and furnishings. Art, architecture, furnishings and lighting all take their place in the lobby as the prequel to the real splendour that is this magnificent view.

Theatrical lobby

The theatrical lobby was the brainchild of Coco Reefs owner John Jefferis whose dream it was to "create the most dramatic hotel lobby in the region" and in his search to give it the ultimate Wow factor has spent over half a million US dollars and scoured the globe to find all the right materials, furnishings and art works. No expense has been spared as he has striven to achieve his vision for the ultimate lobby with the maximum impact, sourcing works from Egypt, the USA, Europe and China. Local firms have also played their part with construction carried out by local contractors and the four magnificent



mirrors made in Bermuda. He says he never had a planned design for the lobby, but it evolved over time and was adapted as it grew into its present form which he is still refining. He did not use the services of interior designers, saying that he calls the main theme Spanish colonial but adding that he likes to mix styles himself from dozens of different influences, a look he claims most designers disapprove of.

Gold and opulent materials abound, and Jefferis has extended his Midas Touch outside to the hotel entrance, where all the pots have been painted gold.

"I believe you should impress with theatre" says Jefferis, adding that his

incentive in designing the lobby was to make people feel immediately that they have chosen the right place

"The whole hotel business is about theatre, he says "I have set the stage here and put in all the scenery and background. The key players are the staff, some will have major roles others will have walk on parts. But altogether they make the production and its success will be proven by the number of people who return to visit it again."

The lobby has already made an impact, with visitors to the hotel stopping and staring at the splendour that greets them, and pausing to take photographs.

Elements of surprise

The element of surprise continues in private rooms located just off the main stage that it is the lobby. The library on the right raises eyebrows immediately the door is opened - unlike the pastels and sun inspired colours of the resort, this room is decorated in blood reds and clarets, with ornate mirrors candelabra, picture frames and a beautiful French inlaid dining table and chairs. There is even an open fire which crackles incongruously in the hearth more reminiscent of an 18th century English stately home than a hotel room steps from the beach.

Jefferis spent \$38,000 on the table alone at auction in Miami to produce an exclusive area within the hotel where guests can enjoy luxurious private dining and service. For a premium price, they will even be treated to gifts such as Coco Chanel perfumes as part of the experience.

On the other side of the lobby is the Bermudaz room, a small intimate space adorned with more strong art works.

The transformation began over ten years ago when Jefferis took over the hotel, and embarked on a \$14.7 million renovation which included building new restaurants, swimming pools and terrace and planting 37 mature coconut palms and landscaping the grounds as well as creating a 220 metre elevated private beach. The grounds are also dotted with classical statues which appear at intervals as guest meander from the ocean front beach to various sandy promontories and viewing points around the property.

Jefferis continues to refine and perfect his lobby, still anxiously watching for changes still to be made - some air vents to go here, some new pictures to be hung there, more mirrors to be delivered from Egypt. He works tirelessly to achieve his goal and make a distinctive entrance which sets coco reef apart from other hotels not just in Bermuda but across the region. The lobby at Coco Reef Bermuda looks set to become a classic.