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**CAYO MUSHA:**  
REFUGIO SECRETO  
DE LAS CELEBRIDADES

EL HOGAR SOÑADO DE  
**MARÍA CELESTE ARRARÁS**

LA MANSIÓN DE  
**DAN MARINO**  
LEYENDA DEL FÚTBOL AMERICANO

APARTAMENTO DE ALTURA  
EN CIUDAD DE MÉXICO

REVISTA DE ARQUITECTURA Y DISEÑO



# The Water Club

Playful and Sensual, a Boutique Hotel in Puerto Rico Gets in the Mood

Interior Design by Anny Falgas, ASID, and Pedro Rosario, ASID, of DesignWorks  
Text by Amanda Vaill/Photography by Dan Forer







OPPOSITE: Soft blue light emanates from the guest rooms of The Water Club, a hotel in San Juan, Puerto Rico. "We wanted to bring some sensuality to it," says co-owner David Kurland, who worked with designers Anny Falgas and Pedro Rosario, of Design-Works. THIS PAGE: The reception area.





LEFT: The appropriately hued foyer of the hotel's restaurant, Tangerine. *El Chupacabras* is by local artist Carlos Mercado. Kravet chair fabric. ABOVE: In the dining area, which was originally intended to be a conference room, sheer fabric is draped over lights to create a diffused orange glow.

First it was Miami Beach, rebounding from decades of fuddy-duddydom to become a sleek Art Déco escape for the young, the restless and the professionally thin. Now the scene is moving farther south, beyond South Beach, across the blue Atlantic to Puerto Rico's San Juan, a place Stephen Sondheim dismissed satirically in a *West Side Story* lyric as having "hundreds of flowers in full bloom, / Hundreds of people in each room." If there are hundreds of people there now, though, the room must be a bar called Liquid, on the first floor of a new boutique hotel called The Water Club, which is the coolest, or hottest, place to be in this whole suddenly hip capital city.

By day The Water Club appears to be an unremarkable white Moderne building that rises 11 stories from the beige, palm-fringed beach of Isla Verde, a community of substantial homes and hotels located five minutes from San Juan's international airport and 15 minutes from the 16th-century streets







The bar, Liquid, features floors made of one-inch-thick glass tiles illuminated from below by neon tubes. "We wanted to use as much transparency as possible because the space was limited," explains Rosario. Brueton leather barstools. OPPOSITE: Kurland claims that watching hotel revelers is "the greatest spectator sport in town."



BELOW: To ensure that guests experience a singular elevator ride, the design team eliminated the roof of the cabin, exposing the brilliant blue of the elevator shaft. Enclosed water cascades down the glass walls of the interior and reflects the blue light from above, which, according to Kurland, helps to quell any sensation of vertigo.



of Old San Juan. By night, however, it's transformed into a luminous spaceship—its windows streaming with marine-blue light, its first-floor and rooftop bars glowing amber—populated with preternaturally beautiful young people who might be aliens from a designer planet. They come to sip cocktails and nibble sushi under the sky or beside the fireplace on the rooftop, at Wet Bar, or to sample lollipop lamb chops with their drinks at Liquid, where DJs spin on Friday nights. “Just to sit here and watch the outfits that walk through the hotel and the kids partying—it’s worth the price of admission,” says David Kurland, The Water Club’s managing partner and, with Joaquin Boliver II, co-owner.

The Water Club is Kurland’s creation, a dream he envisioned when he was still managing director of the nearby Wyndham El San Juan Hotel. “No one had done anything in the boutique style in Puerto Rico,” he says, “and I felt

By night the hotel is transformed into a luminous spaceship streaming with blue light.



A water sculpture, created by DesignWorks, reflects the movement of guests as they travel through the hallways to their rooms. Whimsical water references abound. The sound of crashing waves resonates from hidden speakers, diaphanous curtains undulate, and tiles with transposed images of river rocks are underfoot.



"The concept of **water** kind of dictated everything: the ocean, the sand and the **tropical** elements," says Rosario.



A typical guest room. "The vision was to infuse and soften the harshness of minimalism with the relaxed qualities of the Caribbean—and to convey that everywhere in the hotel," Kurland says. The bed fabrics are from Kravet.

the island had matured enough to make it possible." With a multitude of new restaurants, museums, galleries and dance companies in San Juan, he points out, there was room for a hostelry that didn't try to compete with them but instead offered a place where—as Kurland describes it—you feel like you're in the Caribbean for the first time.

Enlisting the help of San Juan-based designers Anny Falgas and Pedro Rosario, who had previously worked on his private residence, he set about making his dream a reality.

"David had the name of the hotel before we even came up with the concept," says Rosario, "and water kind of dictated everything: the ocean, and the sand and the tropical elements."

The 84 guest rooms, all of which have ocean views, are light and airy, with bare wood floors bleached the color of a sandy beach, custom-designed furnishings and sheer white curtains; they're suffused with a soft underwater glow from blue neon lighting concealed behind the draperies. On a wall near the door is a "desire board," *continued on page 247*

BELOW: Warm tropical breezes gather under the canopy of the hotel's rooftop entertainment area, Wet Bar. The design, Kurland says, revolves around the elements of fire and wind. BOTTOM: The pool, also located on the roof, is bordered on three sides by a glass railing. Guests can enjoy panoramic views of the Atlantic.

