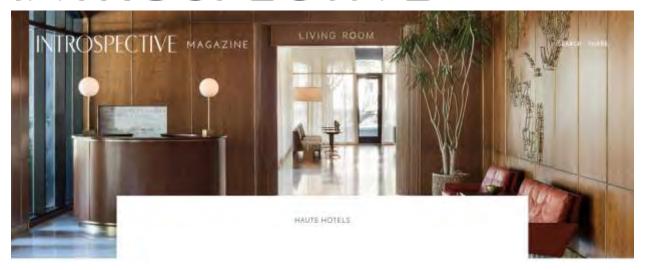
INTROSPECTIVE MAGAZINE



HOW A MID-CENTURY OFFICE BUILDING BECAME A HIGH-STYLE HOTEL

by Andrew Sessa | July 3, 2017

The trio behind the design firm Workstead have reimagined a 1960s Charleston, South Carolina, federal building as an old-meets-new emblem of a look they call "Southern modernism."



Nink about Charteston, South Curolina, and the architectural images that most immediately come to mind probably include brightly painted Federal row houses, brick Georgian colonials and grand Antichellum manors — plus some Queen Anno. Italianate and Greek Revival thrown in for good measure — most filled with centuries-old American furniture and fixtures.

But clean-lined mid-century-modern style featuring big termes in <u>Scandonnila</u> and beyond? Not so much. Which is why the city's recently opened <u>Dewberry hotel</u> is such a surprese.

The Dewberry occupies the former L. Mendel Rivers Federal Building, a cubic merble-and-brick structure with a street-level colonnade and long, narrow recessed windows that was built in the 1960s by the row-defunct Colombia. South Carclina, firm Lyles, Bissett, Carliste and Worlf) Originally commissioned by President John F. Kennedy to house government offices, it did just that for some 35 years, until 1995's Hurricane Floyd tendered it uninhabitable. The building, which sits on the city's centrally located Martin Square, by ampty for new years while locals debuted what to do about it, with many coesidering razing the structure.

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To create the restlictic of this ambitious adaptive-reuse project. Dewderry turned to husband and wife Robert Andrew Highsmith and Stefania Brechbuehler and their Rhode Island. School of Design classinate Ryan Malaning, perhies in <u>Workstead</u>, a besign firm that got its sturt in Williamsburg. Brooklyn, and now has studios both there and in Charleston. The trio, whose lighting and furniture collections are offered on Istilius, previously designed Rivertown Lodge.

are offered on Istilits, previously designed <u>Revertour Lodge</u>, in Lipstate New York's Hudson Valley, and the public spaces at Williamsburg's <u>Wythe Hutel</u> — both of which had seen them turning vintage buildings into contemporary destinations.

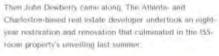
"Workstead had distinctive ideas about woodwork, brass and tables and had proved to be especially adept at lighting selections in their past projects," says Dewberry, who met the designers through industry connections in New York. "That drew me to them for this hotel."

"Our vision was to give more than a passing nod in the lederal building's mid-century modern roots," Deaberry continues, "and I do believe our collaboration proved to be winning, resulting in a notable reflection of our concept."

"We explored a balance of traditional southern materials with more modern forms that were appropriate to the era of the

building," Brechbuehler says of the Dewberry's eclectic mix. "A lot of the furniture we sourced at auction," continues Highsmith, "adding new pieces from <u>Lawson-Eenning</u>, as well as one-off designs we created specifically for the hotel."

Here, Highsmith, Brechbuehler and Mahoney expound on their vision for the building's dramatic reinvention and take us inside the completed hotel.





Workstead partners (from left) <u>Byan Mahoney, Robert Andrew Highernith and Stefanie Brechbuehler</u> met while studying architecture at the Rhode Island School of Design. Portrait by Olivia Rae James



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The Project

This was a huge undertaking for which we designed numerous public and private spaces within the original building's 100,000-square-foot shell, all of them exploring the princept of an aesthetic we call "southern modernism."

These spaces include the historic cherry-paneled lobby; a living room lounge surrounded by a verande and colemnote; itenrietta's, a brasserie decorated with black-and-white concrete thous, custom Lawson-Ferming stools, Thomes that's and church-pew-like beaches: and a baltroom with white eak floors inspired by the parquet pattern at Versailles. Then there are the 153 rooms and ourses, which return mahagany <u>Stickley</u> armores; marble-and-brass tables; chairs in leather, linen and mahair, and marble-clad bathrooms with cypress cabinetry.

Our purview included elements big and small. We drive plane that were highly detailed from an archifoctural perspective, but then also put together binder after binder of furnishing specifications. Along the way, we designed every piece of furnishing in the guest rooms, most of the custom light fixtures throughout the hotel and a large number at pieces in other spaces. We even specified the fill of pillows and the pleats of curtains. We met with fabricators, artisans and the entire leans over the course of some very busy years.

The Inspiration

The interiors of the Develorry are an expression of southern madernism — a combination of the tried-and-true materials of the South with the sensibility of the modern building that is the Dewberry; an icon in the city with prominent views all around.

The Art of the Mix

The items vary in their distinctive styles and materials but are linked by their domestic sense of scale. This approach to color, texture and proportion offsets the monolithic nature of the building, opening it up for the public to enjoy.

In the living room, for example, the ceiling lights take inspiration from <u>Italian modernism</u>, and John Dewberry salvaged the wood flooring from a tobacco barn in Georgia. We clad the columns in antique mirrors and designed modern interpretations of 1960s <u>Paul Maiyen</u> lighting for the table and floor lamps.

The Innovation

Lighting was a major focus for us, from custom-designed pieces to architectural lighting to vintage items. In the ceiling of the living room and ballroom, for example, we designed a series of light scoops — concave bowl shapes carved into the ceiling. Inspiration for these came from Milan's aconic Art Deco Villa Necchi Campiglia. Those originals were probably carved out of plaster, but in our case, we engineered an architectural solution that comprised a prefabricated bowl form containing a socket for a butb, which we integrated seamlessly into the ceiling.



In the ballroom, we also used a style of chandelier, composed of multiple cust-briss armatures and crystal, that was originally designed by <u>Joset Hoffmann</u> in 1914 and is new produced by <u>Woke</u>, in Vienna, Woke had never created it in such a large size until it did so for the hotel.

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The Castom Commission

In the historic lobby, we added a new brass map of Charteston Harbor above two original <u>Pool Nuemolm sofas</u> from Denmark.

Local designer Peyton Avrett, whose grandmother worked in the federal office building for decades, created the piece for us, basing it on an Elliot & Ames map from 1861.



This designers' blooming quest release in the biject are known as the Charleston Flats. Occupying the common of skery floor, these are the mores to reserve, they any, for forms of space his large are a one-potential in New York Cityl, views during Square and the Cooper Rivery and document expension bandwood floors and a fore-front set.



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The Comforts of Home

Locals immediately started treating the Irving room tike in-

extension of their own homes. Groups show up for meetings, couples for dates, four people to play cards and singles to get some work done while sipping a cocktail. The space is warm, comfortable, cozy and without pretension. People just feel welcome there.

BRING IT HOME

Channel the Dewberry's Insk with items hand-picked by Workstead's designers



Walnut nightstands, current production, offered by Lawson-Fenning

"We asked Grant Fenning and Glenn Lawson at Lawson-Fenning to fabricate a console version of these nightstands. We were able to tailor the length and height exactly to our needs."











