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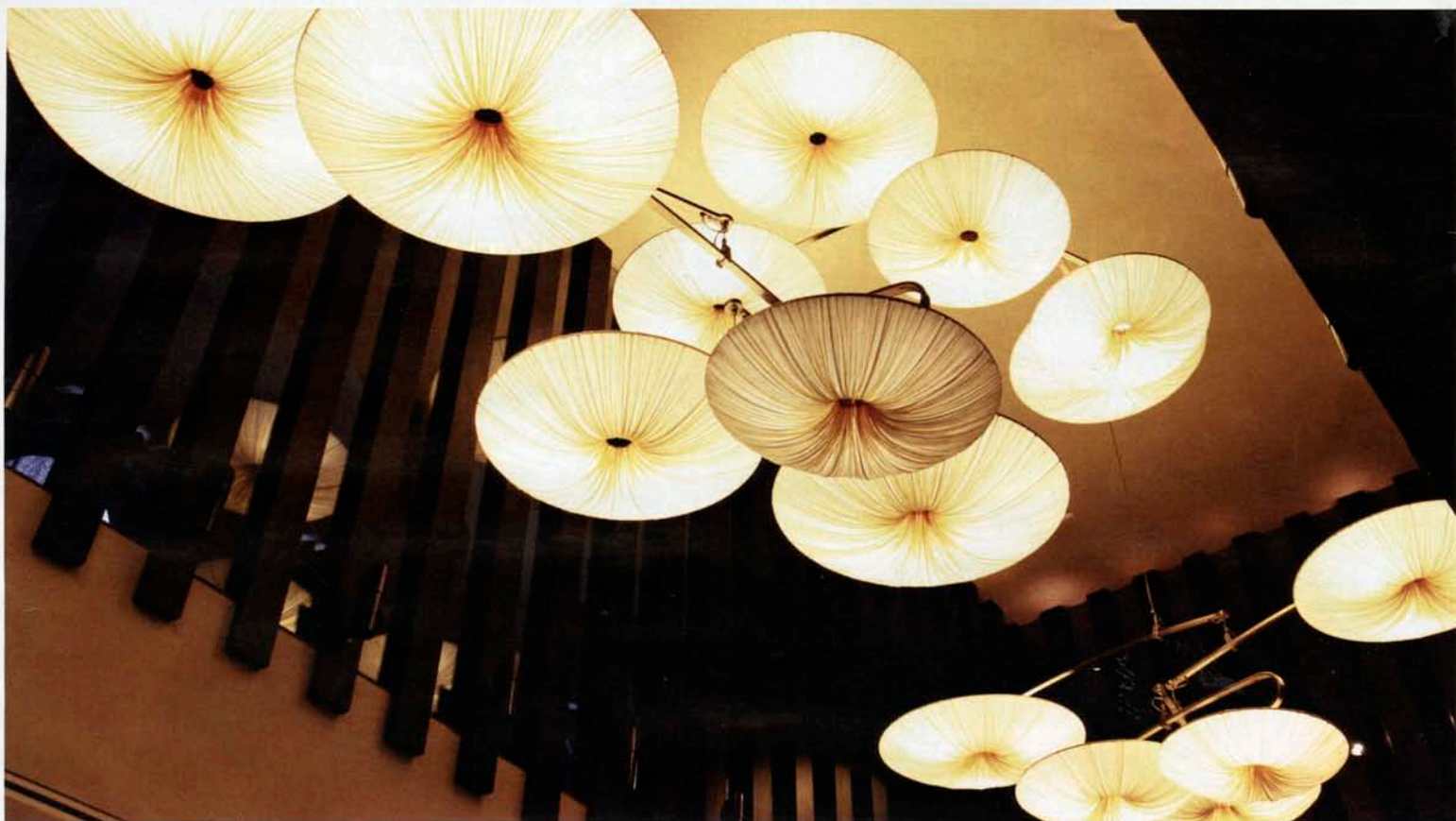


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**STAR TREATMENT:** Sè San Diego enlisted top-brass designers for the 23-story hotel. *From top:* The lobby ceiling boasts Cirque du Soleil-inspired lighting courtesy of David Rockwell; a bronze map of San Diego in the Dodd Mitchell-designed restaurant; the spa boasts metallic walls and daybeds.



## Sè Ahhhh...

*Sè San Diego is upping the luxury hotel ante, one stingray wall at a time*

| By Stacy Rauon | Photography by John Dole |

The coming-soon buzz of Downtown's ultra-hotel seemed to go on for years—so long, in fact, that the luxury palace went through three name incarnations, from The Diegan to The Setai to, finally, Sè San Diego.

Never mind the identity crisis. The 23-story steel-and-glass building on Fifth Avenue is finally open, making a major statement from the gates: a 9,000-pound bronze lobby door. Housed in the former Jessop & Sons Jewelers building, the hotel may have been wishy-washy with its name, but not its design. The property boasts a 7,000-square-foot rooftop pool and will soon house the West Coast's largest hotel penthouse, thanks to an all-star design team and \$150 million smackaroos.

The who's-who of designers includes NYC superstar David Rockwell, who erected a cascading stairwell of ceramic "fins" that seem to swim up the wall of the lobby. For the restaurant, "It" boy Dodd Mitchell brought in brown leather sofa-style banquettes, exposed brick walls and a three-dimensional bronze map of San Diego, with the hotel's exact location marked with a blue light. And the loo? San Diego's first completely unisex bathroom is covered floor-to-ceiling in

hundreds of polished stones set in Lucite. "It's really a textural experience," says Ed Bakos, a principal at Rockwell Group.

Lavish materials (think ebony, stingray leather, limestone and silverleaf) abound throughout the 184 guestrooms (including 37 suites and three penthouses). The must-see is a tucked-away lobby bar complete with a living wall of plants, a stingray-covered bar, bronzetiled columns, organic shell curtains that tumble from the restaurant above and a see-through fireplace to the lobby.

Upstairs, "the rooms are all about comfort and unexpected detail," Bakos says. For instance, take the Brazilian walnut floors and custom, floor-to-ceiling blue suede headboards. And for those who want to own a piece of the luxury, the suites are for sale, and come with extra touches like Italian kitchens and pocket doors that open to balconies boasting heady bay views.

Meanwhile, the still unfinished grand penthouse will be a sort of Chrome Hearts meets Minotti, with a 14-foot-long green onyx dining table, 20-foot-high wine wall clad in gold, mirror and glass, a custom-designed pool table, and 180-degree views of the city. Top that. [sesandiego.com](http://sesandiego.com) 