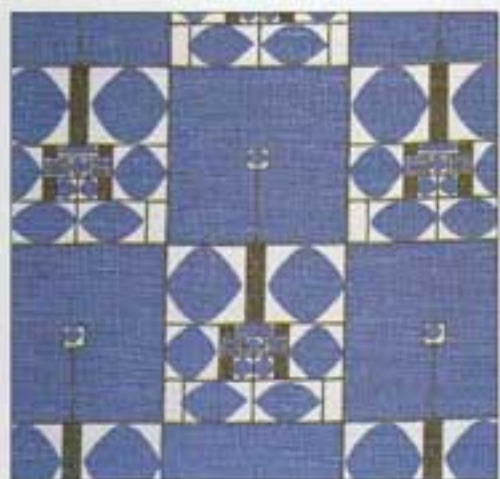
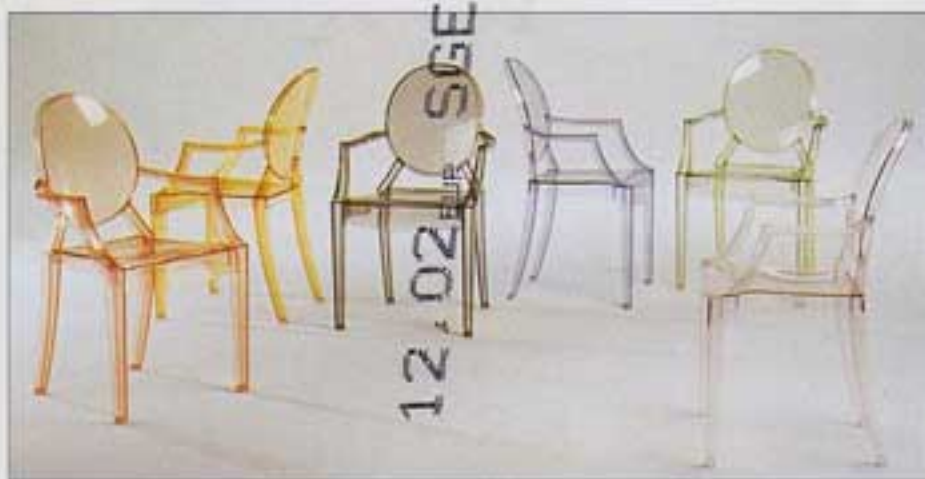


# ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

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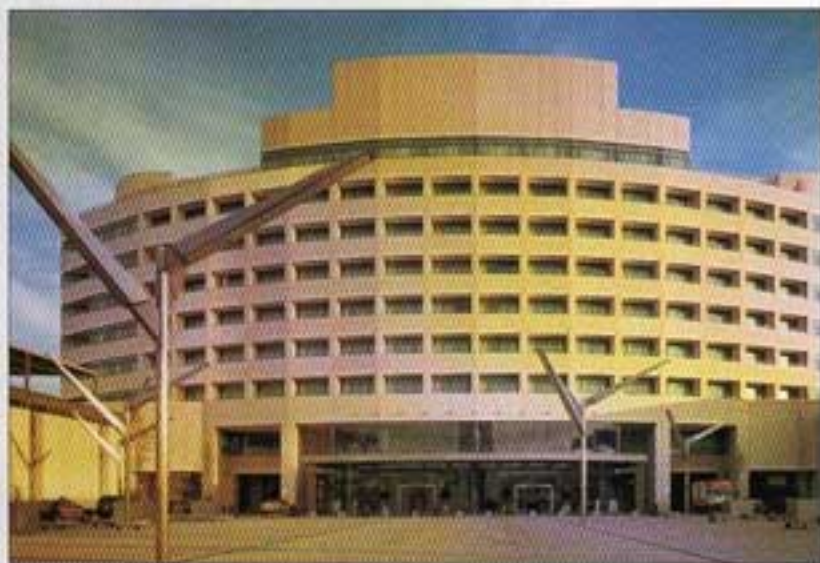


## THE GREAT DESIGN ISSUE



RIGHT: Facing the Mediterranean, the Grand Marina Hotel stands in the heart of Barcelona's old port. Pei Cobb Freed & Partners created the structure so that each of the guest rooms has a recessed balcony. The interiors were designed by GCA Arquitectes Associats.

OPPOSITE: A spiraling staircase swoops into the first-floor lobby, where *Aire de Mar* by Catalan artist Albert Rafols-Casamada hangs above the desk. "The staircase gives the space a real sense of drama," says Henry N. Cobb. BELOW RIGHT: A cherrywood wall highlights the bar.



## HOTELS

# Grand Marina

WITH MODERN FLAIR AND NAUTICAL TOUCHES, THE BARCELONA HOTEL IS A CATALAN ORIGINAL

Architecture by Pei Cobb Freed & Partners/Interior Design by GCA Arquitectes Associats  
Text by Michael Frank/Photography by Vincent Thibert

For a brand-new building, Barcelona's sleekly elegant Grand Marina Hotel has an intricate—but also quite interesting—history. The structure was originally conceived to house offices in the city's new World Trade Center, which was itself conceived as a way of revitalizing the old port, whose commercial activities, as is typical of urban ports throughout the world these days, had been moved out of the center of town. "You might call it a case of adaptive reuse before the initial use actually took place," says Henry N. Cobb, a founding partner at Pei Cobb Freed & Partners, the firm responsible for the World Trade Center design.

"When the steel framework was already up, the building's purpose was changed. We had to rethink, from the outside in and the inside out. But the curious thing is, I believe





we ended up with a better hotel this way than we would have if we'd set out to design one from the start."

What happened was this. When in 1989 the port authority of Barcelona undertook a substantial reinvention of the Moll de Barcelona, the city's port, there was a law forbidding the construction

of hotels within 656 feet of its shore. The original complex, then, was designed to house conference facilities, terminals for cruise ships and offices. "With all the cruise ship traffic, the location was ideal for a hotel," Cobb observes, "so when, more or less midconstruction, the law changed, we welcomed the opportunity

to fit a hotel into the scheme."

Architecturally speaking, hotels tend to be quite narrow structures, whereas office buildings are much deeper, so the biggest challenge Cobb and his associates faced was what to do with this extra depth. Their solution was to pull the building back and give each room a balcony that

was recessed into the structure. "This clearly sets the hotel apart from the other buildings in the complex," Cobb explains. "It creates beautiful light and shadows in each room and an overall shiplike sensibility, which for obvious reasons we favored."

Indeed, a gentle nautical theme pervades the hotel, but



LEFT: A rectangular upholstered niche creates a built-in headboard for the bedroom of the Presidential Suite. "We wanted minimal transitions within the space," says GCA's Josep Juapere Miret, "hence the receding doors." A "butterfly" desk stands outside the bedroom.

BELOW: Dark fabrics play against the maple walls of the suite's sitting room, where black-and-white photographs are displayed. "We didn't want traditional prints on the walls," says Miret. "We wanted something that captured the Barcelona of today." BOTTOM: The suite's bath.



the Grand Marina, part of the Hotusa hotel group, is at the same time quintessentially Barcelonan in its attitude: It remains in respectful scale to Las Ramblas, the great boulevard that ends nearby in a monument to Columbus; it frames—and defines—a large courtyard; and its mixed use is typical of the city, where life