



The Four Seasons Brings

Text John T. O'Connor

High Design to Fort Lauderdale Beach.

The arrival of the Four Seasons Private Residences, Fort Lauderdale is fortuitous, to say the least. With 42 private residences, 48 Four Seasons Hotel residences and 150 hotel suites, the acclaimed Four Seasons will undoubtedly be the finest new addition to grace Fort Lauderdale's reimagined shoreline. It's hard to believe it has been a decade since the St. Regis — now Ritz-Carlton — opened in an Arquitectonica-designed tower just a few blocks south.

For this project, Fort Partners and Merrimac Ventures opted to team up with architect Kobi Karp and interior designer Tara Bernerd. Bernerd, based in London, is very highly regarded in the field of hospitality design. Bernerd's firm has completed acclaimed interiors for the Thompson Chicago, Swissotels in Basel and Zurich, as well as the complete redesign of Thompson Hotel's London flagship. In November, we had the opportunity to speak with Bernerd about her part in the creation of this new gem.

Tropic: *Tara, you've been very successful with residential interiors, but seem to be especially adept at creating authentic spaces for the hospitality industry, perhaps most notably with your seductive interiors for Thompson Hotels. How did a partnership with the Four Seasons come about and why do you*

Once completed, this new, streamlined tower by architect Kobi Karp, with interiors by Tara Bernerd and landscaping by Fernando Wong, promises luxury and legendary service never seen on our shores.

think there is a good synergy between Tara Bernerd & Partners and the Four Seasons?

Tara Bernerd: The Four Seasons had been aware of our work for some time and I think in particular were very aware of our work in the US for both the Thompson Chicago and indeed at SIXTY SoHo for Jason Pomeranc. Our initial work commenced when the Vice President, Christopher Norton, visited our offices 2 years ago and there was indeed an incredible synergy, which has been the foundation of this relationship.

Your hotel interiors always embody a special, understated take on luxury, and from the designs released so far for the Four Seasons Private Residences Fort Lauderdale, this still holds true. But with this Fort Lauderdale property, you've captured the essence of the new Fort Lauderdale: relaxed elegance. How did you arrive at that solution for the hotel and residences?

The design intent for Fort Lauderdale came very naturally and it was an instinct to marry an elegance of the past and a Riviera lifestyle, with a luxury Florida/Bahamas feel. I think respecting this old-school chic and combining it with the lifestyles of today have been key elements that inform the design.



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Tara Bernerd, designer

The cafe, lobby and restaurant offer tall, volumetric spaces, thanks to the team at Kobi Karp Architecture and Interior Design. How did you deal with that as a designer and in the end, what did you envision these tall spaces evoking for the hotel's guests and residents?

The Hotel in fact varies in height and as a result we are able to create different zones. For example the reception lobby benefits from a handsome double-height space, which becomes more intimate in the lounge bar where the ceilings are lower. In essence the experience of working with Kobi Karp has been invaluable and although our remit has been for the interior architecture for the resort, we have worked carefully on the first floor language with the window treatments introducing both stone exterior cladding and interior screening in other areas.

When I look at the current renderings of the café and lounge, I'm struck by a few things: the airiness of the entire space, how it's broken up into intimate gathering areas, and a kind of Florida-centric vibe.

It was very important to me to try and achieve something light and airy, yet still with a warmth and an intimacy. We have set about achieving this through floor finishes, careful furniture layout and indeed furniture and fabric. All of which was very carefully zoned.

We were inspired to bring something very interesting to the flooring due to the amount of glass and the ceiling height, so that a warmth and style could be immediately impactful. We achieved this through a patterned travertine, which offered a slight homage to the 1950s.

Stone flooring and mid-century inspired furnishings add interest and a special sophistication to the Hotel's café and open terrace beyond.

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Tara Bernerd, designer

Architect Kobi Karp has used a lot of glass in what is a very special project. How do you as a designer, make the transition from indoors to out in these public spaces.

Clearly, this is an important part of our work and we have worked closely with Kobi Karp and landscape designers Fernando Wong. In addition, on an interiors note, we have also observed and carefully used indoor plantings, which helps bring the outside in to the interiors and melds the spaces together.

As you continue the process of refining the design, have any indoor or outdoor spaces become your favorite?

I am personally very excited by the lounge bar, however feel that the entire project has become a favorite.

How did you extend your special take on the building's location, this dreamy Florida elegance you've conjured up in the public spaces, and bring it to the hotel's guest suites?

When I first arrived and saw the site with my partner Lucien Smith, it conjured up thoughts of the Riviera and Croisette in Cannes in its heyday. And although a lot has changed since those hazy days, those thoughts inspired me.

In the renderings of the hotel guest suites, I was surprised to find travertine flooring in certain spaces and linen or grasscloth wall coverings. These elements, in my opinion, are perfect for a South Florida Four Seasons. How did you arrive at decisions like these?

Custom laquered cabinetry, integrated Sub-Zero, Miele and Wolf appliances are standard in both the private residences and the Four Seasons Hotel residences.





Hotel residences are elegantly finished with travertine floors, soft tones and floor-to-ceiling sliders. Suites are cared for by Four Seasons housekeeping and butler service.

Travertine does play a key role in terms of materials and our choice has been for this warm yet interesting stone, that sits so well with the other finishes. It has a very natural stylish, low-key appearance, in keeping with the projects' DNA or scheme.

The color selections in these guest suites are incredibly restful: pale flooring, integrated galley kitchens finished with light-toned woods... Most pieces seem to fit into a palette that runs from cafe au lait to silvery grey to chamois. What were your thoughts about color in this special, oceanfront Four Seasons?

There is in fact quite a substantial amount of color that surfaces in these interiors, although the use of color has been more subtle and perhaps not overly busy. There's a mix of some paler palettes all the way to navy blues and yellow, ochre, linen that together, combined with the patterned floors and interesting furniture, actually brings a layered effect that exudes color.

The lobby furnishings seem to suggest a tongue-in-cheek nod to mid-century design with slipper-style chairs, mesh light-diffusing screens and some pieces with almost a Scandinavian vibe. Given the history of Fort Lauderdale Beach, I personally love these selections.

Fitting and fixtures chosen for the private residences and the Four Seasons Hotel residences are the best available. Waterworks and Lefroy Brooks in the bathrooms, Sub-Zero and Wolf in the kitchens.

There has indeed been an intentional nod at mid-century as it was so natural to the DNA of this scheme and in my opinion also brought something sophisticated and perhaps less generic and formulated in terms of hotel furniture.

In the end, when the doors of this establishment open and the bar on fine design is again raised in Fort Lauderdale, what do you want guests and residents of the Four Seasons to feel here? How would you want them to describe their experience to friends?

Unforgettable! ■