



SECOND BLUSH

An iconic resort in sun-kissed Port Douglas is starting over freshly washed in tropical white and mint with hints of its original pink.

Photographs SEAN FENNESSY Words CARLI PHILIPS



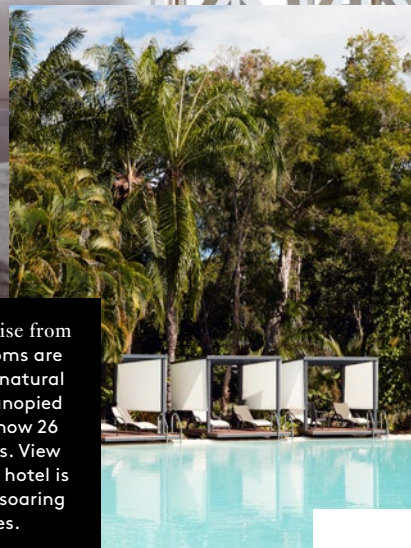
The 1980s was the height of excess for Australian billionaire and fugitive-to-be Christopher Skase and his wife Pixie, who launched their five-star Sheraton Mirage resort and golf course with an extravagant party that lasted for days. Complete with two hectares of saltwater lagoons, it put the sleepy fishing town of Port Douglas on the map, but it's been a long time since George Clooney, Claudia Schiffer, Mick Jagger and the Clintons walked the shores of Four Mile Beach and played 18 holes of golf.

Well past its prime, the hotel remained untouched until interior design studio Mim Design began a refurbishment. "Being able to work on such an iconic hotel dating from the heady era of the 80s brought many challenges but also many delights as we embraced key philosophies as to why the hotel was built and what it meant in promoting far north Queensland," says Miriam Fanning of Mim Design, who was responsible for redesigning the public spaces and VIP penthouse suites.

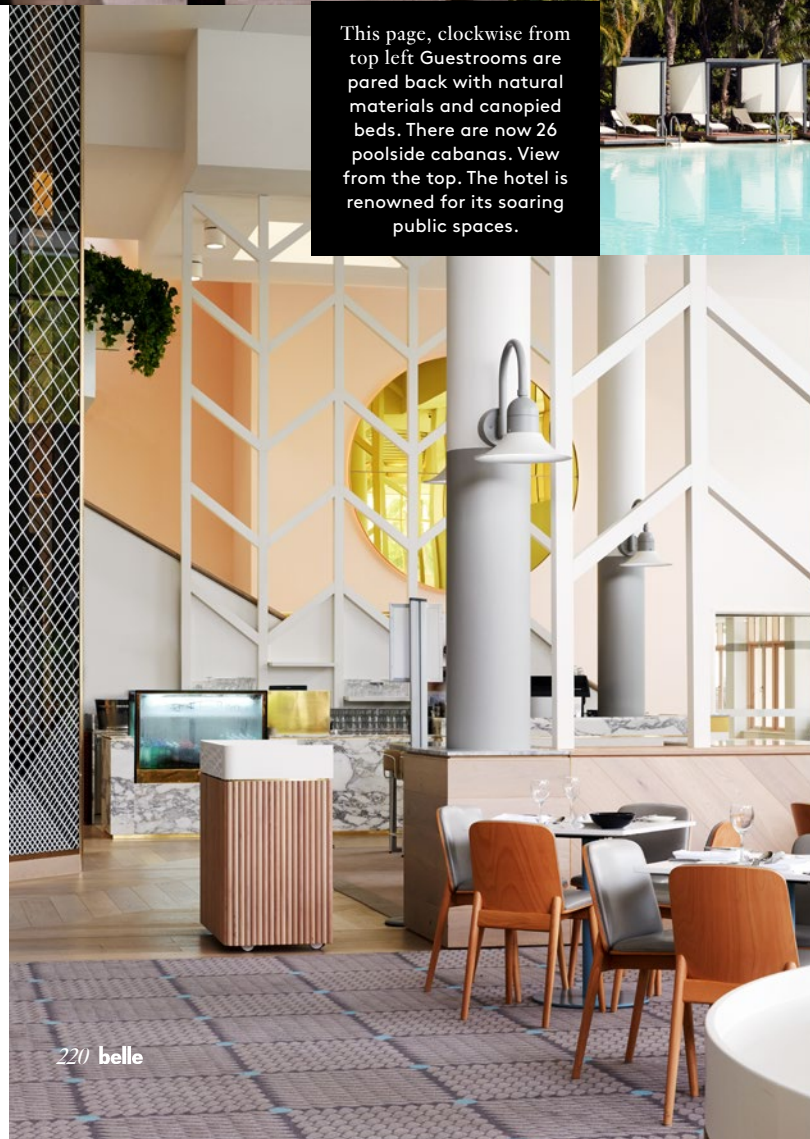
"It was originally moulded on 1970s and 80s Hawaiian style which is why there is such a big internal aspect instead of outward views," she says of the expansive lobby which remained untouched structurally. The hotel has been given a lick of paint and the famous 'Pixie pink' facade has been reinterpreted in the new signature Feast restaurant where an indulgent buffet (it would make the Skases proud) is served from silver cloches resting on rich, dove-grey marble countertops. The room is both gentle and bold, a soft palette of dusty coral and powdery biscuit offset by confident materials such as ribbed timber and copper. Miriam says the "complex size and proportion" of the sprawling volumes proved

This page, clockwise from top left Glamorous Feast restaurant. Saltwater lagoons wind around the resort. The dining room and Feast restaurant. The Hawaiian-Australian aesthetic is accented with sophisticated fittings. Check-in and lobby. Opposite page Upper lounge area.





This page, clockwise from top left Guestrooms are pared back with natural materials and canopied beds. There are now 26 poolside cabanas. View from the top. The hotel is renowned for its soaring public spaces.



challenging but were overcome by “the layering of materials and finishes along with the addition of screens and shutters... designed to break down the large, expansive space”.

The owners felt that some original pieces such as the antique tables and 18th-century French figurines remain as an ode to the hotel's heritage, but they are perhaps a little too conservative for the now spirited space. Mim Design's “curation” involved using “original elements such as polished brass, limed timbers and forest green stone along with white shutters” as the basis for a “fresh look”. Australia's very own Pink Palace, the atrium features wicker armchairs in musk pink and mint peppered with banana-leaf cushions. On the floor, custom oak timber boards from Woodcut intersect with ceramic tiles, while the surrounding lounge is dressed in emerald-green velvet chesterfield banquettes and rich-rose club chairs. “We chose to work with part of the original scheme because we felt it paid homage to the iconic nature of the hotel,” says Miriam of her choice to use velvet in the light, tropical environment.

The guest bedrooms adopt a more minimal aesthetic, with crisp muted textiles and breezy canopied beds. With the addition of driftwood timber-tiled floors and natural wood furnishings, it's contemporary coastal chic at its finest. This look extends to the spanking new poolside cabanas fringed by palm trees and just a few steps to the beach. Best enjoyed with a club sandwich and cocktail, it's no mirage – just a tropical paradise at its five-star finest.

For more go to mimdesign.com.au; sheratonportdouglass.com.