

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

The Watergate Hotel leans into scandal via thematic redesign

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Exterior of The Watergate Hotel. Image credit: The Watergate Hotel

By STAFF REPORTS

In honor of the 45th anniversary of the Nixon administration's political scandal, The Watergate Hotel is giving an infamous guest room a makeover.

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During the break-in at the Democratic headquarters in the Watergate complex on June 17, 1972, the leaders behind the burglary used the Washington hotel's room 214 as their command center. Now, this guest room is being given a new look that plays into its shady past with help from a costume designer used to outfitting dramas.

Scandalous stay

On the night of the break in, E. Howard Hunt and G. Gordon Liddy set themselves up in the Watergate Hotel, using their room to communicate with other members of their team via radio. This activity was noticed by security guard Frank Wills, who called the police and set into action the unveiling of the scandal.

Fittingly, as the five-star hotel embraces its status as a household name, it has chosen Lyn Paolo, the costume designer behind "Shameless" and political drama "Scandal," and as its collaborator.

Ms. Paolo will work with the hotel's co-owner and senior vice president of design and development Raket Cohen to give the space a new look. In-room amenities, closet items and furnishings will highlight the room's scandalous past.



The Watergate Hotel completed \$200 million renovations in 2016. Image credit: The Watergate Hotel

"Because of the infamous break-in 45 years ago, The Watergate Hotel has been a household name with a scandalous past that can't be ignored," said Ms. Cohen in a statement. "We pay homage to the past with small details throughout the property, but everyone kept asking us about room 214, so we needed to do something bold with it.

"The decision to team up with Lyn Paolo, known for her award-winning work on the hit TV series *Scandal* was an easy choice we couldn't have a better partner," she said.

The guest room is slated to debut this fall.

Rather than hide from its place in U.S. political history, The Watergate member of Preferred Hotels & Resorts embraces it. Even before its remodel of room 214, the property owned by Euro Capital Properties has made other nods to its past.

For instance, the hotel uses Nixon's recorded voice instead of hold music, decorates pencils with the phrase "I stole this from The Watergate Hotel" and gives guests room key cards reading, "No need to break in."

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