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Color My World

Palm Springs' new SAGUARO hotel puts on a happy face with a poppin' palette *by* MAYER RUS

In its last incarnation, the Saguaro in Palm Springs was painted in what can only be described as olive drab—emphasis on drab. When the old Holiday Inn was purchased by the Sydell Group (backers of Ace hotels in New York and Palm Springs), they knew something had to be done.

Enter Stamberg Aferiat, the New York architecture firm headed by Peter Stamberg and Paul Aferiat. The directive was clear: Turn that frown upside down—fast. The metamorphosis of the 249-room, three-level hotel was to be completed in time to catch the end of high season in the Coachella Valley. That deadline precluded any major structural emendations or elaborate design calisthenics.

Facing a timeline of a scant 14 weeks, Stamberg and Aferiat turned to a familiar tool of architectural alchemy: color. The partners' first order of business was to



free the 1977 building from its dreary straitjacket by whitewashing the entire hotel. Their next move involved the deployment of an array of vivid hues drawn from the indigenous flowers of the surrounding desert.

The rainbow riot extends from the Pantone-like color sequences of accent walls on the exterior and the courtyard to custom, mega-scaled floral wallpaper behind the reception desk to guestroom furnishings that include deep purple carpet and blazing yellow and orange sheers. The euphoric palette is tempered—a bit—by traditional Mexican equipale chairs and tables of rustic woods and leather.

At the first Saguaro, which opened in Scottsdale in November, Stamberg Aferiat married kaleidoscopic color and nods to the native landscape. In Palm Springs, they've taken that pop symphony to new heights of delicious, delirious design.