



Room 214, the Scandal Suite, in The Watergate Hotel David Preta

CELEBRITY LIFESTYLE

## The Watergate Hotel's Room 214 Gets a Makeover by *Scandal* Costume Designer Lyn Paolo

*Scandal*'s Lyn Paolo has paired up with the owner of the Watergate Hotel to reimagine one of history's most iconic guest rooms

By Carson Griffith

October 17, 2017

In 1972, E. Howard Hunt and G. Gordon Liddy stationed themselves in what is now [the Watergate Hotel](#)'s Room 214. (From there, they remained in contact with those involved in the scandal via radio while the burglary at the Democratic National Committee in the adjacent Watergate Complex was under way.) Forty-five years later, the room is still a draw for history lovers. But now there's even one more reason to visit the commemorative space: On Thursday, October 19, the Watergate Hotel will unveil a new version of its signature guest room, which has been redesigned by *Scandal* costume designer Lyn Paolo. Paolo, who is also the designer for the Showtime series *Shameless*, collaborated with Watergate Hotel co-owner Rakel Cohen to preserve the iconic room's history while modernizing the space.

Get **The International Issue**, featuring **Naomi Campbell**, guaranteed!

Subscribe Now

The room, which sets itself apart from others in the hotel due to its distinct look, boasts a number of items reminiscent of the political scandal President Richard Nixon attempted to cover up: binoculars, a typewriter, a cassette tape player, and several pieces of furniture serve as a throwback to the 1970s. (Guests of the hotel who don't get the opportunity to stay in Room 214 can still enjoy the establishment's nod to its historic past: room keys read "No Need to Break In"; Nixon speeches are played over the phone instead of hold music; and pencils engraved with "I Stole This from the Watergate Hotel" are scattered throughout the property.) The woman behind [Kerry Washington's](#) fiercest on-screen looks, Lyn Paolo, talks to *AD* about putting her own touch on one of America's most politically iconic rooms.



David Preta

**Architectural Digest:** What did you think when you were approached by the Watergate Hotel to help design this *Scandal* Room 214?

**Lyn Paolo:** I was thrilled and excited. I am a huge political junkie, and the thought of working with Rakel Cohen, the owner and senior vice president of design and development at the hotel, and actually getting to stand in Room 214 of the Watergate was a huge thrill. The fact that it is also the 45th anniversary of the notorious Watergate break-in only added to my sense of excitement. As a design experience, it was so out of the ordinary for me as a costume designer, and I loved the challenge.

**AD:** Were you aware of the room's history before you were brought on for the project?

**LP:** Oh my goodness, I was well aware of the history, although the actual room number was not on my radar. Also, I would say to your readers that if they get the chance to stand in that room, it is a surreal experience that is well worth a visit to the Watergate Hotel. So much of our history and of the American culture was defined by that space. I loved visiting the Watergate Hotel and adding to my knowledge with the research that I did with Rakel Cohen. Rakel is such a warm and giving collaborator and we had a wonderful time together.

**AD:** How did you preserve the history of this famous room? What elements did you bring in to do so?

**LP:** Rakel and I really had to work within the original footprint of Room 214, so our vision was to transport the guest back in time by selecting a palette and design elements that reflected our modern vision of the period. We found an amazing metal desk by

Twenty Gauge that really felt like it could have been in the Watergate offices of the Democratic National Committee, and we found newspaper articles and quotes from the period and *Scandal* that now adorn the walls of the room.



David Preta

**AD:** Are there any little interesting things in the room you think a one-night guest may not notice that we should point out?

**LP:** As well as designing the space to "feel" like you were stepping back in time, Rakel and I also added little touches that would remind one of the DNC office space: a midcentury steno chair; a vintage red Ericofon phone to ring room service, a Crosley record player so you can spin tunes from the period.

**AD:** What is your overall favorite item in the room and where did you find it?

**LP:** I am a huge fan of any kind of spy or thriller fiction and also biographies so I will always err on the side of talking about the small library of relevant books that are inside the room: *In Nixon's Web*, *The Secret Man* by Bob Woodward, et cetera. Rakel and I also loved an amazing sofa from In Style Modern Inc. that we upholstered in red leather to give the room that vintage "scandalous" pop of red.

**AD:** How does being a costume designer translate to the work you did for the Watergate?

**LP:** They are quite different, but both important to help in telling a story. I enjoyed this experience of expressing a part of history through design.



David Preta



David Preta

AD

Get The International Issue Guaranteed

featuring **NAOMI CAMPBELL**

**SUBSCRIBE NOW**

Plus, 2 free gifts!

