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The Inn of the Five Graces

Eastern motifs enliven an intimate hotel in downtown Santa Fe

ASIAN AESTHETICS AND DECOR HAVE LONG BEEN A PART OF SANTA FE'S HISTORY, and The Inn of the Five Graces pays homage to that tradition not only with its name but with an assortment of textiles, furniture and architectural features that have found their way into the New Mexico hotel from the far corners of the world. The inn's name comes from a Tibetan travel custom of presenting five gifts to a holy lama before embarking on a journey. The offerings, symbolic of the five senses, are made in exchange for a blessing.

In 2002, the Garret Hotel Group purchased the property after David and Christie Garret spent one night at what was then a bed-and-breakfast. "Almost all of our hotel purchases have been impulsive," says Christie Garret, who is overseeing the redesign of the inn. "This was certainly no exception." The inn is the first western property for the company, which focuses on running small hotels, all with fewer than fifty rooms. Cornerstones of the group's holdings are Lake Placid Lodge and The Point, two Adirondack camp-style lodges in upstate New York, as well as The Wilcox, an elegant hotel in Aiken, South Carolina. "We hope and intend for it to be something truly unique in Santa Fe, offering a more intimate experience than bigger hotels and a higher level of service than smaller ones," adds Garret.

Nestled in a historic nook of Santa Fe, The Inn of the Five Graces is a hideaway. The compound includes adobe buildings and a 1938 stone house built of rocks taken from the Santa Fe River. Most of the twenty-two suites adjoin interior courtyards filled with Japanese elm trees, plants overflowing ceramic or antique wood planters, fountains, intricately carved wood garden swings and akas—as well as the occasional Buddha peeking out from leaves.

During the Spanish Colonial era Asian textiles, art and furnishings traveled by Spanish galleons across the Pacific Ocean from the Philippines to Mexico and then by mule trains over the dusty trails of the Camino Real into New Mexico. The furnishings inside The Inn of the Five Graces made a similar,

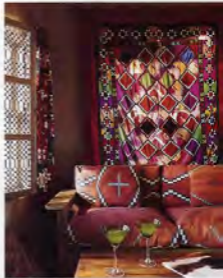
The Inn of the Five Graces in Santa Fe is the first western property in the Garret Hotel Group's portfolio of boutique hotels, which includes The Point and the Lake Placid Lodge. **opposite:** Most of the twenty-two suites open to courtyards. **above:** Christie Garret worked with Vision Design Group to update the hotel's original interiors, by Ink and Sylvia Seer.







In one of the suites, a leak mirror from Rajasthan is mixed with an Afghan chest and bed linens and pillow fabric from Jaipur. The headboard upholstery is an antique kilim from Afghanistan. "These pieces work so well in Santa Fe because all the symbols and the geometric patterns have been traveling for thousands of years," says Ira Seret. "They're connected in some way to Southwest style."



Clockwise from top left: An antique milk cart from India sits in front of the property's 1938 stone house; the rear courtyard has a stone table from Agra, Uzbek draperies and Indian grillwork in a living room; a swing that once belonged to a maharajah was paired with dhurrie cushions and placed in the front courtyard; **opposite:** For the baths, Sylvia Seret created murals of Pueblo tile and broken plates from Jaipur. The wood vanity incorporates two-hundred-year-old carvings from Maharashtra, while the sink is a contemporary design from New Mexico.





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albeit modern, journey to the hotel, brought there by Ira and Sylvia Seret. Both exterior and interior furnishings were initially selected by the Serets, who established a bed-and-breakfast on the site in the mid-1990s, creating an intimate showcase for the furniture and textiles from their Santa Fe store, Seret & Sons. They retrofitted the rooms with wood screens, doors and other amenities, including mirrors, kilims and exotic chests from places like Tibet, Afghanistan and India. Sylvia designed many of the whimsical tile and mosaic patterns in the hotel's kitchens and baths.

Working with David Naylor and Marty Nelson of Visions Design Group in Santa Fe, Christie Garrett plans to expand the baths and reduce the size of the kitchens, remnants of an earlier era when the property was managed as condominiums. "It's still going to be in that Seret and Sons style, using the architecture and fabrics from Afghanistan and India," explains David Naylor. The beds have already been transformed to give them "more of a silky, sumptuous feel," says Christie Garrett. Also in the works is a reception area, which will include a library, breakfast room and bar. "We have ambitious plans for a succession of outdoor garden rooms in the courtyard spaces."

The Inn of the Five Graces fosters a sense of escape, in part by paying particular attention to the needs of its guests. Approximately a week before visitors arrive, they can expect a phone call from Niall Reid, the general manager, who queries them about any needs they might have: whether they want a fireplace, for instance, or what specialty foods or beverages they want in their rooms. Other touches involve the turndown service: In addition to providing a plate of cookies and a dreamcatcher, the hotel delivers a daily planner with a weather forecast and a schedule of exhibitions at nearby museums and film-screening times. Reid, who has no trouble remembering everyone's first name, also offers guests some of the best treasures of Santa Fe, including breakfast breads and pastries from the Sage Bakehouse and temporary gym memberships at Quail Run.

"We're creating a hotel where you can get very involved with the activities and the high energy of Santa Fe and then come back to an almost reclusive home feeling," says Philip Wood, chief operating officer for the hotel group. "It's your enclave. Because you're sort of behind walls in your own private area, you don't need to feel that you're in the middle of all the tourist hubbub." ←

above: Among the Serets' specialties are antique doors from around the world. For one of the rooms, they installed a narrow two-hundred-year-old oak piece from Nunatak. **opposite:** The acryls-and-oil mural on the fireplace is one that was done by a local artist.