

Dallas' Virgin Hotel Artfully Reopens With a New Installation Reflecting the Times

Has sheltering in place for oh-so many months left you consumed by wanderlust? But perhaps you're still hesitant to book a plane ticket to a far-and-away destination. That predicament seems to be quite common nowadays. The summer travel season was supposed to start Memorial Day Weekend, but fewer and fewer decided to venture very far. Poll after poll has shown that Americans just aren't comfortable with the idea of taking a flight to their favorite beach or mountainside retreat.

The thought of a staycation — a concept that emerged during the last economic downturn in 2008 — seems to be crossing the minds of many people who have gone stir-crazy staring at the same walls day in and day out. Many hotels that had shuttered during the coronavirus lockdown are beginning to reopen. Promising new protocols for cleaning and less contact with employees, they are beginning to get more and more reservations from locals who live only a few miles away.

One boutique hotel, the Virgin, located in the burgeoning and bustling Dallas Design District, has decided to take an artful approach to its reopening. The property had debuted just a few short months before Texas' stay-at-home orders came but had already gained a reputation for attracting a chic and design-obsessed clientele.



In an attempt to foster social distancing in the common areas, a new installation, “Together Again: Reconnecting Through Fashion and Art,” has unveiled in time to welcome weekend vacation and staycationers. The inventive vignettes, curated by fashion consultant Kristen Cole, are made from 12 mannequins who have been styled in bold and beguiling pieces from a roster of renowned fashion designers including Christopher John Rogers (winner of the 2019 CFDA/Vogue Fashion Fund), Rosie Assoulin (nominee for the 2019 CFDA womenswear designer of the year), Marina Moscone, and Gigi Burris. In addition, classic elements from Archive Vintage are peppered throughout the installation.

Coexisting in these whimsical mannequin-occupied spaces are new artworks. A collection of Manolo Campion’s surreal fashion photographs is scattered about Commons Club — Virgin’s restaurant, bar, and lounge. In the adjacent Funny Library Coffee Shop, a bright graphic vinyl

installation was created by Andrew Kuo to encourage our six-feet-apart new normal. Other artists whose is found throughout the hotel include Andy Coolquit and Katie Stout. Be on the lookout for the stunning neon, and LED hanging sculpture from Adela Andea.



Kristen Cole had garnered a large fan club during her tenure at the helm of Forty Five Ten for always bringing up-and-coming design talent to Dallas. Her eye is second to none and was the immediate choice when the hotel decided to not simply remove furniture or rope off areas, but instead create fashion installations, shared Teddy Mayer, vice president of design of Virgin Hotels.

- BILLY FONG