



loa
The Bar

In Voodoo, "**loa**" means deities or Holy Spirits. At the bar of that name at **International House**, the atmosphere, the ambiance, and the attitude all give space and sanctuary to the spirit.

This stylish enclave within International House, attracting a regular following of the city's creatives and entrepreneurs, as well as the hotel's enlightened guests, was designed by LM Pagano, known for a romantic decadence typified by her interiors for Johnny Depp. *loa* exudes tranquility and calm, and a worldly sophistication, bathed in the seductive sparkle and glow and promise of candlelight – which is known to soften the defenses, as well as the features.

As you enter, a dramatic handcrafted "bubble" chandelier spanning the entire ceiling catches your eye and draws you in – designed by Peter Manukyan of Filament Lighting, its glass orbs and bare bulbs dangle in a relaxed grid pattern at varying lengths, giving the naturalistic impression of a starry sky, or a nocturnal garden of fireflies. In the belief that light symbolizes the divine, each evening at *loa*, a ritual illumination takes place as dozens of votive candles are lit throughout the space. Oversized pillars of ivory wax glow atop ornately carved rococo candlesticks, their worn gilding and dynamic curves adding a lively note to the copper-topped bar.

With local insight and eclectic sensibilities, Pagano deftly integrates influences from parts of the world that have contributed to New Orleans' cultural richness – Italy, Spain, France, Africa – along with local elements that single out a distinct time and place. Within the glowing atmosphere, in cozy arrangements encouraging lounging and whispers, clusters of crimson cut-velvet chairs and settees beckon, anchored by a whimsical sofa-in-the-round, all by Pagano. A dozen diminutive ottomans, similarly upholstered, are easily arranged at will to suit the impromptu dynamics of intimate conversation. A Calcutta-gold topped altar and cocktail tables infuse the atmosphere with a creamy gleaming opulence against the predominantly plush red palette.

Behind the bar, backlit by daylight and aglow at night, soars a delicate grid of iron and glass shelving, holding the carefully curated spirits. The collection is surrounded by a variety of fresh herbs, floral, and other vegetation, an easy sprig's distance from the apothecary-like operation that lend to the rainbow of aromatic syrups that perfume the hotel lobby with intriguing scents from saffron, to Spanish moss, to catnip. The concoctions on the colorful list of "**Potations**" and "**Preparations**" at *loa* often involve at least a drop or two of one of the nearly twenty proprietary syrups, condensing and preserving the flavors of a myriad ingredients in a [usually] sugar-based liquid. The syrups are created on a rustic camp-stove powered by a can of butane, right on the bar. The

flavor being captured might be Pine Needles, picked that morning over in City Park; or Raw Lemongrass or Caramelized Pandan Leaf.

Adding a layer of history to the rich amalgam of cultures, styles, and textures at *loa*, the inventive concoctions are served in delicate vintage glass ware that links you to New Orleans' colorful past with each sip. A favorite "Preparation" is the *Green Chartreuse*, with fresh-pressed apple, ginger, sage, mint, and basil, presented like a glowing liquid emerald in a delicate glass bowl. The signature "Potation," *Jean Lafitte*, combines Oronoco Rum, pisco, Spanish moss, dried lime, and fennel. The *Drawing Room* is a romantic blend of Redbreast Irish Whiskey, rose liqueur, Elixir MP Roux, and watermelon. "Nieux Classics" offer a fresh approach to beloved cocktails, a drink form that originated in New Orleans, and where the mastery of concocting honors invention alongside tradition. The *Old Fashioned* features Wild Turkey Rare Breed, Thai chili demerara, and aromatic bitters.

At *loa*, replete with glimmering candles and sparks of creative passion, there's plenty of fire – but no smoke: in keeping with the sense of sanctuary, International House and *loa* took the lead in becoming the first *smoke-free* boutique hotel and bar in New Orleans.

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