

Cool Comfort

MULTI-PURPOSE ZONES AND AN ATMOSPHERIC PALETTE MAKE FRANCESC RIFÉ STUDIO'S VIP LOUNGE FOR AVIANCA FIRST CLASS IN EVERY SENSE

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Airports are chaotic places. So when passengers seek refuge in a lounge, the top thing they crave is a sense of order and quiet. This desire is perfectly in tune with the principles of Spanish designer Francesc Rifé, who has made order, symmetry and proportion the trademarks of his practice. When called in to design the Colombian national airline's new flagship VIP Lounge at El Dorado International Airport in Bogotá, Rifé exercised precision and applied a relaxing palette to create an oasis that mixes comfort and entertainment.

Encompassing 3,500 square metres, Avianca's lounge could have felt cavernous. To counter this effect, Rifé organized areas to meet the various needs of both business- and first-class travellers, the purpose of each space identified with a name such as "Stay Connected," "Resting Area" or "Enjoy Your Meal." The approach eschews the traditional concept of lounges as places to merely sit and wait. Instead, Avianca's fosters myriad experiences – passengers can sequester themselves in a quiet area or socialize in open zones, depending on their mood.

Keeping in mind such airport-imposed restrictions as ceiling height and general lighting levels, Rifé incorporated a series of "micro architectures" within which he could play more freely with proportions and illumination. For example, he designed towering auxiliary standing lamps whose metal structures hold aloft canopies of light and mimic the form of a local tree species. For seating, Rifé mixed custom pieces with ones drawn from his portfolio for Spanish brands Carmenes and Capdell. He also included furniture by Claesson Koivisto Rune and Jorge Pensi and lighting by Ramos & Bassols.

Colombia itself inspired the palette, which is dominated by a soft grey that evokes an indigenous stone. Introduced through carpet and ceramic floor tiles, the soothing tone is enlivened with hits of inky black and warm walnut that help create a dramatic aesthetic without feeling ominous. In a further nod to the region, caña flecha – a species of tall grass used to make traditional sombreros – was fashioned into sound-absorbing panels. rife-design.com



ABOVE: A moody quality defines one of two quiet areas, where privacy and a hushed environment take precedence.

FAR LEFT: With seating for just over 50, "Feel at Home" is the largest area for waiting and relaxing. The Bud armchairs are by Francesc Rifé Studio for Carmenes.

LEFT: The bar area (or "Have a Drink") features both lounge chairs and bar stools. Grey walls and floors maintain a tranquil vibe.