

HOTELS by DESIGN



A GUIDE TO THE MOST BEAUTIFULLY DESIGNED HOTELS IN THE WORLD

HOUSE & GARDEN

PATRICK BLANC

Patrick Blanc designed the living wall at The Athenaeum in London



RECENT PROJECT
The Athenaeum, London
OTHER NOTABLE WORK
Pershing Hall, Paris; The Westin, Paris; Byblos, St-Tropez

I am a cross between a botanist and an artist. I need botanical knowledge to understand which plants suit each project and then I become an artist to make the best aesthetic use of them.

The attraction of a vertical garden, or a living wall, is that visual contact

with plants is very calming to the mind. Looking at plants helps you to relax. It's also a big way for a hotel to differentiate itself from the next. The Athenaeum's living wall was selected by *Time* magazine as one of the 50 most interesting innovations in 2009.

Sourcing the plants is not easy because we use some species that are not on the market. We find small, specialised nurseries all over the world and work with local plant companies. We tend to use 30 plants a square metre, and up to 2,000 on a single project.

Every vertical garden is supposed to look good all year round, so we don't select plants because they are blooming; we look at the colour and volume of each plant, and the shape of its leaves. A garden may take three years to come to fruition, but we like it when we are involved in the building design - we can make sure that the garden is located in the best place for maximum visibility,

ANDRE FU, AFISO



RECENT PROJECT
The Upper House, Hong Kong
OTHER NOTABLE WORK
Piacere and Nadaman restaurants and Horizon Club lounge at the Shangri-La Hotel, Tokyo; Agnès B, flagship shop, Hong Kong

Andre Fu's design for *The Upper House* in Hong Kong (below) is based on **symmetry and proportion**. The 'sky bridge' (below left) that links the lobby and the restaurant was inspired by a Chinese paper umbrella

I do not wish to be considered a designer with a signature style: I am approach-driven, rather than style-driven, and derive my work through discussion with a client and sharing their vision. Within that, the DNA of my designs comes down to a feeling I'm trying to project. What makes a great hotel is the fourth dimension: the emotional side. *The Upper House*

called for calm and comfort, but the Asian influences are not too literal, not replications of specific motifs or features, more a general serenity that people associate with Asian sensitivity. I wanted that subtly to permeate the design.

Everywhere you turn there's a piece of art that anchors the vision - we commissioned 350 pieces - or a traditional Japanese garden with a view of what is beyond, to give a sense of place. There's a strong sense of symmetry and balanced proportion that is evident in ancient Chinese architecture - so perfectly balanced that it is really calming and comfortable to look at.



54 H&G | HOTELS BY DESIGN 2010

