

DISCOVERY

Studio^{cx} ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE 娛樂指南 > PAGE 84

 CATHAY PACIFIC

OCTOBER 2011
2011年10月號

George Town shines again

Penang regains its lustre
檳城舊建築光芒重現

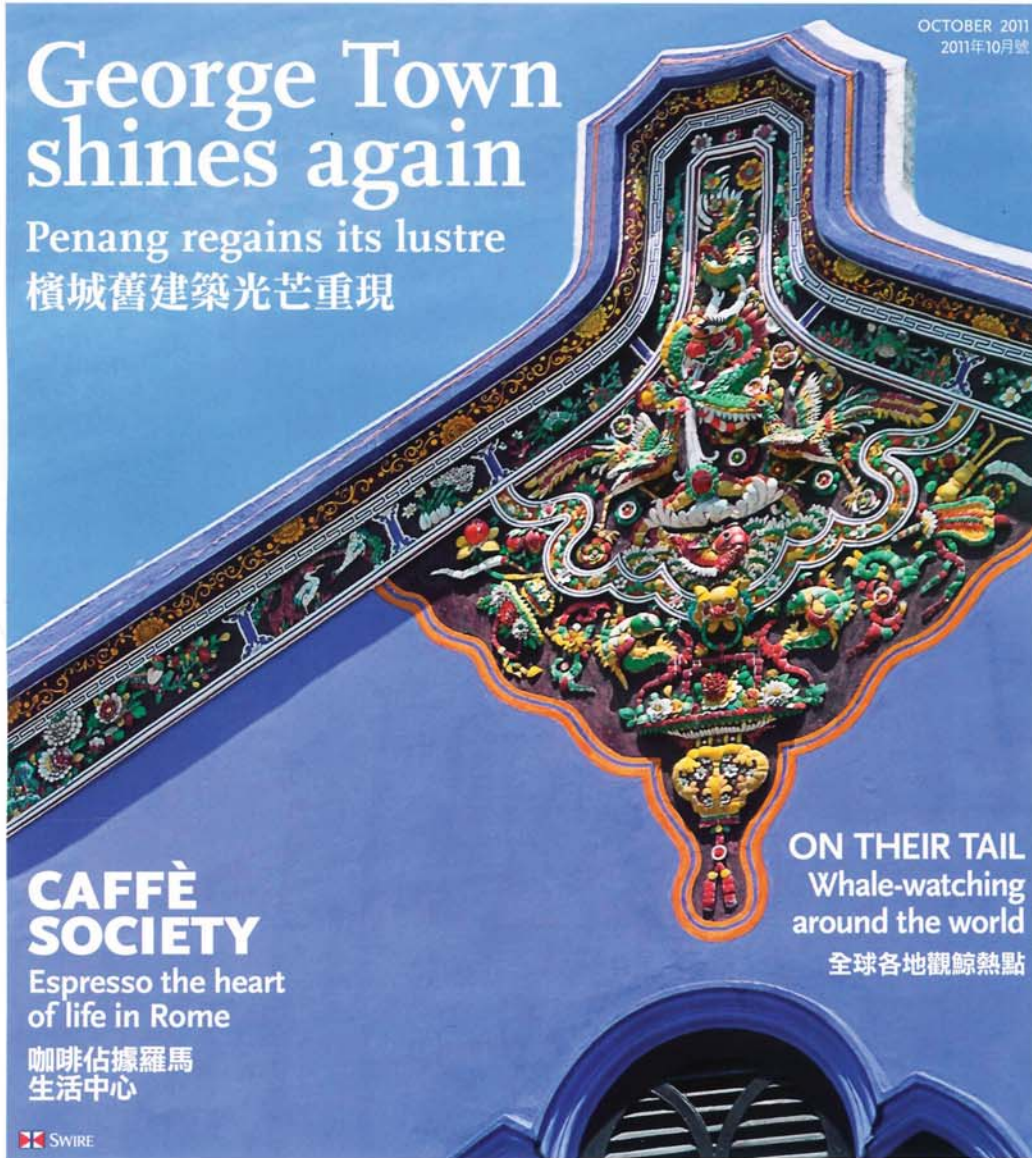
CAFFÈ SOCIETY

Espresso the heart
of life in Rome

咖啡佔據羅馬
生活中心

 SWIRE

ON THEIR TAIL
Whale-watching
around the world
全球各地觀鯨熱點



Andre Fu is the inside man behind some stunning design work at Asia's top hotels and restaurants

亞洲多家頂級酒店和餐廳的出色設計，均來自傅厚民的創意巧思

Internal affairs

創意滿室

by SALLY ROBINSON



School of thought: Andre Fu launched design company AFSO during his final year at university

傅厚民於大學最後一年創辦了自己的設計公司AFSO

IT'S 1:30PM IN Bettys Kitschen, a chic new restaurant in the middle of the IFC, one of Hong Kong's busiest malls. Outside, it's a frenzy of lunchtime shoppers but in here it's an oasis of calm – all pale stone walls, blonde wood tables and vintage fans purring overhead. Andre Fu, the restaurant's designer, is sitting in one corner of the long, trapezium-shaped room, neatly framed by a wall of vibrant green basil. The concept of this, his latest project, was to blend the essence of a rustic Italian *cucina* with a modern spirit and the 800 pots of basil lining the walls are here to lend a homespun touch to the place.

Since the 2009 opening of Swire Hotels' The Upper House in Hong Kong, highly acclaimed as a lesson in understated luxury, Fu has cemented his position as Asia's design darling. In the past five years his commissions have included Singapore's Fullerton Bay Hotel, Nadaman and Piacere restaurants in the Shangri-La, Tokyo, the agnès b. La Loggia flagship store in Hong Kong, Bettys Kitschen (owned by Alan Yau, the man behind the Wagamama chain and London's Hakkasan restaurant) and a collection of sumptuous rugs for Tai Ping Carpets. Hot off the press is *A Bespoke Journey: Andre Fu*, a glossy coffee-table book documenting 12 of his projects from the past 10 years.

Considering Fu, 35, only finished university a little more than a decade ago, his rise has been meteoric. In the past few years he has been dubbed everything from a "design master" to "Asian Design Sensation". He describes himself as a perfectionist and is well known for insisting that every minute detail is exactly right. Those who have worked with him describe him as calm and personable with a tenacious streak and exacting standards.

Raised in Hong Kong's Mid-levels, Fu loved drawing from an early age. "When I was about eight I would draw mazes," he says. "I'd give them to my classmates to try to find the way out." By the age of 12 or 13 he knew he wanted to pursue a career in design. At 14 he went to boarding school at London's exclusive St Paul's, followed by Cambridge University where he read architecture for seven years. He launched his company, AFSO, in 2000 during his final year at university. "An architect friend asked me to help out with the design of a new restaurant – the now defunct Cassia Oriental in Berkeley Square – and for practical reasons I needed to have a company name and business," he says.

Fu spent the next few years in London working with friends mainly on residential projects. He moved to Shanghai in 2002 where he designed

Zen Chinese Cuisine in Xintiandi, one of Shanghai's first urban redevelopment projects. In 2004 he moved back to Hong Kong. Although work was steady, Fu was still his company's sole employee. His big break came when he was asked by Yenn Wong, owner of Hong Kong's Philippe Starck-designed boutique hotel Jia, to design its restaurants Opia and Y's. "Because it was designed by Starck it was already perceived as an avant-garde design so I could be quite liberal," he says. Fu's approach led to another commission at Azure, the restaurant at Hotel LKF, another boutique property. Gradually, AFSO's payroll swelled to 15.

In 2006 Swire Hotels asked him to design The Upper House in Hong Kong's Pacific Place. It was Fu's first hotel commission and he poured his heart and soul into the project until it opened in 2009. The hotel was an immediate hit with glittering reviews from the international press and a loyal fan base of locals who fell in love with its sleek bar and restaurant and spectacular views over the city.

Intimate and stylish, The Upper House has elegance and serenity. "I wanted people to feel comfortable and calm as soon as they walked in," says Fu. "That was the design brief." To achieve this he used a restrained set of materials including limestone, bamboo, lacquer, oak and bronze and a neutral colour palette of pale mauves, lilacs, mineral blues and soft greens.

It is the work he is most proud of. "I got the project when I was 30 – that was a big leap of faith for Swire," he says. "Hong Kong is a very saturated market for hotels and I hope The Upper House has created something different."

Fu is well known for his attention to detail and perfectionism: at The Upper House he was involved in every decision from the light switches to the staff uniforms. "I believe in a tailored approach, almost like an atelier, being involved in the whole process to make sure of the original vision," he says.

It's this that really sets him apart, says Dean Winter, General Manager of The Upper House, who worked closely with Fu on the project. When the hotel opened Winter remembers Fu giving each member of staff a beautifully produced card mapping out the design of the hotel with information on the art work and other aspects of the design. "We had a lot of people to show around," says Winter, "and he wanted to be sure everyone could explain the design concept."

These days AFSO is inundated with requests for Fu's services and only takes on one hotel project

every 18 months. "Going to the nth degree to do something well is more rewarding than doing multiple projects," says Fu.

He is currently working on a Four Seasons resort in Suzhou in China, as well as a 22,000-square-foot stand-alone shoe store which will be part of the revamped Lane Crawford on Canton Road in Hong Kong, and the sky bar at the first Shangri-La hotel in London, due to open in The Shard – which will be the tallest building in Western Europe – in 2013.

Fu is constantly described as someone who embodies the new Asian sensibility, but it's a label he struggles with. "I have Hong Kong DNA in my work because that is who I am and where I was born," he says, "but I don't think I embody the Chinese element enough." In future, he says, he would like to explore his Chinese heritage more, but not in a literal or clichéd way.

His collaboration with Hong Kong-based luxury rug manufacturer Tai Ping Carpets is the perfect example of the way he likes to infuse his work with his Hong Kong heritage. He was asked to design a range that embodied a sense of Asia. "The literal way would have been to make a collection that was oriental," he says, "but Asia is not like that."

Instead, Fu took Hong Kong's grid and cityscape as the basis of the range – "something very graphic", he says. The result is a lavish collection of wool rugs interwoven with cashmere and silk.

Olivier Arzel, Managing Director of Tai Ping says "it was the most intricate collection we have ever made. He would request samples until the reality matched his idea [and was] always trying to



accommodate technical difficulties without compromising his design."

Considering the volume of work that has passed through Fu's office in the past few years, it is not surprising he doesn't have time for extra-curricular activities. "I don't feel the need to switch on and off from work," he says. "I can walk into the office and start talking work before I even sit down." When he does have free time Fu enjoys swimming and collecting art, particularly works by Olafur Eliasson and François-Xavier Lalanne.

By now it's mid-afternoon and time for Fu to return to the office. "Increasingly, so much of what I do is about travelling but what I really enjoy is the design part," he says. "Ultimately it is the physical experience of being inside things I have designed that really counts." ■

Fu created an elegant and serene atmosphere at Café Gray Bar at The Upper House in Hong Kong, with a neutral colour palette and materials such as limestone, bamboo and bronze

傅厚民設計香港奕居酒店Café Gray Bar，運用柔和的色調，並採用石灰石、竹和銅等建材，營造出典雅和寧靜的氣氛

▶ 創意滿堂

香

港國際金融中心內新開幕的餐廳 Bettys Kitchen是傅厚民的最新傑作。他在這家意大利餐廳牆上排列了八百盆青綠的羅勒葉，巧妙地糅合鄉村風情和時尚氣息。

自太古酒店集團的奕居於2009年開業後，傅厚民成為了亞洲設計界的寵兒。過去五年，他參與的設計項目包括新加坡富麗敦海灣酒店、東京香格里拉酒店的Nadaman餐廳及Piacere餐廳和香港agnès b. La Loggia旗艦店等，還為太平地氈設計一系列豪華地氈。他剛出版的新書《A Bespoke Journey: Andre Fu》，記錄了他這十年來參與的12個項目。

現年35歲的傅厚民離開大學校園只有十年，但他在設計界的成就驕人，於業界迅速崛起；過去數年間贏得「設計大師」及「亞洲設計天才」等美譽。他自言是個完美主義者，曾與他共事的人都說他穩重、有魅力，對工作一絲不苟。

傅厚民於香港半山區長大，自小喜歡繪畫，約12歲立志成為設計師。他於14歲遠赴英國入讀倫敦頂尖寄宿學校聖保羅學校，接著在劍橋大學修讀為期七年的建築系學位。他於大學的最後一年，即2000年，創辦了設計公司AFSO。在倫敦從事住宅項目設計工作：2002年移居上海，設計了上海新天地菜蝶軒餐廳。

2004年，他回到香港，獲Jia精品酒店東主黃佩茵邀請，設計了酒店內的Opia和Y's兩家餐廳。

2006年，傅厚民獲太古酒店集團邀請，設計太古廣場的奕居，首次涉足酒店設計。酒店於2009年開業後，旋即引起媒體和顧客們的熱烈回響，更令他聲名大噪。

現時，他正理首設計中國蘇州四季酒店、香港連卡佛位於尖沙咀廣東道，面積達22,000平方呎旗艦店內鞋履部，和2013年開業的倫敦首間香格里拉酒店「天空酒吧」項目。待該酒店所屬的The Shard大廈落成後，The Shard便是西歐最高的建築物。

儘管工作繁忙，傅厚民卻應付自如，說：「我覺得沒必要將工作和生活區分。」自言最享受設計過程，然而，出門公幹卻佔據了他的大部分時間。他說：「畢竟，惟有置身自己設計的空間中，才能體會當中的滿足感。」