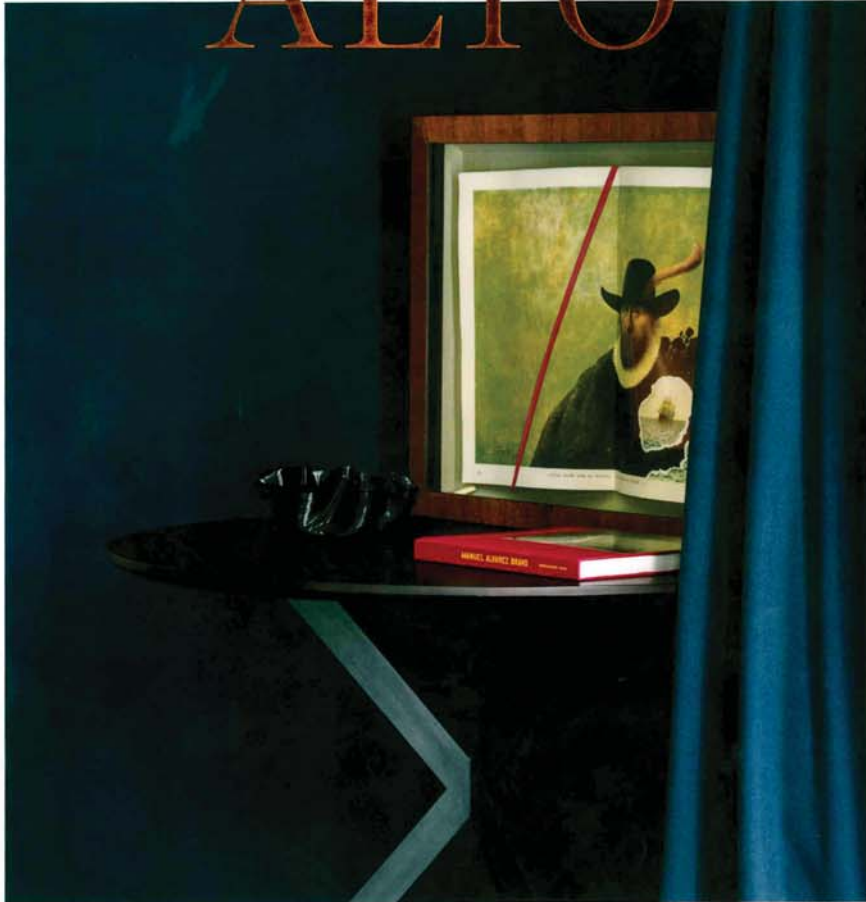


..... DESIGN FOR LIVING .....

# ALTO



..... ISSUE 05 / SPRING 2014 / £30 .....

*A MOODY, CHIC MEXICAN HOME / ROLF SACHS / EFFORTLESS, PARISIAN STYLE / ONBOARD THE WORLD SHIP  
PORTUGUESE DESIGN / THE JOY OF CLASSIC CARS / BEAUTIFUL LUGGAGE / WHERE TO STAY IN VENICE  
FERRARI'S FF ROAD-TESTED / KENWOOD HOUSE REKINDLED / KELLY HOPPEN / THE ELEGANCE OF SALVAGE*



The Hong Kong-born, Cambridge-educated architect and designer has just unveiled the Opus Suite at The Berkeley – a calm, balanced space fit for the most harried guest – and is working on a bar for the London’s new Shangri-La, making him a name to watch / By Ruth Corbett

# André Fu

The Berkeley is the antithesis of flash. Granted, the London hotel has ushered its fair share of aristocrats and film stars through its doors since it opened in 1897. It’s had many associations with renowned designers, architects and Michelin-starred chefs, too. But for all that, the place has maintained a pleasing sense of discretion. Unpretentious and elegant, it’s a classy joint. Which is why André Fu said yes when the owners, the Maybourne Hotel Group, approached him to create a brand-new suite, the Opus, in the knowledge that he would bring to it his specialist understanding of modern hospitality. “It was a wonderful project to work on,” says the Hong Kong-born architect and interior designer. “It’s an iconic London address and the space itself is intriguing, because

of its exciting corner perspective and views of Hyde Park and Knightsbridge.”

Fu believes that design isn’t simply about creating a space that looks good: it’s about anticipating the physical experience of being inside that space. “Plenty of people think of hospitality design solely in terms of luxury and the visual experience, but for me, the purpose of great hospitality is for the guest to be indulged, right down to the most basic requirements – it’s the thoughtfulness behind the design that makes a successful hospitality experience.”

OPPOSITE, TOP: Marble, bamboo, bronze and lush textiles come together at The Berkeley’s Opus suite

OPPOSITE, BOTTOM: Enveloped in bamboo, the bedroom demonstrates Fu’s Asian influences





OPPOSITE, TOP: *The reception at Singapore's Fullerton Bay Hotel, a beautifully crafted space in muted olive, cream and beige*

OPPOSITE, BOTTOM: *Fu created colonial-style comfort and a sense of Singaporean heritage in a brand-new building – no mean feat*



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*"IT'S THE THOUGHTFULNESS  
 BEHIND THE DESIGN THAT  
 MAKES A SUCCESSFUL  
 'HOSPITALITY EXPERIENCE'"*  
 .....

Fresh from Cambridge University, Fu set up his studio, AFSO, in 2000, and became internationally renowned as a result of an early commission, the Opia restaurant in Hong Kong's Jia Hotel. High-profile projects such as Singapore's Fullerton Bay Hotel and the Nadaman restaurant at Tokyo's Shangri-La followed, as well as the I by Inagiku Japanese restaurant at the W hotel in Guangzhou and Ist Too, a restaurant for Istanbul's Shangri-La. Next up is the Gong Bar at London's Shangri-La, on the 52nd floor of The Shard, due to open in late 2014. Fu says "it will have strong, contemporary Chinese elements, like red lacquer panes and Chinese cabinets in galvanised steel. The Shangri-La is a Chinese brand, which requires a modern Asian response to traditional Chinese architecture."

But until then, all eyes are on the Opus. One of the largest suites in London, one

enters via a beautifully lit hall, from which the interconnecting rooms are stitched together by luxury textures and elements, including Turkish marble, bamboo, hammered bronze and sumptuous textiles. Zoned by sliding screens, there's a sitting room, dining room, study, two en-suite bedrooms (with a third in the planning) and a kitchen. Despite its size – five bedrooms and a suite once occupied the same space – it feels cosy, albeit in an extremely sophisticated way. "The bold materials, particularly the solid blocks of stone used in the bathroom and kitchen, give a quite masculine feel to the space, but the refined attention to detail makes it sensuous at the same time," says Fu.

Fu takes in his stride the suggestion that this space, like the Gong Bar, is an East-meets-West concept. "Inevitably I get asked about this. Western people are fascinated with 'new China and new Asia,' >

OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Fu's work at I by Inagiku, the Japanese restaurant at Guangzhou's W hotel; the dramatic kabuki bar at I by Inagiku; lei Tuo, part of the Shangri-La's Istanbul outpost, features industrial-looking lighting that spreads across the ceiling



and given that my DNA is as much English as it is Chinese, I'm perfectly happy with the East/West assumption, but it's never been something conscious," he explains.

Not a single painting punctuates the walls here, despite the best efforts of the management to include them. Instead, Fu enlisted the help of Hong Kong-based art consultant Alison Pickett to create a mix of freestanding sculptures and wall-hung installations, including stone and iron pieces by Belgian artist Christian Cadelli, bronze installations by the UK's Barnaby Gorton and a stone sculpture by Hong Kong-born Cynthia Sah. "Sculptural art fascinates me," says Fu. "I gravitate towards three-dimensional objects - the way they play a role, how they interact within the space, giving it another dimension and a strong sense of personality."

It was most important that the suite should feel like a home-from-home, particularly for long-stay guests, hence the

inclusion of a state-of-the-art Poggenpohl kitchen, complete with spectacular onyx countertop. Should guests wish to stock it with their own foodstuffs, fine, but many will choose to take up the unique, in-house chef service from the Berkeley's two Michelin-starred chefs, Marcus Wareing and Pierre Koffmann, who can be booked to come and cook their signature dishes for a private dinner for one or a party of up to 10 guests. "The first thing we talked about in the planning was the kitchen," says Fu. "People enjoy cooking, and being cooked for, as a part of modern day life, especially those who travel a lot and who might not want to eat out all the time."

Nothing, it seems has been overlooked here, in the pursuit of high-end hospitality. All those interested in a masterclass in how it's done need look no further than a night or two in the Opus. **A**

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/ALTO/