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ROAD WARRIOR

How to Design the Perfect Jet Interior

ANDRÉ FU IS FOUNDER of Hong Kong design studio AFSSO. His portfolio includes the Hong Kong home of actress Michelle Yeoh, the Fullerton Bay Hotel in Singapore, and Gong bar on the 52nd floor of the Shard skyscraper in London. Mr. Fu, who was born in Hong Kong and who was the subject of a recent book by luxury publisher Assouline, spoke with the Journal about his favorite hotels by other designers, why he loves London, and how he would design a jet's interior.



Courtesy of AFSSO

How often do you travel?
Some months I travel every week, but I usually don't travel in July and August, when typically a lot of people are taking time off.

Where are you traveling in coming months?
Our projects are spread out from Hong Kong to Provence. We are doing projects in Bali [Indonesia], Phuket [Thailand], Bangkok, Tokyo, Seoul.

Favorite airline?
When I was in London I liked Swissair a lot because of the graphics, the purity of the experience. Now, I quite like Singapore Airlines because of the service—like when you check-in you can get your boarding pass for your return trip. It's one step less.

Favorite hotels that you didn't design?
The Park Hyatt in Tokyo. John Morford is a master of contemporary design—really timeless, very pure and there is a great post-modern quality in everything that he does. Another hotel that I really like is in Sorrento [Italy], the Parco dei Principi. It was done in the 1960s by Gio Ponti. It is classic, the first generation of design hotels—furniture, landscape, tiles, stucco work pulled together. It's amazing.

buildings. I've also been intending to go to Sri Lanka because of [architect] Geoffrey Bawa's [tropical-modernism style].

Favorite destination for personal travel?
London. It's a second home. I left for education in the U.K. when I was 14, and I was there for 14 years. London is a place that I know well. I like the diversity of life and culture—there is always something to do in London.

Favorite work destination?
Provence, because it is a very different experience. I'm working on a project there now that is part of a vineyard. It will embrace landscape in a different way. Every project that I do is pretty much urban—in a city, in a skyscraper.

What do you want in a hotel room?
I don't want a lot of printed cards. It's a lot of clutter. The only thing that you want is an empty table where you can put your laptop and phone. Usually I'm just so exhausted when I arrive, but once I checked out of a hotel five minutes after I checked in because of the way it was done.

How do you feel about the concept of a design hotel today?
I like the relaxed luxury experience, an environment that is very comfortable to be in. That's why Upper House [in Hong Kong] is so successful.

How light do you travel?
I don't go away for a long time rarely check-in [luggage] unless I'm armed with a full presentation [of designs to show clients].

What are your travel essentials?
A small Canon camera. A small Goyard pencil case with two pencils and a calligraphy pen. A pile of A4 paper. I don't necessarily bring a computer. If I need to do emails, I do it on my iPhone.

Where did you go on your last holiday?
Bangkok, for a short break over the New Year but it also tied in with a meeting.

Do you always work on your holidays?
No. I'm usually quite good at keeping a balance with everything. It's not easy merging work with leisure.

Where haven't you been that you'd like to go?
Brazil, because I'd like to see [the late architect] Oscar Niemeyer's

In London called Wright Brothers in Borough Market that I always go to. It is a seafood bar. They serve Irish oysters, they make a really good fish soup. It's just a very down-to-earth market vibe.

How did the recently published Assouline book come about?
I was introduced to them by the CEO of London's Maybourne Hotels, a client. We have a certain sensibility to our design, but we can be quite specific to a sense of place. Though we have done a lot of hospitality, we have worked in art spaces and retail environment, too.

How would you design an aircraft interior?
I'd like something more natural, with softer lines. Lighting that is a bit more warm. I'd have a revitalized air purification system so you don't get that smell. I want to design the air.
—Edited from an interview by Alexandra A. Seno