

DESIGNQUEST: THE MISTRI TALES

ARTFORM: CALVIN SIEBERT

UNCOVERED: STUDIO LAGOM

# HOME REVIEW

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HOME IS A TWO-STORY AFFAIR!  
BY NSQUARE DESIGNS

WOOD, GREY, WHITE N' ORANGE  
BY RC ARCHITECTS

INNOVATION IN DESIGN SPECIAL  
MODERN HUES AND SOLUTIONS  
INSPIRED BY DESIGN

**WORK. UNWIND.  
WORK.**

SHABNAM GUPTA DESIGNS A CREATIVITY  
INFUSED STUDIO FOR AN ARTIST IN MUMBAI

*The entrance doorway of The Fleming Hotel is a time machine that transports one back to the industrial era of Hong Kong in the 70's. The 66-room boutique hotel in Wan Chai is a true reflection of the maritime heritage of the city.*

# PORTHOLES INTO THE PAST

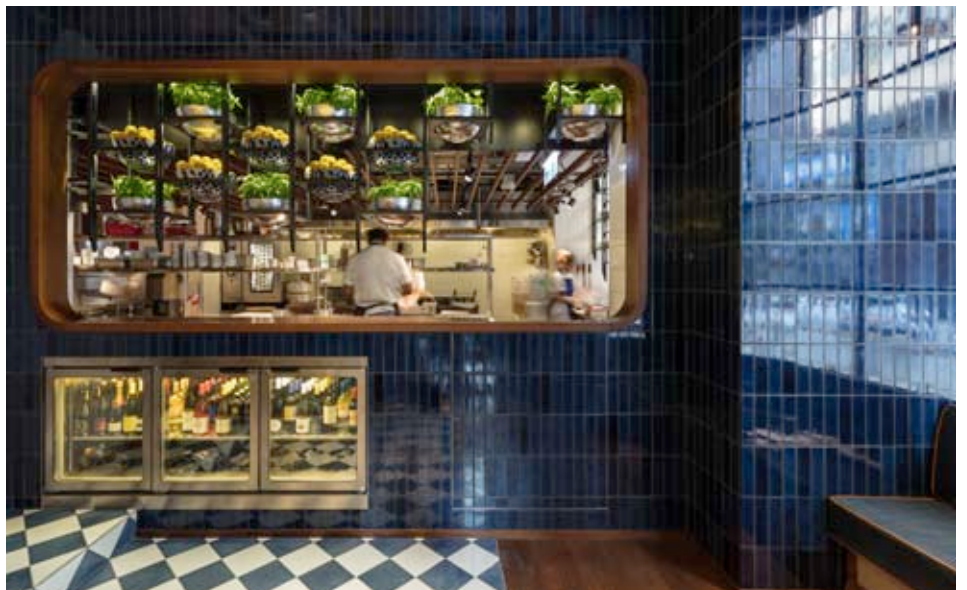
Ten years after its original opening in 2006, the owners of The Fleming Hotel commissioned the firm 'A Work of Substance' to redesign and rebrand their Victoria Harbour front property. Before beginning their design process, the studio carried out in-depth research on The Fleming's predominant clientele - business travellers - as well as on the prevailing international and local hospitality landscape.

Text By Priti Kalra  
Photographs Courtesy Dennis Lo



Movable backrests in the lounge chairs allow for multiple configurations of seating, creating a flexible social space.





A large wood-framed opening set in a glossy blue-tiled wall looks from the restaurant into the kitchen.



Among their findings was the fact that future business travellers were increasingly keen on engaging in art and culture. “As opposed to the traditional trade-focussed mentality, people were expecting an emotional experience,” said the studio. In response to this demand, efficiency, sociability and culture became the backbone of the new and improved Fleming experience.

**In terms of functionality, the new design goes beyond meeting the needs of business travellers.**

Thoughtfully zoned rooms satisfy versatile possibilities of usage. From the extra large room with a king size island bed to the medium room with two single beds, customers have a wide array to choose from. Strategically placed light switches, power points, and practical systems of storage offer convenience in operation.

Ledges and tracks along the walls allow for unlimited configuration of the local artwork. Spacious bathrooms and walk-in closets with high-end amenities ensure optimum efficiency and luxury.

“While designing the layout and furniture, sociability was of key importance,” said the studio. The design strives to create interfaces for two-fold interaction - the first is between the guests themselves, and the second, between the guests and the staff. An example of this is seen in the reception. Movable backrests in the lounge chairs allow for multiple configurations of seating, creating a flexible social space.

**In the hotel’s restaurant, Osteria Marzia, a centrally located bar counter surrounded by high stools creates a sense of openness and unhindered communication.**

A large wood-framed opening set in a glossy blue-tiled wall looks from the restaurant into the kitchen enhancing visual connectivity with the chefs. The hotel’s main façade is predominantly in glass, making the restaurant’s interiors largely visible from the outside, enhancing a notional interaction with the street.





The studio's multilayered concept draws inspiration from the Star Ferry to create a design that is both culturally and socially relevant. For over a century, the Star Ferry has connected people across the harbour.

"It is a unique and elegant icon of Hong Kong's past and present, a crucial piece of its collective memory and identity. Thus, it is the foundation for every design detail inside the hotel," says the studio.

The furniture and lighting are custom designed to evoke a sense of nostalgia. The choices of colours and scents reiterate the concept. Seen on the hulls of Hong Kong's ferries, fishing boats and delivery trucks, carmine reds and bottle greens play an important role in the colour palette of the interiors.

Toiletries inspired from apothecaries and the custom aroma of sandalwood and amber further create an authentic sense of place. A reception area clad heavily in wood is reminiscent of naval architecture. Circular mirror frames in the bathrooms and elevators mimic the portholes of ships while the combination of grey and brass finishes in the common areas and corridors creates a pleasant longing for the years gone by.

A Work of Substance is a 22-person studio that revels in using design as a tool to culturally rejuvenate local neighbourhoods. Founder and creative director, Maxime Dautresme, was surrounded by Asian antiquities and the works of 20th century masters while growing up. His great uncle, a tireless captain of overseas courier crossings, was fascinated by the forgotten treasures of the Middle Kingdom.



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Another uncle, a talented photographer, was equally inspired by China and opened a concept store in Paris in 1965 as a tribute to the poetry of Asian daily life. His mother, daughter of Brazilian painter Cicero Dias and goddaughter of Pablo Picasso, spent most of her life submerged in the prolific work of her ancestors.

With a childhood that traversed Brazil, Korea, Japan, France and the USA, it was no surprise that Maxime developed a keen eye for beauty and culture. The founding pillars of his studio are a love for research and historical style, and an intention for cultural revival.

The Fleming Hotel meets and exceeds the needs of its target audience, giving its customers a memorable aesthetic of what Hong Kong feels like. Apart from the experience within the building, the new design has a profound impact on its context.

“It contributes majorly to driving foot traffic to the industrial Wan Chai, uplifting the aesthetics of the neighbourhood and rejuvenating the cultural quotient,” says the studio. A Work of Substance has curated a multi-sensory experience which ensures that each guest leaves Hong Kong with a dollop of nostalgia.

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