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TAKING PRENETICS TO NEW HEIGHTS

FOR



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HOME, REIMAGINED

Whether it's a house, a hotel room, or a lovingly conceived bolthole, much has evolved over the last couple of years about where we feel the most at home – or how we even define it. We speak to three of the city's top designers tasked with creating them

BY CHERRY LAI





It's 2022, and nothing is quite the same when it comes to our relationships with our surroundings. This is especially true for city dwellers living in the cosy confines of Hong Kong, in which we have been spending an inordinate amount of time over the last two years.

Certainly, the notion of home has always been less about a physical place than a concept; at its best, it is a safe haven where we rest our heads after a day's work,

a place that conjures feelings of belonging, joy and permanence. Yet as living spaces quickly turned into makeshift offices and daycare centres, many urbanites have found themselves rethinking their connection to their environments, their expectations of them, and in some cases, craving new oases altogether. As architects and interior designers alike respond to an all-time-high demand for personal build and renovation projects large and small, one thing for certain is that people have never been more in need of a sense of place.

MAXIME DAUTRESME, CO-FOUNDER OF A WORK OF SUBSTANCE

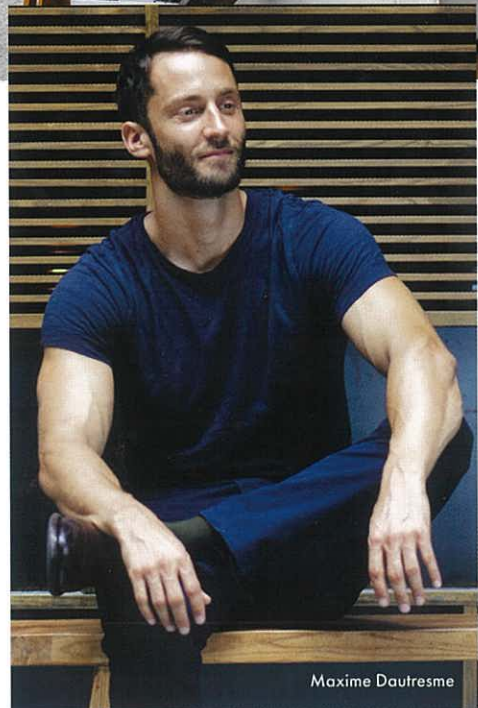
Born in Brazil, raised in Japan, and having spent much of his adolescent years jaunting between Rio de Janeiro, Tokyo, Seoul, Monaco and Paris with his French father and Brazilian mother (the daughter of Brazilian artist Cicero Dias and goddaughter of Pablo Picasso), Maxime Dautresme is familiar with finding grounding in fluidity. “Home for me is where there is a sense of intrinsic correctness. It’s where everything is in the right place and you feel a total sense of harmony,” says Dautresme, calling in from his office in Bali. “I would have a hard time putting a perfect location to it, though.”

That multicultural sensibility, which he describes as his “wealth”, never left Dautresme and set the foundation for A Work of Substance’s eclectic portfolio. The award-winning multidisciplinary design agency he co-founded in Hong Kong in 2011 spans projects for Six Senses and Aman Resorts as well as Black Sheep Restaurants, luxury homes and furnishing collections. One common thread connects them all: a celebration of context, be that the scents of sandalwood and amber the studio developed for The Fleming, an ode to our city’s “fragrant harbour” trading roots, or the Indonesian influences dotting the agency’s new Lisbon office, paying tribute to the country’s historical ties to Asia.

“We are contextualists. We want to create a brand that highlights pockets of insights so people could leave with more knowledge and be more engaged with the history of the place they’re staying at,” says Dautresme. “We often use the metaphor of a culinary journey for what we do: we are chasing and collecting ingredients to come up with a flavour.”

That flavour is abundant in The Library, a stunning recent project crafted for a private car enthusiast. Swathed in dark timber and stainless-steel panels, the 6,120sqft part-garage, part-gentlemen’s lounge is where the client displays his impressive collection of automotive treasures and memorabilia, admired among a few friends over glasses of whisky on the lush leather sofas. It provides a cocoon where one can quietly escape from the hustle and bustle, or revel in the company of a few loved ones, offering a sense of pleasure that is increasingly coveted. Dautresme notes his many clients’ penchant for entertaining and

A penthouse in Singapore



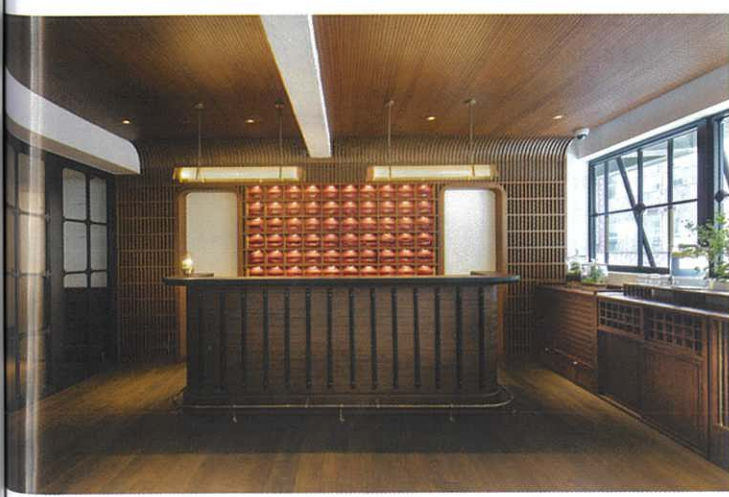
Maxime Dautresme



A marketing suite in Tuen Mun, Hong Kong



Top and bottom: The Fleming



bringing people together, and the agency being the voice that expresses that passion and vision.

In fact, the rare opportunity to slow down and rediscover one's own backyard is something Dautresme is relishing with open arms. "The challenge and the beauty of my work is that the boundary between work and life is very blurred. I work with my emotions so there is really no switching off. I was travelling constantly and didn't have time to expand on my own space or be aware of the context that surrounded me. The last two years have allowed me to have a more connected experience with my own life."

· Tokyo continues to evoke profound memories of Dautresme's childhood, while in his family house in the south of France and his own in Hong Kong, there are "essences that connect me back to my roots". Still, business has ramped up – "We're a big team now with over 50" – and it is the exotic that beckons, with upcoming projects in Bali, Vietnam, Phuket, Abu Dhabi, the French Alps and more. "There is this constant push to help our clients experience 'off the beaten path'. It goes back to the idea of being in tune with nature, designing in remote places with the intention to reveal its exoticism," expresses Dautresme. "There is a strong curiosity that connects us – the agency with my childhood and my upbringing that has now shaped the business."