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NEW
HORIZONS

SPRING'S STYLE
AWAKENING



HIGH STAKES DESIGN

City of Dreams' award-winning Morpheus hotel is an instant icon, heralding a new era of design-driven development on Macau's Cotai Strip

"Zaha believed that like art, contemporary architecture shouldn't follow fashion or economic cycles—it should follow the cycles of new ideas and innovations," says Viviana Muscettola, project director at Zaha Hadid Architects of the late designer's distinctive approach.

"Architecture, she believed, had to change with these new patterns of life to address the greater levels of complexity and dynamism of our lives today."

Most today know of Ms. Hadid the architect, whose distinctive style straddled the line somewhere between organic, biomorphic and sci-fi, surrealist. But few knew of Ms. Hadid, the artist.

"Painting formed a critical part of Zaha's early career," says Ms. Muscettola, explaining that as a design tool, it allowed for intense experimentation. "Her paintings were a critique of what was available and evolved as she felt her architectural drawings required a much greater degree of distortion and fragmentation."

"In the early days of our office, the methods Zaha used to develop and construct a painting would lead to new and exciting discoveries," recalls Ms. Muscettola. "We sometimes didn't know what the research would lead to, but we knew there would be something."

Where the research often led was to transmuted shapes and sculptural geometries that adhered to their own logic, allowing her structures to stand out and apart, in a class of their own.

The intensive process of creation that Hadid's office employed was often slow going, requiring tremendous concentration and precision as plans had to be retraced with each new permutation—"a form of reverse archaeology in a way," quips Ms. Muscettola.

"It could take Zaha many years for her 2D sketches to evolve into a painting, then into a workable space and finally a realized building," says Ms. Muscettola. "These were the journeys that she felt were most exciting because the outcomes weren't predictable and offered greater possibilities for invention."

Approaching architecture as an art form, Ms. Hadid's work gave physical expression to her ideas and ideals.

Her single-mindedness in this regard would eventually earn her the distinction of the first-ever woman to seize The Pritzker Architecture Prize—architecture's highest accolade—with the jury citing her "heroic struggle" and seemingly endless originality, and describing her work as "fearless", "audacious" and of "bold visionary forms".

A visit to Morpheus hotel today—City of Dreams' newest ultra luxury flagship hotel in Macau the unintended swansong of the late Pritzker Prize-winner's career after her tragic death in 2016—reveals all these qualities and more, with the full expanse of Ms. Hadid's artistic qualities laid bare in the structure's hulking yet shapeshifting form.

Special Advertising Feature

And when it came to creating interiors that levelled up to the architectural standard, internationally acclaimed interior designer Peter Remedios knew to take his cue from Ms. Hadid. "I looked at the architecture first because I like the interiors and the architecture to go hand in glove, so that you really cannot see where one discipline leaves off and the other starts."

The result is interiors that meet and complement the unduly high expectations set into place by the architecture's otherworldly form. As Mr. Remedios explains, "It's not about creating a sense of place, but a sense of some other place."

More specifically, "it's about a lifestyle that people aspire to that few ever achieve," says the designer of his inspiration for the guest rooms. "It's about a world of super yachts, fast cars and private jets—that world that is very aspirational. We want to give guests the feeling of experiencing that rarefied lifestyle."

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the hotel's ultra high luxury suites and villas, where exclusivity is the name of the game.

Building on his metaphor, Mr. Remedios describes these as "the super yacht—we're talking about the mega, mega 100m+ yacht." At just under 700m² each, Morpheus' three pool villas and six duplex gaming villas are highly specified, with bespoke furnishing and finishes purposely designed by Remedios for each individual unit, and boast such exclusive amenities as a private massage room and fitness center, personal sauna, 24-hour butler and—as the name suggests—three include their own private plunge pools, each with its own changing rooms and a view overlooking the Cotai Strip.

"These are for the exuberant person," says Mr. Remedios. "Is it over the top? Yes it's over the top—I mean mega yachts are hardly conservative things! But we design it in a way that's classy, modern but also timeless."

Choreographing such sumptuous spaces, the designer concedes, can have its challenges. But his aim is to create a series of spatial frames and sightlines that gradually draw guests in through the magic of their sequencing. "It's more enduring than the fleeting first impression," he says, "but settles in and leaves a lasting impression."

True luxury, the designer says, ultimately comes down to a choice: "The choice of being as open and as sensual as you want, or as closed and private as you want."

Through its articulated form and highly orchestrated interiors, Morpheus has set itself apart as an icon of New Macau, creating cachet in its use of art and design to underpin an experience of true luxury.

