



/ WORDS JULIANA LOH

# AN ITALIAN IN SHANGHAI

Piero Lissoni's latest hotel, The Middle House is a masterpiece where Italian aesthetics meet Chinese sensibilities.



/ 1  
The lobby of The Middle House more closely resembles the library of a private abode, than a hotel.

/ 2  
White Porcelain Robe by Caroline Cheng is the feature artwork in the lobby, adding a touch of bling to the space.



The sprawling new HKRI Taikoo Hui mixed-use complex in the heart of the Jing'an financial district is home to The Middle House.

The fourth hotel in The House Collective – Swire Hotels' arm of individual luxury hotels – designed by Piero Lissoni, it cues little details that remind travellers familiar with the other "Houses".

The bamboo façade at the entrance that creates a sense of privacy is reminiscent of Kengo Kuma's The Opposite House in Beijing.

Lattice screen dividers with repetitive delicate Chinese motifs and broody dark wood interiors draws a similarity to Make Architect's The Temple House in Chengdu.

The intimate, cocooned corridors hugged by curved wood panels recall the intimacy of Andre Fu's The Upper House in Hong Kong.

"The Middle House is a room open to Shanghai's life, a way of being that is both contemporary and classic," says Lissoni.

"As you enter the door, you immediately breathe the history of the city and, through the design, I sought to bring tranquillity and sensuality in dialogue with this cosmopolitan metropolis."

Stepping into the hotel lobby, one is greeted by an ornate Venetian glass chandelier by China-based Italian artist Fabio Zanchi hanging tall (pictured left).

Framing it are two-storey-high walls made up of handmade green ceramic tiles, each piece with bamboo details that gives the walls a textured finish.

This grandiose welcome captures the spirit of modern-day Shanghai: one that pays homage to traditional Chinese artistry as well as the decadent European influences in the city's illustrious history.

Alison Pickett, Swire Hotels' art consultant, has thoughtfully curated ceramic art pieces that complement Lissoni's design.

Alongside them are modern remakes of Chinese furniture pieces in his signature style, representative of today's modern China.



/ 3  
Modern European is married with touches of Chinese elements in Café Grey Deluxe.

/ 4  
International art works add pops of colour and personality to the Café.









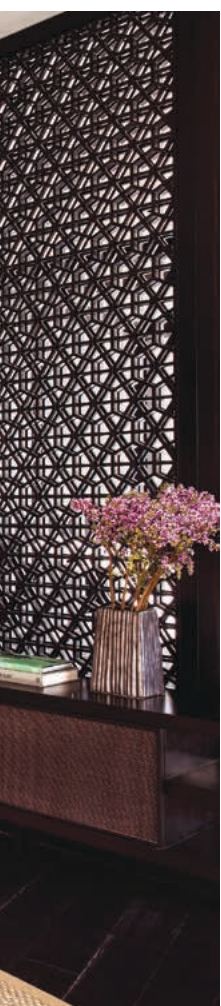
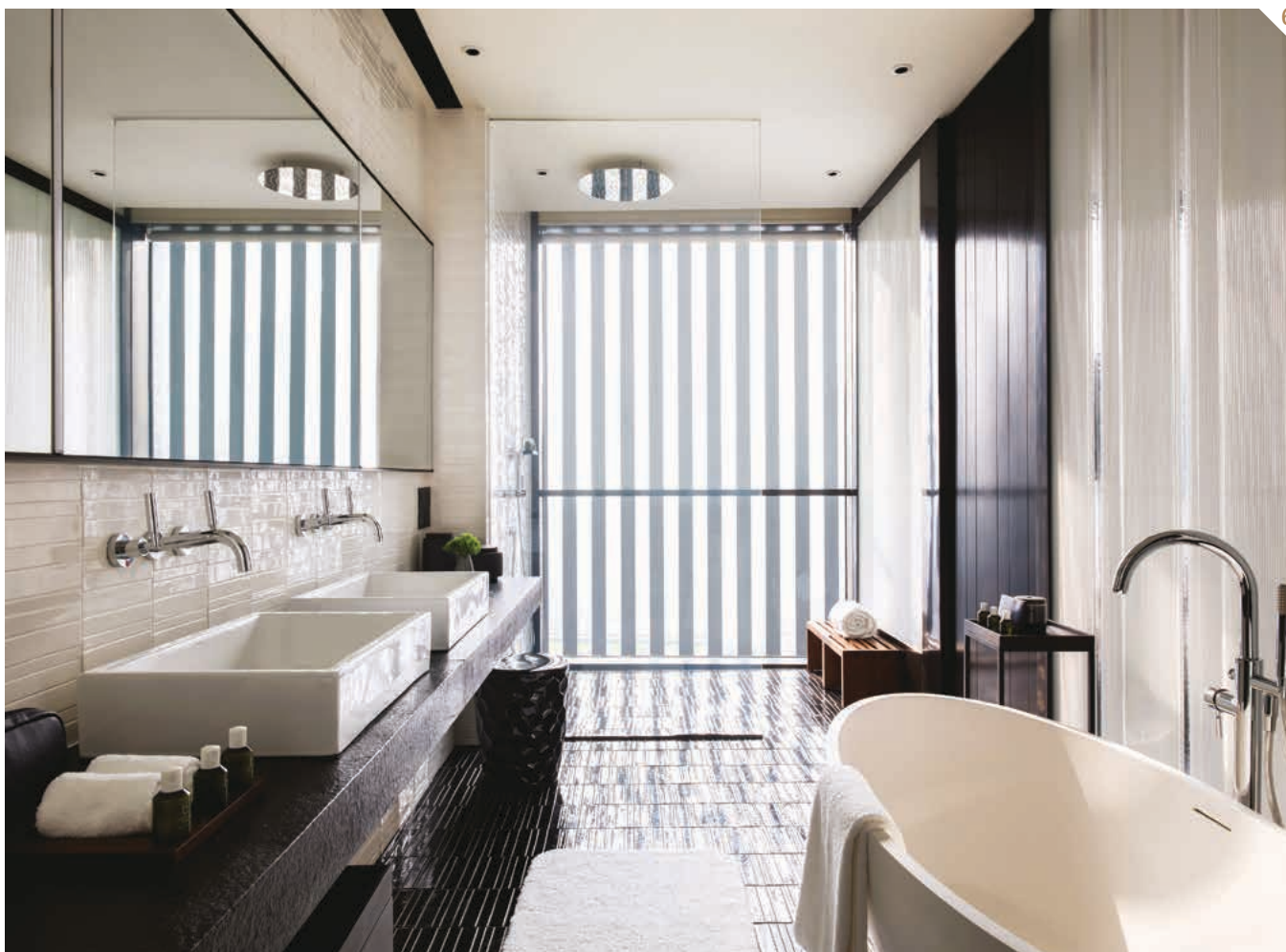
**/ ABOVE**  
Contemporary Chinese artworks adorn the rooms, such as bird cages often seen along the old lane ways of Shanghai.

**/ 5**  
Lattice screen dividers with repetitive delicate Chinese motifs divide the living and bedroom in the Residences.

**/ 6**  
The bathroom in the Residence offers backlit mirrors and floor-to-ceiling windows in the shower cabin.







Like a puzzle, it all fits, nothing is jarringly out of place; but rather an eclectic mix, paying homage to the crafts and aesthetics of Italy and China.

"The idea behind the interior design is based on a combination of different expressive forms, especially in the lobby with the Venetian chandelier," he says.

"Stylistic features that are typical of the history and culture of local crafts are placed in relation to contemporary elements to generate an attractive spatial equilibrium."

In the rooms and apartment residences, Lissoni's signature combination of bold lines and an elegant colour palette take centre stage.

Contemporary Chinese artworks adorn each room – from bird cages often seen along the old lane ways of Shanghai, to ceramic vases – contrasting with leather couches and dark wood panelling that gives an intimate vibe.

Lissoni also took the liberty to create modern reinterpretations of traditional Chinese

furniture from the Oriental-style nightstands to table lamps.

Floor-to-ceiling windows afford the rooms plenty of light contrasting against the dark, sexy tiles of the bathroom.

This is illuminated with backlit walls and glazed screens as a space division, adding to the cocoon of luxury in the spacious rooms that start at a generous 50m<sup>2</sup>, culminating with the Penthouse occupying a generous 660m<sup>2</sup>.

"The colour palette throughout the hotel provides the atmosphere of an elegant and calm oasis. As an example, the oval staircase, a sculptural feature designed for the hotel, is made of black metal plate, an industrial material.

"The staircase has been combined with the warmth of oak wood, while the stair void is completely clad with handmade bricks, a reference to local tradition reinterpreted in a contemporary language," he points out.

This serves to connect the public areas to the restaurants.

### **THE MIDDLE HOUSE**

**LOCATION** / SHANGHAI, CHINA

**COMPLETION** / 2018

**SITE AREA** / 62,810.4M<sup>2</sup>

**GROSS FLOOR AREA** / 30,000M<sup>2</sup>

**ARCHITECT** / INSTITUTE OF SHANGHAI ARCHITECTURAL  
DESIGN AND RESEARCH

**DESIGN TEAM** / PIERO LISSONI

**COLLABORATING ARCHITECT** / WONGBOUYANG (HK), AECOM, BNC  
/ AUTOCONTROL

**CONTRACTOR** / SHANGHAI CONSTRUCTION GROUP

**C&S CONSULTANT** / BNC AUTOCONTROL LTD.

**QUANTITY SURVEYOR** / CAO, CHAN

Sui Tang Li (pictured right), Café Gray Deluxe and Fresca follow the same vein of design style: modern European with touches of Chinese elements, complete with international art works that add pops of colour and personality to the space.

On finding the balance of combining East and West elements, Lissoi says, "Amid the dynamic backdrop of one of Asia's most sophisticated cities, we carried out a great deal of research, regarding the history and culture of local crafts, by visiting local artisans, seeking to assimilate the characteristics and particularities typical of the context.

"These elements were then placed in relation to contemporary features to generate an unexpected and intriguing dialogue, that best describes the ideology of the House Collective."





