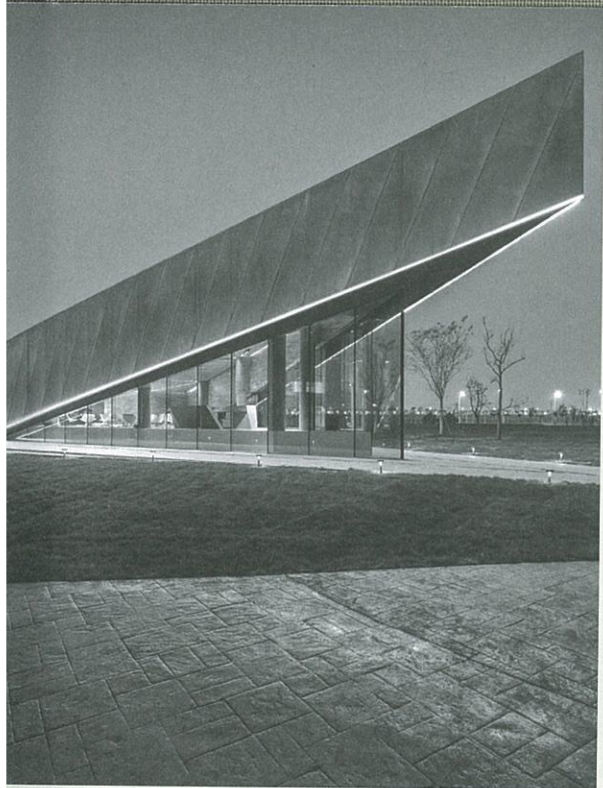
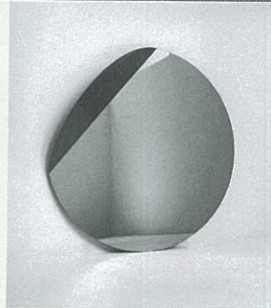


THE DESIGN HOTELS™ BOOK



The Influencers List 2016

Design Hotels™ picks 10 of the world's most formidable designers and architects to top our annual Influencers List. These beacons of individuality and expression create stunning spaces that are changing the way people think about design today. Discover who made The Influencers List 2016.



The Influencers 2016
COLIN SEAH

*»This book actually
makes you want to pack
your bags and
go explore the world!«*

AMBRA MEDDA

Featuring 289 handpicked Design Hotels™ properties worldwide, with glorious photographs and behind-the-scenes stories of the original hoteliers and daring designers who brought them to life.

Take a journey inside each of our boldly conceived independent hotels in 55 countries across the globe. More than a collection of hotels, Design Hotels™ is a collection of stories. Experience the cultural authenticity and thought-provoking design and architecture of the Design Hotels™ community.

 **DESIGN HOTELS™**
MADE BY ORIGINALS

 **DESIGN HOTELS™**
MADE BY ORIGINALS

75°E

90°E

105°E

120°E

45°N

30°N

15°N

0°

15°S



CHINA

SOUTH KOREA

Shanghai
3

Hong Kong
3

TAIWAN

INDIA

THAILAND

CAMBODIA

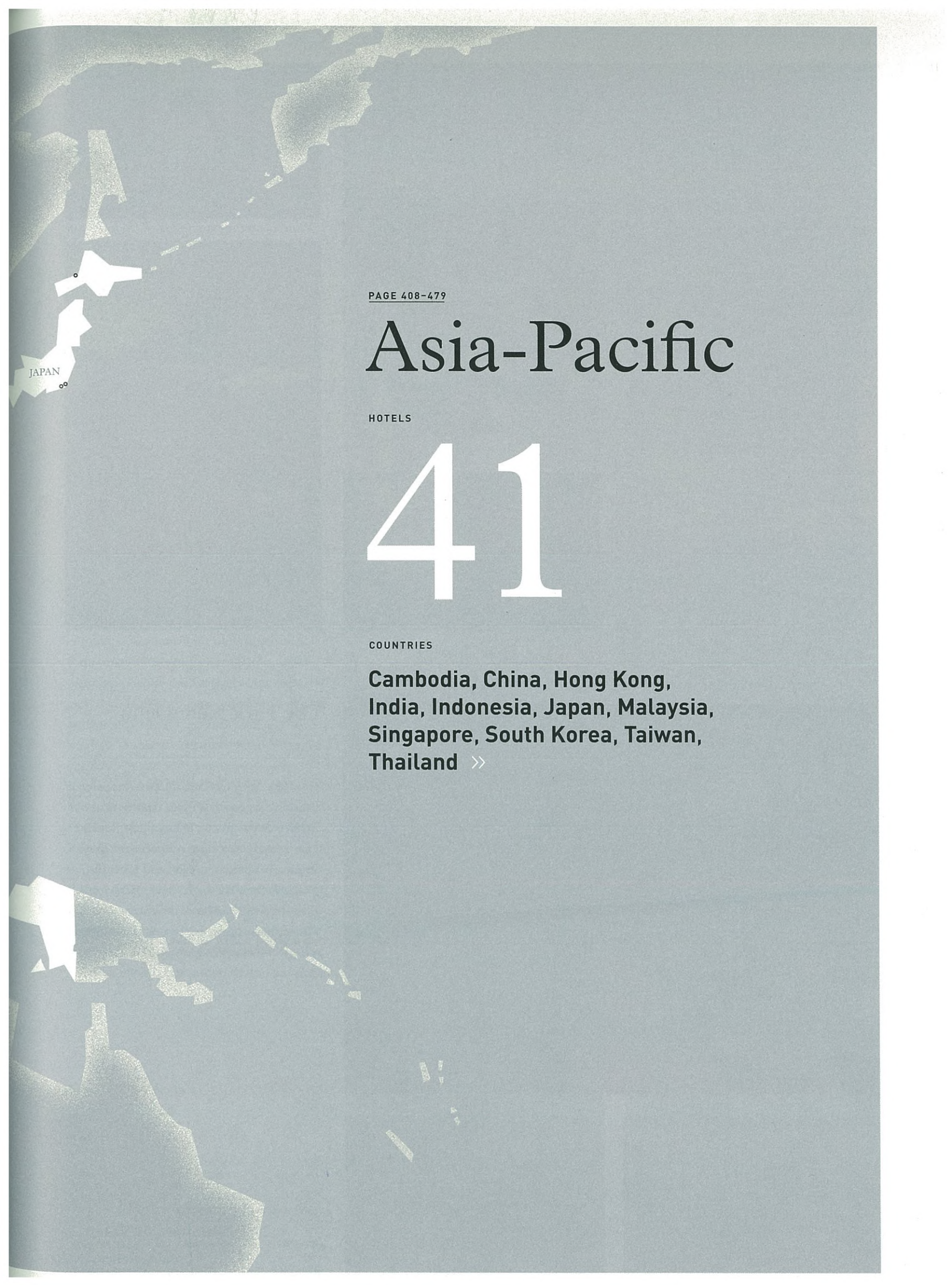
Phuket
3

MALAYSIA

Singapore
3

INDONESIA

Bali
8



PAGE 408-479

Asia-Pacific

HOTELS

41

COUNTRIES

**Cambodia, China, Hong Kong,
India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia,
Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan,
Thailand »**

A man with a short haircut and goatee is sitting on a ledge in a room with a vibrant red wall. He is wearing a dark leather jacket over a black V-neck shirt, and patterned trousers with small white dots on a dark background. He is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The lighting is dramatic, with strong shadows and highlights.

Colin

SEAH

A CAREER THAT BEGAN ON A DARE IS NOW PRODUCING SOME
OF THE WORLD'S MOST DARING DESIGNS. SEAH'S SECRET
TO SUCCESS LIES IN FINDING A SPACE'S RELEVANCY THROUGH
REINVENTION AND PERSONAL INTERACTION, AND IN AN
UNDYING MODESTY THAT PUTS RESULTS FAR ABOVE EGO.

*“Key to my work is a search for relevance—
in terms of how our cultural norms
and practices influence the way we interact
and the spaces we need.”*

COLIN SEAH

Colin Seah's success as an architect was born out of a pure desire to design rather than the ambition of owning his own practice. The Singaporean's firm, Ministry of Design (MOD), was founded in 2006 as a result of an ultimatum posed by friend and hotelier Loh Lik Peng, who wanted Seah to design the city-state's first boutique hotel, the New Majestic Hotel: Either stay at his day job teaching at the University of Singapore's Department of Architecture or dedicate his talents full-time to his own practice.

Seah took the challenge and has never looked back. He was named Interior Designer of the Year by International Design Awards in 2010 and has become a two-time Grand Prize Winner of the highest international hospitality accolade, the Gold Key Award.

“I have never really been entrepreneurial in spirit. I'm not ambitious in that way to be perfectly honest,” Seah admits, although with a sense of modesty that belies the innovative vision behind his latest project, a new brand called A Good Thing, which will offer everyday, sustainable products designed for the masses and made from a new biodegradable plastic.

Most recently, MOD's Singapore office block, 100PP, was a finalist at the 2015 World Architecture Festival. It is a building that perfectly captures the city's forward-looking, entrepreneurial spirit. Praised for its fresh vision of what a 21st-century creative workspace should be, it mixes gritty industrial and commercial spaces together in a layer cake structure. It is a futuristic *mille feuille* of light, glass, and texture that allows for balconies and air-conditioned ledges.

Long before the awards and the praise, there was a need for a name. Most designers simply use their own name for their firms. But

again, Colin Seah is not most designers. “We didn't name the practice after myself or a person because I didn't really want it to be about personality,” he says. “We called the company Ministry of Design, mirroring a desire to serve others through a God-given design ability, and I am just a steward of it.” Seah's modesty feeds into one of the key elements of his design style: relevance.

“Key to my work is a search for relevance—in terms of how our cultural norms and practices influence the way we interact and the spaces we need,” he explains. “There is a need to question, to redress convention, to reinvent.” With this approach, each of his projects primarily conveys a cultivated individuality rather than a signature MOD design stamp.

It is a refreshingly un-egotistical quality that can be seen across his work, whether it's an historic reinvention like the New Majestic Hotel, that draws on all layers of the structure's past; a statement commercial gallery such as the Vanke Triple V by the sea in Tianjin, China, with its striking sculptural wave form; a design-art piece like his lighter-than-air revision of the traditional Chinese bow-back chair called the Ming 647; a Singapore retail space that elevates Durasafe's premium safety gear and equipment to cult fashion status; or a “Commune” country retreat by the Great Wall of China in Ba Da Ling that reflects the owner's love of nature, light, and simplicity, while also balancing local culture and foreign influences.

Seah also recalls how his “final lesson” as a young architect came after recovering from a rigorous stint working at architecture practice OMA under Rem Koolhaas. He had just paid a visit to Peter Zumthor's striking Therme Vals spa in Switzerland, an experience that prompts him to say now, “It is

SIDE NOTES

NAME *Colin Seah*

COMPANY NAME *Ministry of Design*

COMPANY HEADQUARTERS *Singapore*

NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN COMPANY *33*

WEBSITE *modonline.com*

SIGNATURE PROJECTS *Singapore: New Majestic Hotel; Leo Burnett office; Royal China restaurant; Prologue bookstore; Durasafe Gallery; 100PP office building; Zig Zag House Tianjin, China: Vanke Triple V Gallery Penang, Malaysia: Ecoworld Flow Gallery Products: The Measure of Reflection mirror*

SIGNIFICANT AWARDS

2014 *Red Dot Design Award for Durasafe Gallery*

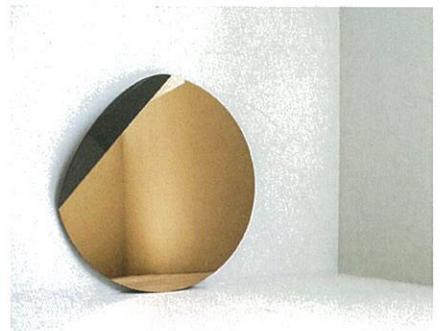
2013 *Gold Key Award for Macalister Mansion*

2012 *Architectural Record Good Design Award for SOHO San Li Tun*

2011 *World Architecture Festival/Inside Awards*

2010 *International Design Awards, Designer of the Year*

2008 *Gold Key Award for Royal China restaurant*



Far more than a mirror, Seah's “Measure of Reflection” explores the essence of why we do things and the motivations behind those acts, be they hubris, vanity, or insecurity.

almost prehistoric thanks to the tectonic quality of the stone, the rawness of water.” It reminded him of the sensory value of the spaces that surround us. “We forget that relevance also needs to address certain needs and phenomenological desires that people have had for eons. We still feel temperature through our skin, we respond to surfaces and textures. Our distant relatives 2,000 years ago would still hurt when they stepped on something sharp, would still luxuriate when they felt something soft—and that doesn’t change. That’s also relevance.”

It is the coming together of these two qualities—relevant reinvention combined with an almost theatrical sensory experience—that has driven MOD’s work under Seah’s direction.

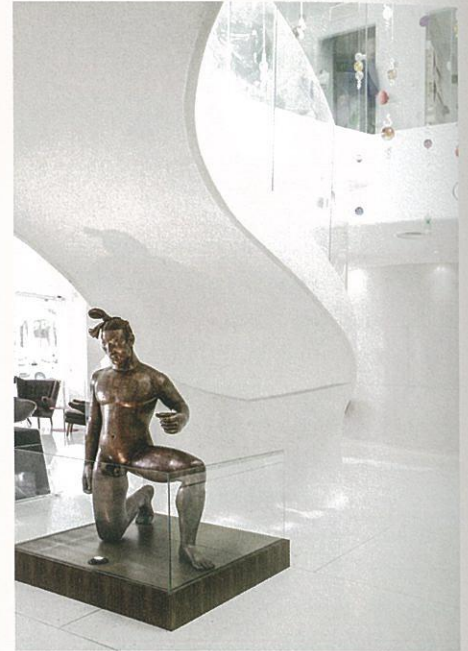
This is perfectly embodied in the New Majestic, the hotel that launched his career. Situated in a traditional Singaporean shop house, Seah wanted to add a new-old twist to its preservation. “When we removed the ceiling boards in the lobby we discovered layers of paint representing each previous owner’s intervention. For us it was beautiful, so we treated it as a work of art. It is a great way to represent the old rather than return it to a quasi-heritage state.”

Seah is also interested in how hotel guests aren’t just passive participants of the design drama that surrounds them. “A guest should also be impactful, an actor, a proponent,” he explains. The New Majestic’s aquarium rooms each have a glass-box bathroom

inspired by a time when the neighboring buildings were brothels. In these brothels patrons would view the women from behind a huge glass aquarium. When guests step into the glass box and turn on the hot water it steams up, transforming the transparency of room.

Seah believes that good hotel design isn’t necessarily about the property needing to reflect something cultural about its place. “But it should definitely reflect something specific—is it the owner’s quirk or is it an obsession the designer has? It could be many things but it should transform you and leave an indelible memory in your mind—or in your heart.”

Text: Fiona Harkin



I

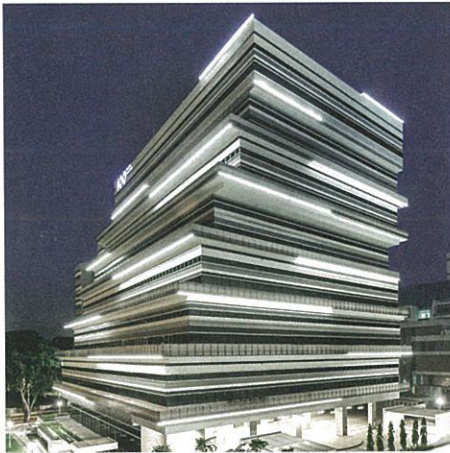


1 Seah's lobby for the New Majestic Hotel, in Singapore, has won seven international design awards thanks to his alluring use of natural light, bold sculptures, and an industrial-meets-contemporary look.

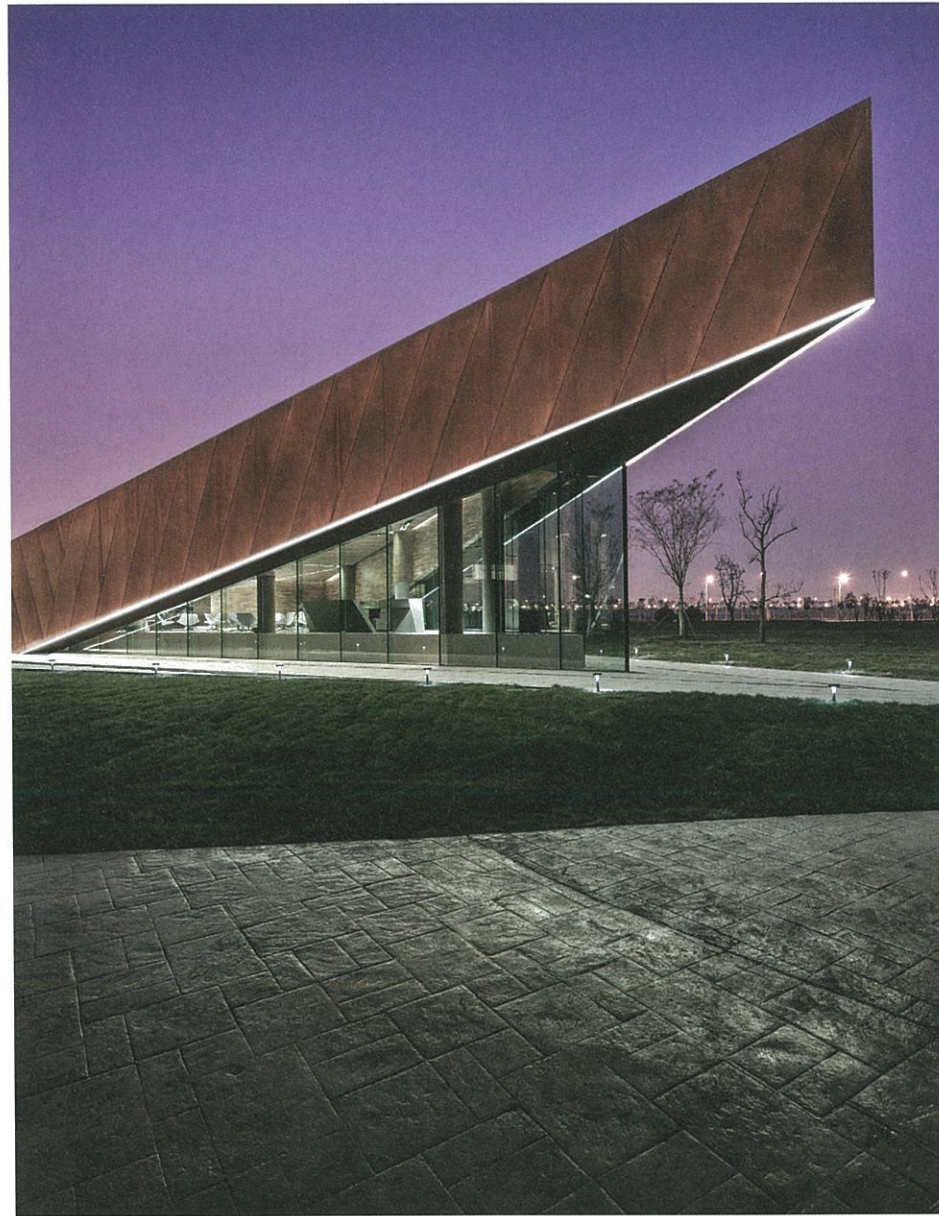
2 For Singapore's Royal China restaurant, Seah blends both traditional and modern aesthetics, utilizing six-meter vaulted ceilings and a large mirror to emphasize a strong visual axis, which further showcases furniture he also designed.

3 The stunning 100PP Office Building, in Singapore, intentionally blurs the definition of the structure's exterior elements (windows, balconies, air-condition ledges) with a series of horizontal stripes throughout the façade that emphasize the shifting and stacked nature of the different volumes.

4 The Vanke Triple V Gallery, in Tianjin, China, commands attention through its arresting triangular concept and contrasting exterior materials of Corten steel cladding and glass.

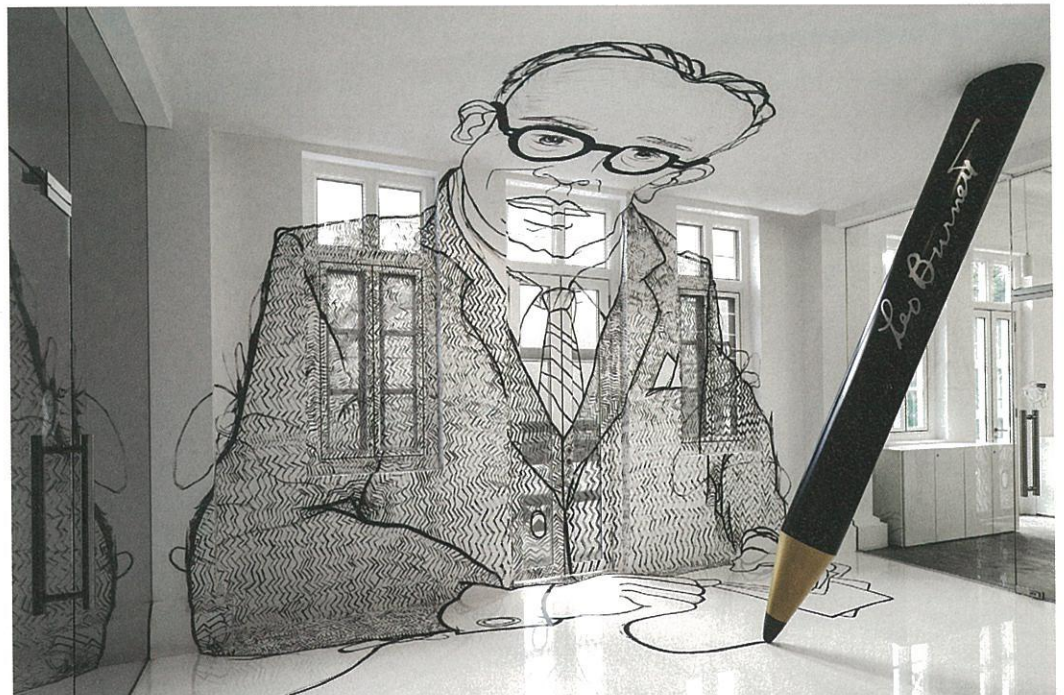


3



4

5 The 2010 Interior Design of the Year award went to Seah for the Leo Burnett office in Singapore, which presents bespoke desks, milky white mirrored resin flooring, and a giant graffiti-style mural of Leo.



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289 distinctive properties

55 countries

181 destinations worldwide

22 bold new hotels

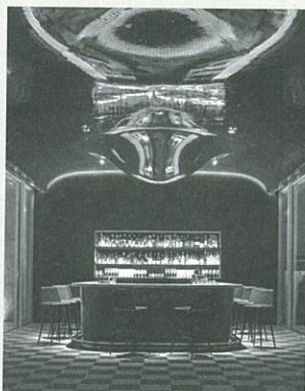
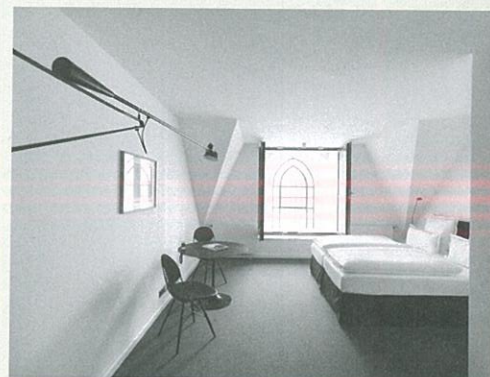
Striking photographs

In-depth features

The Influencers List 2016

Meet this year's 10 honorees and see the work that made them great.

INDIA MAHDAVI / SPACE COPENHAGEN
KIT KEMP / GERT WINGÅRDH
MONIKA GOGL / JEAN-MICHEL WILMOTTE
TARRUELLA TRENCHES STUDIO
MATTEO THUN / DUANGRIT BUNNAG
COLIN SEAH



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