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/ ISSUE 113, 2019/2020 · S\$8 /

LOST VILLA
BOUTIQUE HOTEL
DAS LAB

NAMLY
HILLSIDE VILLA
A D LAB

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/ WORDS LOW SHI PING

IT'S JUST AN ILLUSION

The magic of the Ministry of Design is felt not just in its designs but, quite literally, in The Prestige Hotel in Penang, Malaysia.



Multi-disciplinary firm Ministry of Design (MOD) has developed a reputation for conceptualising projects that are equal parts delightful and distinctive.

Its latest, The Prestige Hotel in Penang, Malaysia, delivers on both fronts.

For starters, the Premier Deluxe room we are allocated has a floor-to-ceiling box that takes up about a third of the space. It is a composition of clear glass and champagne-bronze-tinted metal.

Apart from being aesthetically pleasing, it encases the wardrobe on one side and the shower cabin on the other.

"That's the super-sexy hero piece in the guestrooms," says Colin Seah, Director of MOD. "It's very pretty, but yet there's a masculine touch because of the metal mesh.

"We integrated it into part of the room by dissolving the lines and walls where the bathroom would typically be, so it's completely X-ray in that you can see right through it."

Fans of Houdini might liken it to the boxes

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The Prestige Hotel is a new-build by KL Wong Architect with a 21st century interpretation of Victorian design.





THE PRESTIGE HOTEL

- LOCATION / PENANG, MALAYSIA
- COMPLETION / 2019
- SITE AREA / 3,725M²
- GROSS FLOOR AREA / 8,570M²
- DEVELOPER / PUBLIC PACKAGES HOLDINGS
- ARCHITECT / KL WONG ARCHITECT
- INTERIOR DESIGN / MINISTRY OF DESIGN
- MAIN CONTRACTOR / GOODWOOD BUILDERS
- INTERIOR DESIGN CONTRACTOR / PENA BUILDERS
- C&S CONSULTANT / L.O.T CONSULTANT
- M&E CONSULTANT / GH CONSULTANTS
- QUANTITY SURVEYOR / UNITECH QS CONSULTANCY



immersed in water the magician would escape from and they would not be too far off.

The interior design concept of The Prestige is inspired by the movie of the same name. For those unfamiliar with it, the psychological thriller, set at the end of the 19th century, is all about magic.

MODERN, COLONIAL, TROPICAL VICTORIAN

Located on the edge of the UNESCO World Heritage Site that is George Town, the hotel is set by the coast overlooking Church Street Pier on an east-west axis.

It is a new-build, though judging from its architecture, it is almost impossible to tell. KL Wong Architect has done a good job drawing

elements from the neighbourhood’s colonial roots to create a 21st century interpretation of Victorian design.

“The site was previously occupied by a derelict godown. The owner tried to salvage it but it was in such a decrepit state it was not possible,” shares Seah.

In its place rose a five-story building with a rectangular footprint, topped with a pitched roof running its length.

The ground floor is occupied by the lobby, restaurant The Glasshouse and an arcade with carefully-curated tenants.

The second storey is reserved for the carpark and the remaining floors are for the 162 guest rooms, sized from 28m² to 45m², spread across four room categories.

Because it is 143m long, the building is



/ 2-3

The ground floor is occupied in part by the hotel lobby, where the first thing that is visible is the image of a maze overlain on the marble floor.





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/ 4-5
 The Glasshouse is a hipster dining spot with its custom metal frame lattice in white paint overlain on the walls, cube-patterned and grey-stone flooring tiles, accent cushions and wicker-backed banquettes.



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loosely split into east and west wings with a lift lobby for each.

The interior design concept, explains Seah, is “modern, colonial, tropical Victorian”, “Because it’s a colonial climate in the tropics, as opposed to a colonial climate in Africa, or wherever else that the British had their flag flying all those years ago.”

This means there are punctuations of green, whether in the form of indoor plants or the botanical wallpaper, paired with rattan furniture, wainscoted walls in the corridors and guestrooms and champagne-bronze-tinted metal accents.

TRICKS APLENTY

Casting its spell throughout the property is the magic theme.

Enter the lobby and the first thing that is visible is the image of a maze overlain on the marble floor. Trace it and it will lead to the hotel logo in the middle.

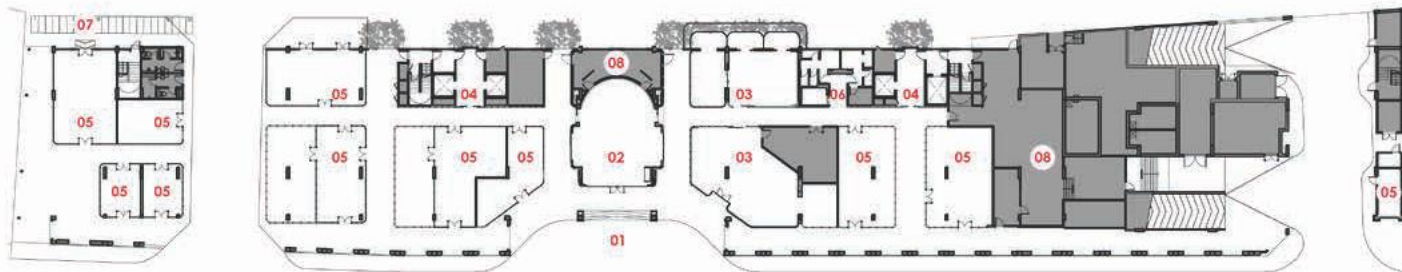
Above it is the illusion of a chandelier, created using LED lights, seemingly to reflect the design of the maze.

The check-in counters are in a mirrored chrome finish but look into it and there is a distortion of the reflection, mimicking those found in a funhouse.



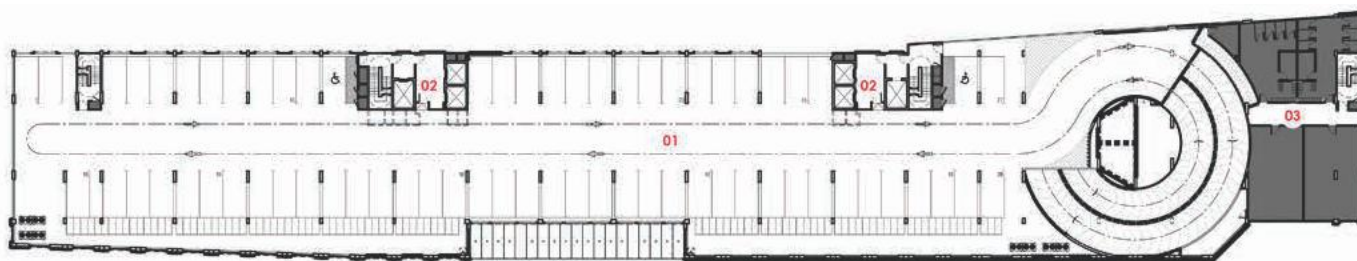
Colin Seah, Director, Ministry of Design (MOD)

FLOOR PLANS

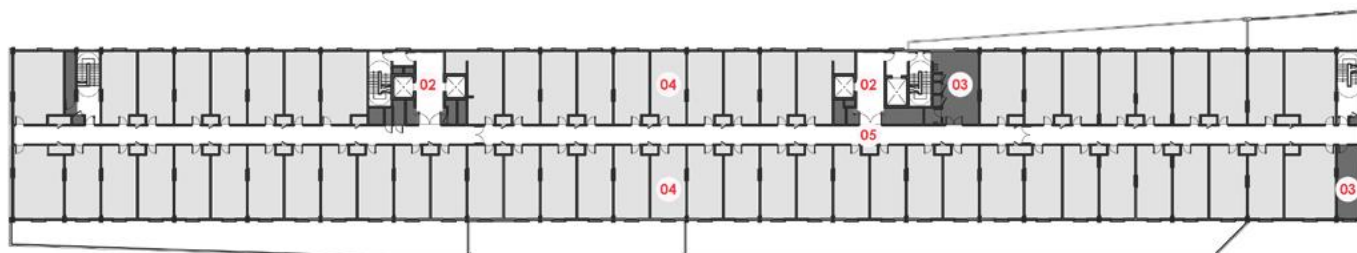


GROUND FLOOR

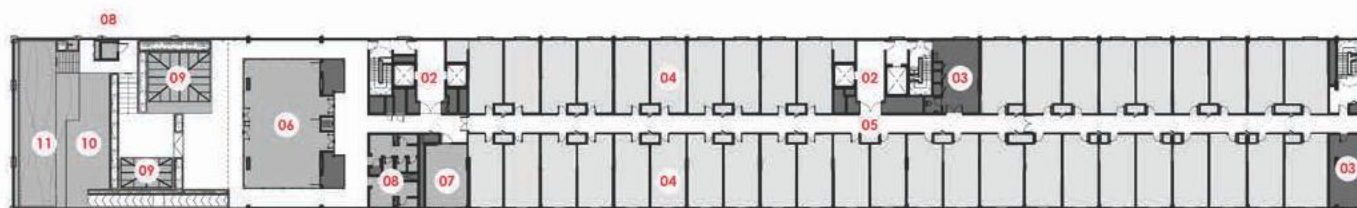
- | | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. DROP OFF | 2. HOTEL RECEPTION | 3. ALL DAY DINING (THE GLASS HOUSE) |
| 4. LIFT LOBBIES (EAST & WEST) | 5. RETAIL SHOPS | 6. PUBLIC WASHROOMS |
| 7. BICYCLE PARK | 8. BACK OF THE HOUSE | |



FIRST FLOOR



SECOND AND THIRD FLOOR



FORTH FLOOR

- | | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. CARPARK (63 LOTS) | 2. LIFT LOBBIES (EAST & WEST) | 3. BACK OF THE HOUSE |
| 4. GUESTROOMS | 5. GUEST CORRIDOR | 6. FUNCTION ROOM (ANGIER & BORDEN) |
| 7. GYM | 8. PUBLIC WASHROOMS | 9. GAZEBOS (JULIA & OLIVIA) |
| 10. POOL DECH | 11. POOL | |





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/ OPPOSITE

The colour palette of the 140m-long corridor alternates between a light and dark grey geometric pattern to break down the scale.

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Initially invisible in The Loft Suite is a set of sliding doors designed to look like the wall, hiding the pantry.

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The hero piece pictured here in the Premier Deluxe room is a composition of clear glass and champagne-bronze-tinted metal.

Ride the lift up to the guest room floors and more magic awaits.

Because the corridors run 140m in length, Seah faced a challenge, "It was just too intimidating. To mask their length, we resorted to visual illusion [again]."

Their colour palette alternates between a light and dark grey geometric pattern to break down the scale.

"In each light grey section, we created these filigree light shades with a light inside that rotates – similar to how you put kids to sleep.

"As you walk down the corridor, every light grey section has a slowly rotating lattice of shadow, which is quite nice," he explains, adding that this long axis provided the original inspiration for The Prestige's concept.

Enter the guestrooms and they each have their own aforementioned hero piece.

Other magical touches include a bed with a recessed stand so it appears to be levitating, and a perfectly-camouflaged door that conceals the entrance to the WC with its unexpected burst of emerald-green botanical wallpaper.

Special mention has to go to the Loft



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Suite, which also has a set of sliding doors designed to look like the wall, hiding the pantry.

Almost all the furniture in the rooms – from the bedhead to the lights, poufs, chairs



and tables – are custom-made.

This includes the occasional tray housing the toiletries, which when filled up with the various boxes and properly arranged, looks like a completed jigsaw showing an illustration of the façade of the hotel.

Up on the rooftop, there is a gym hung with a custom-designed chandelier that the hotel general manager Melvin Ooi says helps to make it the most beautiful gym in Penang.

In fact, he points out that guests are often more concerned with taking selfies than work out.

Outdoors, there are a pair of function rooms named Angier and Borden, as well as two gazebos named Olivia and Julia. These are the lead characters in the movie that the hotel is named after.

Beyond these is the infinity-edged swimming pool that looks out towards the sea, part of which is made up of mosaics with a botanical design.

As with any self-respecting designer, context is an important inspiration point and Seah is no different.

The Glasshouse holds its own as a hipster dining spot with its custom metal frame lattice in white paint overlain on

/ ABOVE

The rooftop houses function rooms and open-air gazebos all in the same design language.



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/ 8
The infinity-edged swimming pool that looks out towards the sea, part of which is made up of mosaics with a botanical design.

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The colour scheme of the room is also applied onto the lift lobbies on the upper floors.

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A tapestry of icons linked to Penang, laser-cut into mirror-tinted metal, is found in the lift.



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the walls, cube-patterned and grey-stone flooring tiles, accent cushions and wicker-backed banquettes.

It is split into three sections with one overlooking the street and another two across the arcade facing a thin sliver of courtyard at the back of the hotel smothered in plants.

But the most literal connection to Penang in The Prestige is found in its lifts.

In place of mirrors, Seah “decided to be a bit cheeky” by including a tapestry of icons linked to Penang, laser-cut into mirror-tinted metal.

“Hopefully you notice something new

each time you go in the lift. There are modern buildings like City Hall and the Padang, flora and fauna and even very banal things like hawker centre chairs.”

In fact, it is very tempting to stay inside and spot the icons. And therein lies MOD’s magic.

For as much as the charms of the cities it has projects in are plentiful and compelling, the firm has perfected the formula to create spaces within them that make you reluctant to leave because they are so fun – or, at the very least, when you depart, you’ll bring with you a wonderful memory that will stay with you for a long time.