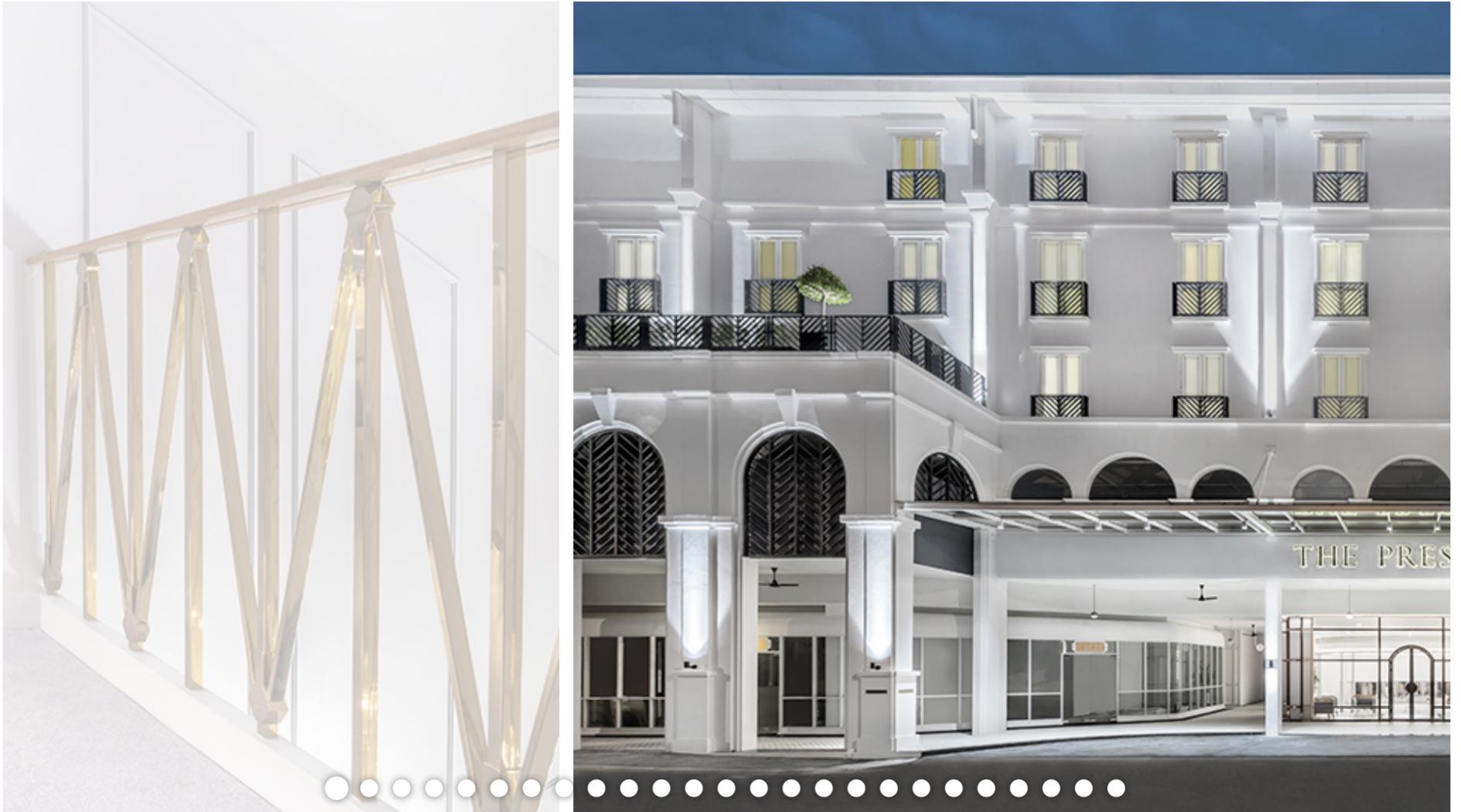




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### The Prestige Hotel: the first of its kind in Penang, Malaysia

Georgina Johnston

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#### Ministry of Design create a modern day magical interpretation of Victorian design inspired by the Nolan film, welcoming the urbane traveler to a contemporised and quasi-colonial universe

Named “The Prestige” to conjure brand imagery of elegance and sophistication, it also takes cues from the movie *The Prestige* starring Christian Bale, which was set in the Victorian era, about the illusory art of magic.

The Prestige Hotel is an independent bespoke luxury hotel portraying the natural and urban beauty of Penang’s historic core. Uniquely one of a kind, the hotel draws upon the cultural relevance of its colonial past whilst showcasing the art of illusion etched in sophisticated architectural and design philosophies to deliver a distinctive hotel stay experience. Located in Georgetown, it’s set amongst the impressive and intricate 19th century English colonial buildings found in this UNESCO World Heritage site. The hotel features 162 rooms, an all day dining restaurant, a rooftop infinity pool, events pavilion and terrace, and a vibrant Victorian dining and retail arcade. Located 25 minutes from Penang’s international airport and within walking distance to Penang’s famous cultural landmarks and popular gourmet hotspots.

Located along Church Street Penang, The Prestige Hotel is a newbuild, joining many Victorian buildings which still house banking and commercial facilities, in a tropical climate where lush vegetation abounds. While the colonial Victorian heritage and tropics are key elements of the design concept, the studio considered a particularly difficult condition of the site, case point, its long narrow proportions which potentially made navigating the hotel’s retail arcade or its long guest room corridors a monotonous experience. To overcome this, the studio introduced elements of visual trickery and surprise, notions of magic and illusions, with the end goal of creating delightful spaces and memorable guest experiences.

This element of visual trickery is subtly introduced throughout the 162 room hotel; ranging from transformation of familiar heritage floor patterns, furniture design such as the custom reception desk that seems to magically balance on balls, and hidden doors in guestrooms that open to reveal toilets and pantries.

For example, the studio alternated dark and light colour schemes along the guest room corridors, to break down the potential monotony of the corridor experience. Mechanised light features were placed at regular intervals, to rotate and cast shadows

of intricate lattice patterns to animate the guest journey. This visual animation and trickery was thus borne out of a response to the unusual specificity of the site.

At the Ground Floor drop off, one subtle intervention to unify the reception with the Glasshouse Restaurant and retail spaces, is the black-and-white floor pattern, which seems to magically “appear and disappear” before your eyes. Introducing a buzzy lifestyle arcade at the drop off, the studio planned the ground floor layout such that the reception, Glasshouse Restaurant and retail spaces are designed as standalone stores; a shop-in-shop concept to break down the linear scale, resulting in a delightful check in, eating and shopping area reminiscent of the historical English shopping arcade.

In the reception area, the designers introduced several tongue-in-cheek references to magical illusion, where guests navigate a custom designed white marble clad maze with brass trimmings on the floor, to get to the reception. The custom reception desk made of mirrored stainless steel, magically appears to balance on chrome spheres, and a cloud wainscot adorns the curved wall behind the reception desk, showing a modern whimsical take on Victorian interiors.

In the guestrooms, a key feature in the Premier Deluxe Suite is the custom designed shower and wardrobe enclosure, crafted with champagne bronze tinted metal and glass; a hero piece which takes aesthetic cues from the elaborate magic props used in performances such as Houdini’s escape box. Another custom design piece is the vanity mirror frame; abstracted from Victorian mirrors, usually heavy and elaborate, and modernised with its angular form, polished brass and integrated light, this feature plays on optical illusions and perceptions, appearing as two mirrors but floats as a frame on top of a horizontal mirror wall. Other subtle visual trickery and surprises in the room include beds that seem to levitate and hidden doors that reveal toilet cubicles and hidden pantries. The studio’s modern take on Victorian wainscoting, was to craft angular trapezium-shaped lines, which provide a contemporised backdrop for the room.

There are four room types in total, the standard room named the Deluxe, the Premier Deluxe Suite, the Loft Suite, this suite features a generous lounge on the ground floor and a separate bedroom area on the mezzanine level; and a unique Deluxe Trio room which features a smaller bedroom for a child travelling with parents, for additional privacy. Besides featuring hidden pantries that are revealed behind the wainscot wall, the Loft Suite also features a custom designed clock at the sofa area, which doubles up as a wall feature, making a fractal pattern out of the angular wainscot lines.

The inspiration for The Glasshouse came from the English Victorian conservatory; the studio applied the lattice pattern to the metal framed walls and glazing of the Glasshouse restaurant, seating 110 diners, presenting it as a delightful garden conservatory for breakfasts, lunches and dinners. A mix of real plants and tropical prints were used for the sofa cushions to add to the allure of being in a “Tropical Eden”. The mirror, a ubiquitous tool for the magician, is deliberately used to clad the end walls to create the optical illusion of multiple rooms. Uniquely planned to be experienced in two zones, the Glasshouse offers a variety of seating areas, either on forest-green leather banquettes, facing the street for people-watching, or on white wicker chairs facing the lush landscaped alfresco areas at the back.

Taking the lift to the room levels on two and three, and to the event spaces on level four, is a confluence of modern Victorian layered with local botany. The lift lobby surprises with a champagne bronze tinted feature wall with etched patterning inspired by Victorian grilles and a window portal which frames the lush plants outside.

In the lift car, the studio custom designed a floor-to-ceiling polished tinted metal wall, graphically presenting the unique features of Penang in an aesthetic that is reminiscent of Victorian-like wallpaper. The graphic pattern comprises etched outlines of heritage buildings, famous landmarks, and the local botany of Penang such as coconut trees, birds of paradise, hibiscus and Pinang palm trees.

The top floor, level 4, houses a fully equipped gym, amidst chandeliers and mirrored ceiling panels to create the optical illusion of infinite space, and a generous events area. Named after the lead characters in The Prestige movie, the Angier and Borden Function Rooms can host indoor events for 110 guests, and the Olivia and Julia outdoor gazebos feature lounge settings. The Angier and Borden Function Rooms feature mullions with fluted glass, providing privacy while maintaining light and porosity.

The infinity edge rooftop pool is an idyllic place to watch the sunset since it fronts Church Street Pier and overlooks the water. The studio not only designed the boundary walls and raised them, for greater privacy, it also designed landscaping to shield sunbathers from those having drinks at the gazebo lounge.

The hotel logo takes its reference from Victorian crests to recreate a modern family crest, in this case, also playing with optical illusion by using lines to suggest the presence of negative spaces. The first “P” refers to Prestige, the 2nd “P” hinges on the idea of seeing double yet also situates the hotel in Penang.

## Key Facts

**Brand:**

Interior

**Practice:**

Ministry of Design

**Project Category:**

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Hotels

Restaurants

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Hotels and other overnight accommodation

Performing Spaces

**Location:**

Malaysia

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