

JOYCE WANG STUDIO

JOYCE WANG

Having recently completed the re-design of the Mandarin Oriental Hong Kong's Landmark Suites, Joyce Wang is the design force behind some of Hong Kong's most high-profile hotel and restaurant design projects. She is now in the final stages of the monumental renovation of the Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park, London, where the aesthetic has been completely redesigned. Can Faik meets the woman of the moment and finds out what inspires and excites her...

Specialising in luxury hospitality and residential interiors, Joyce Wang Studio although boutique in culture, has a global portfolio and an international presence within the industry. Based in London and Hong Kong, Wang and her team have a mission to bring joy to the spaces they design.

Wang's architectural approach, cinematic references and interdisciplinary inspirations give her award-winning projects a sense of drama and narrative that captivate and engage audiences.

Tell me about your role at Joyce Wang Studio?

To motivate and excite, as well as to strive to be the greatest fan of ourselves and our clients. I feel it's also important to constantly indulge in what we want to do as a studio - we will often embark on internal projects that we fund and propel as a studio. When we are our own client, we can hear our own voice and my role is to reinforce that identity. The tricky part of the role is that it doesn't come with a job description, so I have to figure out things that are important to me but that no one else can quite do - such as this Q&A!

What makes Joyce Wang Studio different to other design companies?

We pride ourselves in being and feeling youthful. This novice approach paired with clients who are seeding concepts for the future results in a flourishing and joyful design process.

How and why did you get into the interior design industry?

I had always wanted to be an architect as it was the more accepted creative industry profession in the eyes of a traditional Hong Kong family. I recall one of my first memories of accompanying my mother up the escalator of the HK HSBC Bank Building. Going from the gritty streets through the crystal-like underbelly of the building made me feel like a million dollars. Arriving at the bank atrium interior was exciting and humbling all at once. Since then, I've devoted my profession to making others feel the same way with our interiors.

Have you noticed any particular trends in hotel design?

Ultimately, the design language of any hotel represents hospitality beyond its people. The design of the minibar for instance needs to carry the same personality as its top mixologist when a guest interacts with it - its attentiveness, inventiveness and its ability to delight. It's about humanising hospitality when there isn't anyone around.

How important are public spaces in hotels?

Public spaces in hotels use to be about grandeur and exclusivity; some of the ones who have got it 'right' manage to make their lobbies feel accessible and inclusive. The best ones for me replace the idea of a 'town hall' in the city. I would expect to go there and learn about the happenings of the city at first-hand and have run-ins with like-minded people.





Hollywood Roosevelt Cabana Suite Parlour



Suite in the Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park, London
Acorn Chandelier by Chelsom

How is the current economic climate affecting the hotel design market? And has Joyce Wang Studio felt the effects?

We felt the effects at the beginning of 2017 when retail was really slowing down in Hong Kong and there was political uncertainty in both the US and UK. Fortunately, it has picked up towards the end of this year. During the quieter period, we were able to focus more on internal growth and self-propelled projects.

Have you seen exceptional growth in any part of the world in hotel design?

There was a heavy emphasis on Middle Eastern-based projects for some time. Interestingly, some Middle Eastern investments have now focused on first-tier cities in Europe – to bring hospitality brands into cities that have not yet been saturated such as Vienna, Amsterdam and Munich. Chinese investors have also seen Brexit as an opportunity to invest into London markets, which were previously less accessible. In addition to continued growth in China, there's also been increased interest in key cities in Australia – such as Sydney and Melbourne.

Let's talk about Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park, and what this stunning project mean to you?

Working on a London project has been a dream of mine since studying at the Royal College of Art. There's inspiration everywhere and the myriad of talented fabricators and artisans that seeds collaboration. To win the Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park meant making some of these valuable relationships possible in elevating our work to new levels. To work in a culture that feels familiar yet poses new challenges has been rewarding

and daunting at the same time. Our work is critiqued by international travellers with the highest expectations – culminating in invaluable lessons learnt for the studio for some time to come.

How much time do you dedicate to sourcing products and suppliers for the projects you work on?

We rely wholeheartedly on people who take pride in their trade and craft. I never feel like we have enough time to seek out suppliers and fabricators. When we do meet someone we resonate with; that one fateful meeting can mean collaborations on multiple projects and it becomes a responsibility of ours to protect their craft in whichever way possible on the project level.

Do you find it easy to source new suppliers or do you work with existing companies on a long-term basis?

Both. We constantly challenge our in-house appetite for style and taste as it evolves with time and between cultures we work with. Suppliers have the advantage of not being associated with a particular style so our evolution is dependent on working with suppliers, new and old, to create new languages of materiality together.

What has been your favourite project to date?

Mott 32, Hong Kong. It was the most challenging project and one that the client granted us free rein over. The studio pulled together to draw from their diverse backgrounds and cultures to interpret an interior that felt Hong Kong to us personally. It will always be a special project for us.

— CHELSOM —



Chelsom bespoke lighting for all guestrooms and public areas at Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park, London. Designer: Joyce Wang Studio.



Hollywood Roosevelt Cabana Suite



Landmark Entertainment Suite in the Mandarin Oriental Hong Kong



Reception at the Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park, London



Mott32 Hong Kong

Where do you see hotel design in the future?

As social media makes it more and more challenging to be private, I feel creating spaces that allows one to be private and intimate with their loved ones will be the ultimate luxury. I'm hoping they hold off on providing free wi-fi on all plane rides and underwater as they're the only safe havens we have left for being offline.

In your opinion, what will be the top trends in interior design for this year?

The keyword is wellness. Sustainability is passé as it feels like a heavy burden. It focuses on the self and the area immediately surrounding the body, everything that you touch from a doorknob to a headboard that cocoons you to the bathmat. Comfort has been neglected. As we're living in an increasingly digital world, to have something that really feels soft and stimulates touch is, for me, a luxury because you don't have it as often, then when you do, it feels like a treat.

Is there anything exciting that you are working on at the moment that you can tell us about?

We are working on many 'firsts' at the moment alongside some people who are passionate about design. Me, my team members, clients, collaborators and fabricators are working on our first private members club in New York

with a concept that will be first tested at the end of 2018. We are working with Equinox on the spa and club component of their first hotel in New York that will be 'wellness' to the forefront of the guest experience.

What colours, textures and furniture pieces do you love the most?

I love materials with textures, patina and variance. I am probably least excited by plastics - its homogenous and flat to sight and touch, in addition to its negative impact to our environment. We are working with terrazzo more and more these days and helping it transgress from a pedestrian to a luxurious finish. It uses cement and recycled marble chips, making it one of the more environmentally friendly materials to use.

What's next for you?

Mandarin Oriental Melbourne Hotel and Residences, Mandarin Oriental Bangkok Residences, Private Members Club, New York, Equinox Hotel Club and Spa, New York, Equinox Club St James, Mayfair, London and Mott 32 Las Vegas, USA.

> joycewang.com

ACCENTO

The great strength of Accento family adds a plus to professionalism which has harmoniously sharpened over time through generations ever since 1931, and that now, with Elisa e Eleonora Buiani, is living through a new stage, under banner of a unique mix of modernity and identity: that is what Accento stands for.

