

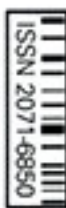
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Exterior of the Oterra Hotel Bangalore



surreality rules

By Tony Smyth

Italian design team of Sawaya & Moroni bring a large splash of European chic to a new boutique brand.

WHEN JITSUN INVESTMENTS took over a run-down commercial building in 2006 there was no alternative but to do a total refurbishment. It was also decided that they build a hotel annex to add value to the property and set about looking to bring something to rival W and Bulgari hotels to be called Klapsons The Boutique Hotel.

Appointing RSP Architects as the local architectural firm to set the whole project in motion they set about to look for an international firm to provide something unique for the hotel portion that was not currently on offer in Singapore. In the end they decided on the Italian firm of Sawaya & Moroni who were considered to share their vision and design ethos. The fact that they are also formidable furniture designers and had worked with the owner on previous projects was also a factor.

The owners knew what they wanted from the beginning and worked with the designers to put the picture together.

"There is no definitive ambience or set theme. These in our opinion tend to die out very quickly. We wanted something that could stand the test of time."

Owner: Jitsun Investments Pte Ltd **Architecture Design Firm:** Sawaya & Moroni, RSP Architects and Consultants **Architecture Project Team:** RSP Architects and Consultants **General Contractor:** Sunray Woodcraft Pte Ltd **Interior Design Consultant:** Sawaya & Moroni **Interior Project Team:** William Sawaya, Paolo Moroni **Interior Fit-out Contractor:** Sunray Woodcraft **Lighting Consultant:** Illumtec **Mechanical/Electrical Consultant:** Squire Mech **Kitchen Consultant:** Sommerville **Signage Consultant:** In-house **Acoustical Consultant:** In-house **Graphics Consultant:** In-house **Art Consultant:** In-house

SUPPLIERS:- **Flooring-Carpet:** Goodrich **Global Hardwood:** Kienson **Furnishings:** Sawaya & Moroni **Room Controls:** Lutron **Air-conditioning/Extraction:** Daikin **Drapery:** Goodrich **Global Architectural glass:** YKK AP **Lighting Controls:** Lutron **Chandeliers:** Sawaya & Moroni, Flos **Door/Entry locks:** VingCard **Elsafe Sanitaryware:** Laufen **Sanitary Fixtures:** Zucchetti, Antonio Lupi **Elevators & Escalators:** Hitachi



*This page, clockwise from top left:
Reception housed within a sphere;
lobby furnishings;
blue LED lighting makes contrast;
pillars emphasise ceiling height.
Opposite page, top and bottom:
The reception sphere.*



Like how some 70s design is still very relevant today," says Adrian Lee, director of Klapsons the Boutique Hotel. "We are first and foremost a business hotel. We wanted to take the monotony of the standard business hotel and make it a little more interesting."

The brief was to build a unique five-star boutique hotel that would look completely different from and less obvious than what you would normally expect from a five-star hotel. Since the hotel is intended as the flagship for a future hotel chain, it had to have a strong character and branding, as well as featuring exportable architectural elements that would make the other hotels in the chain recognisable.

"My team and I drew up several different strategies and potential scenarios, then proceeded by elimination until we were left with the best and most plausible idea," says William Sawaya, principal at Sawaya & Moroni. "We were not targeting any specific theme as such, but a contemporary, luxurious feeling of well-being."

They took the opportunity to convert several potential drawbacks into positive features. For example, there were huge outdoor areas on each floor that were not being used. Sawaya transformed them into pleasant terraces and gardens, upgrading the ambient quality in the rooms. As a result, guests can feel more as though they are staying in a resort than an urban hotel.

One unique feature of the site that offered a great opportunity was the high-rise ceiling. On the other hand, the greatest challenges came from linking the hotel lobby to the existing skyscraper tower and overcoming all the restrictions in the development plan.

The two-storey height of the ceiling underscores the character of the lobby as an indoor plaza. This is reinforced by the organic design of the ceiling with its pattern of overlapping layers of plaster, perforated with amoeba-like forms, inside which an LED system makes it possible to vary the tones and colours of the background.

Stepping into the lobby at the Klapson's Hotel, guests are immediately ▶



This page, far left:
reception with helicoidal staircase.
This page, below, top to bottom:
Mood lighting - red, yellow;
custom furnishings and artwork.
Opposite page, clockwise from top left:
Exterior view of restaurant;
etched pattern on restaurant window;
a geometric motif dominates the bar.





confronted with the strong message that they are in for a surreal adventure. Red quartzite flooring is juxtaposed with a white quartzite approach to a shiny chrome sphere that functions as a reception capsule which is situated between two steel-clad pillars transformed into imposing cylindrical columns.

According to Sawaya, "it puts you in a good mood and raises your expectations." Not least by being confronted with the huge five and a half metre high hand-made stainless steel sphere in the reception area and stainless steel wire mesh that is also a design statement in the lobby.

Around the mirror-finish nucleus of the reception, other architectural episodes appear like 'characters': the helicoidal staircase contained in a portal of Macassar wood, leading to the music bar on the first level, and then the volume of the elevators, clad with steel screens.

Lighting is an important part of creating the surreal atmosphere in the lobby. Powered by sophisticated computer controlled LED lights there is no limit to the colour ranges and permutations that this allows to create different moods, whether excitement or tranquillity throughout the day or for special occasions.

The light is bright almost all year round in Singapore, so Sawaya set out to create a sophisticated, refreshing, energising lighting effect. ▶





The colour and intensity of the light in the lobby and in the guestrooms can be controlled individually opening up endless possibilities for the hotel.

The selection of materials and finishes were chosen with functionality in mind as well as for their aesthetic qualities.

Sawaya believes that when designing for a hotel its imperative to make sure that the materials are resistant and easy to maintain.

"Even so, we try to reconcile that by using materials that are as green and sustainable as possible: LED lighting, natural textiles, marble, stainless steel, natural wood, soft colours etc. all really helped us achieve a feeling of tranquillity in all the hotel's spaces," he adds.

The colour scheme and textural qualities for the space are still reflected throughout the hotel despite the fact that they deliberately set out to make every room different, but without straying away from a consistent palette of colours and materials.

"Although we used different wood veneers in some areas, what doesn't change is the sense of warmth given off by the material," says Sawaya.

The rooms are designed to avoid the dreadful 'where am I?' experience suffered first thing in the morning by so many globetrotters: guests will never confuse their room in this hotel with any one of hundreds of others around the world, but will



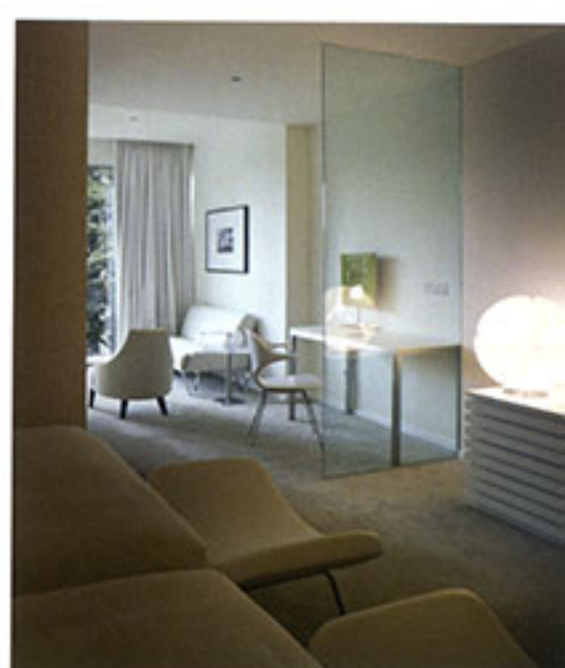
instantly know that they are in the Klapson's.

Whether this is because of the unique transparent circular showers in the some of the guestrooms or the Ferrari-red built-in showers in the others the design includes other features that reinforce the identity credentials that this new brand is trying to establish. The indirect lighting, the artwork featuring vigorous black and white images, the use of saddle leather panelling in the rooms and large-format quartz marble on the floors all combine to give a sense of place with an unexpected synergy.

To obtain the largest possible number of rooms, the spaces have limited width, extending in depth and bringing part of the bathroom into the room itself, closing just the toilet and the washstand in a separate block.

The bathtubs, in certain rooms, are displayed in small living rooms, while in many cases a relationship is established with greenery, setting the rooms next to garden-terraces with outdoor hydro-massage tubs, wooden decks and cots for relaxing. Custom furnishings and padded walls covered with leather alternate with capitonné velvet sofas, coloured lamps, hidden accent lights, in a controlled compositional narrative. ♣

Photography by Santi Caleca



Top row, left to right:
shower unit in Ferrari-red;
guestroom; suite bathroom.
Opposite page, clockwise from middle left:
Circular shower unit in guestroom;
jacuzzi on private terrace;
guestroom with customised furniture.
This page, above, left to right:
White suite bedroom;
white suite living room.