Dariel™ Studio

Thinking by making

Zhouzhuang Blossom Hill Boutique Hotel

Design company: Dariel Studio
Designer: Thomas DARIEL
Project manager: Hata CHEN
Location: Zhouzhuang – China
Surface: 2500 m2
Completion date: May 2012

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The 621 Villa, No 621 Changde Road, Shanghai 200040 China

Zhouzhuang Blossom Hill Boutique Hotel is located in Zhouzhuang, the water town of Southern China positioned 1.5 hours away from Shanghai. This ancient town, known as the "Venice of the Orient," has a history of more than 900 years and still retains the style and pattern of its ancient village. It is noted for its profound cultural background, the well-preserved ancient residential houses, the elegant views of the waterside and its colorful local traditions and customs.

This hotel is a renovation of three old separate Ming Dynasty-style buildings. During the 19th century the three sons of Dai built the buildings that, at the time, served as living places, as well as a space to conduct business. After many years, these buildings were divided into four parts before the renovation: a Museum, a Tea House, a Guesthouse and an abandoned structure. Dariel Studio has reconstructed and transformed them into a 20-suite heritage hotel. The renovation aims to restore the initial spatial unity of the building, while also to preserve the architectural heritage.

These four buildings were independently built but closely connected, which is why the structure and style are similar. Dariel Studio spent nearly six months on repairing and altering the buildings, which include the adjustment of the ground level, the reinforcement of the main beams, the preservation of the old wooden window frames and the layout of space.

Dariel Studio was asked by Blossom Hill to create a boutique hotel that embodies both the picturesque scenery and history of Zhouzhuang. These qualities combined portray the same elegant leisure-lifestyle experience that has endured through the ages in this ancient town, in addition to exhibiting its identity and history.

One sensory travel through the seasons

In order to apply the feeling of history and Chinese culture, designer Thomas Dariel created the ”one sensory travel through the seasons” concept for this boutique hotel.
The inspiration comes from the 24 seasons from the Chinese traditional solar calendar. In ancient China, the solar year is divided into 24 terms according to Chinese traditional farming habits, with each term corresponding to the Sun’s particular position,.
First, the rooms are divided into four seasonal areas and are displayed according to their sun exposure and natural light intensity during the day. Thus, these rooms symbolize the seasons Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter. From light yellow or bright orange, to deep purple, the subtle choice of colors represents the atmosphere and characteristics of each season. Each room is named after a flower based on a different season, such as Blossom, Lotus, Sweet Olive and Cymbidium.

Dariel Studio chose several important solar terms to design the hotel’s entire spatial distribution, where each room is defined by a poetic seasonal symbolism: Vernal Equinox, Solstice of Summer and Winter, Wheat Heads, Awakening of Insects, White Dew, Little Heat…

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- “Vernal Equinox”, for instance, welcomes visitors to enjoy a new experience. “Equinox”, meaning an equal time between day and night, is emulated by a perfect balance between the exterior and the interior of the hotel.

- “Solstice of summer and winter” is defined by a restaurant symbolizing the duality of the two seasons. Furthermore, the representation of combining the East and the West is reflected by a Western-style bar accompanied by Chinese-style furniture.

- The season of “wheat heads” is portrayed by the architectural design of a wine cellar. The intended experience of this room is represented by the time of harvesting plentiful amount of wheat. The maturing process of wheat heads and wine are similar, for both need time in order to develop flavor.
- “Awakening of insects”, a time when hibernating insects awaken, is a place of contemplation. The room awakens people’s spirituality, mirroring the startling insects, with different attributes that define the space: the insect cage-style lamp, the golden color and the comfortable sofas intend to make the room a place of constant change.

- “White dew and little heat” are periods differentiated by opposing temperatures. “White dew”, a time of the year when it becomes rainy and cloudy, is symbolized by a water bar. The term “little

heat", a time in July when the season's heat begins, is signified by a tea house. The warmth of tea and the refreshing water compliment the hot and cool seasons of the Chinese Lunar Calendar.

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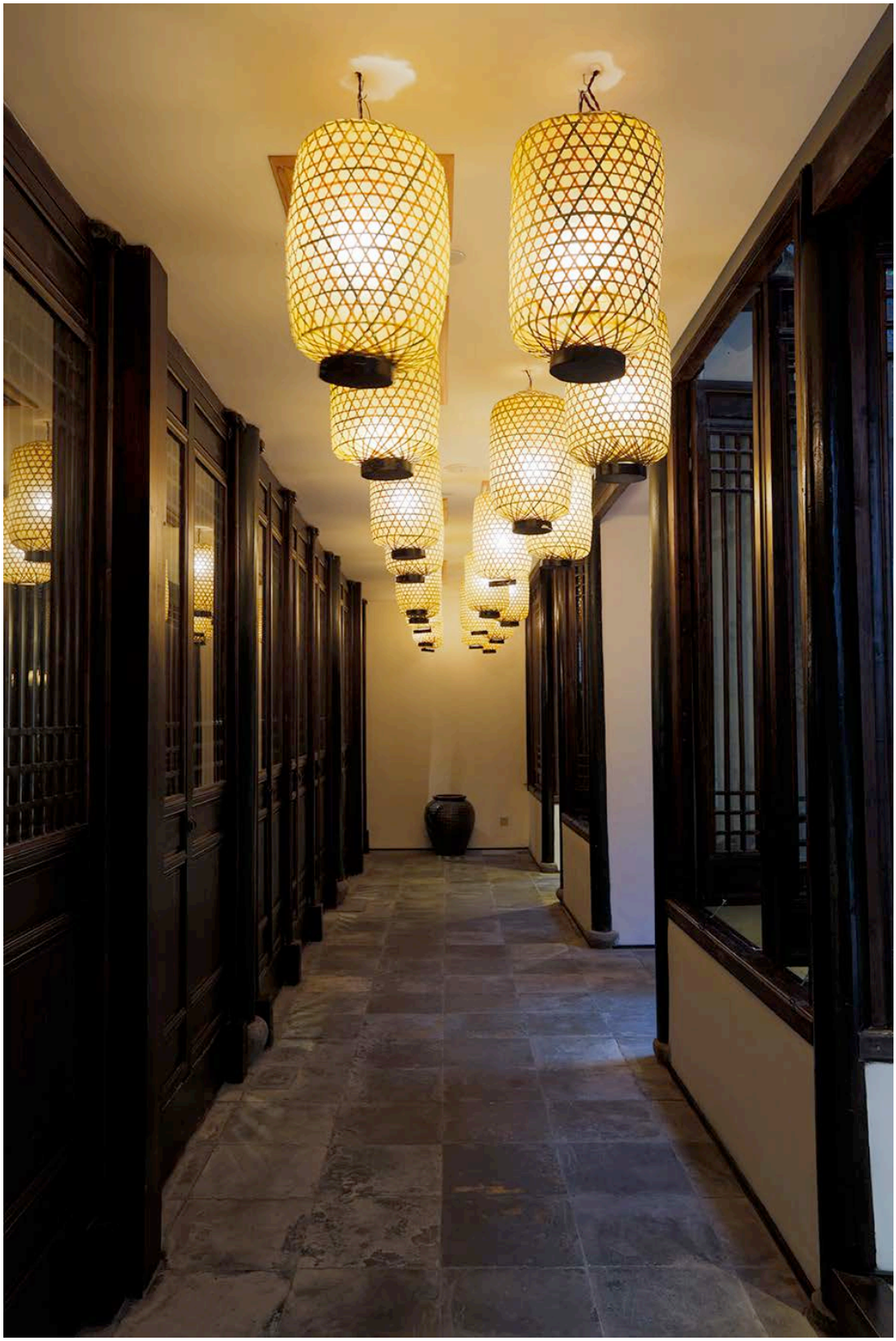

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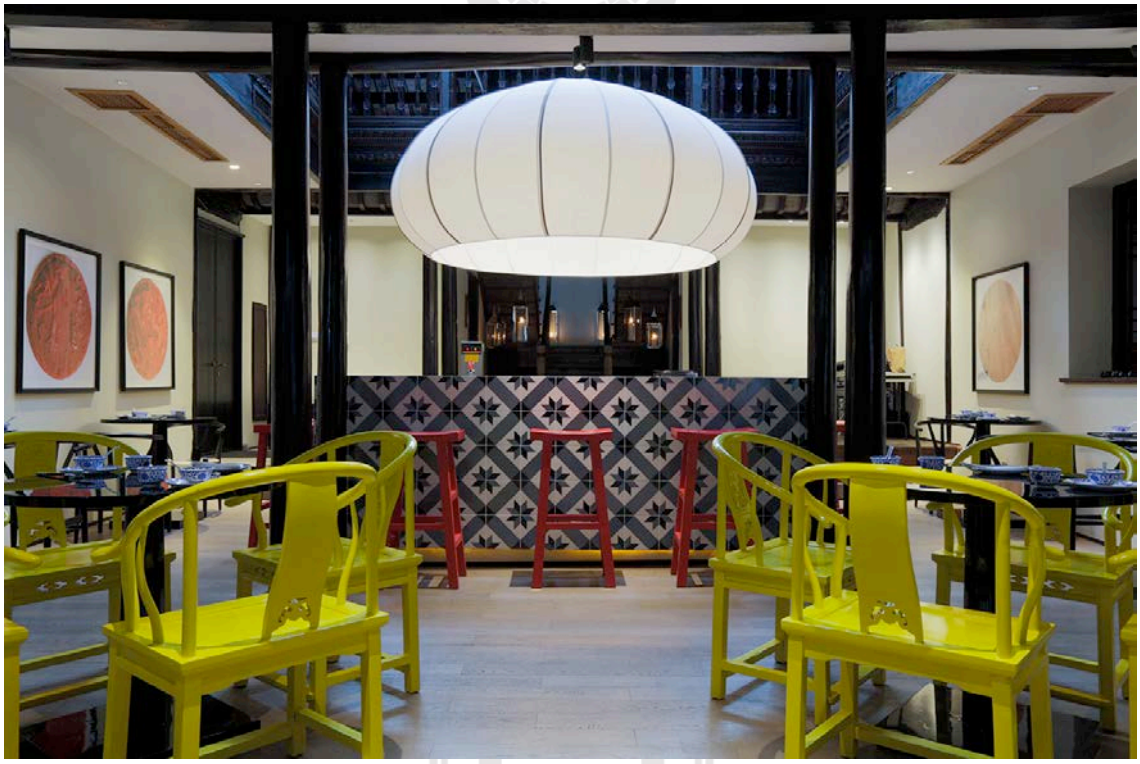
The preservation of cultural and architectural heritage

To protect the building's heritage and local culture, every old decoration, window frame, stone, and tile were carefully collected and noted before renovation. All of these materials were reused to preserve the aspects of cultural tradition. For the ones that could not be reused, Dariel Studio reproduced them with the same pattern to retain the Ming-dynasty style. An inscription,"花萼联辉", by a scholar in ancient China was kept on the top of the archway. ,"花萼联辉" translates to "the three brothers reaching success if they work together with the same ambition." An inscription"剡溪遗泽" on top of another archway means "the hometown is deeply missed." The main structure of this old buidling was also kept; patios connect the front halls and back halls, and Chinese pattern-carved beams and pillars reveal the building's historicity.

Dariel Studio not only preserves the heritage of the area, but also emphasizes historical aspects of the building by artistically incoporating new Ancient-imitated decorations in the design. The shape of the cabinet and bathtub is conceptualized into the square shape of a Chinese ancient food-box; a Chinese king-size bed is kept company by a bamboo-shaped prop; there are Chinese metal handles on the doors and engraved copper on the door of bathroom; a special national necklace is featured on the wall; different Chinese vases are ubiquitous in the rooms and public areas; new brightly-painted Chinese chairs are present; and vibrant calligraphic brushes are hung on the wall for decoration.

Combination of Chinese heritage and Western Contemporary Luxury

Thomas Dariel, who likes to mix Chinese and French culture together, plays with the combination of Chinese traditional culture and Western modern luxury perfectly in this project. The library contains a fireplace and a baby-grand piano that not only make one feel warm, but that also portrays a calm and comfortable atmosphere similar to traditional Parisian salons—a space where one would spend all day reading or thinking. In the restaurant that identifies "solstice of summer and winter", the apparent color contrast of the repainted Chinese Ming-Style chairs set beside the bar with typical French pattern ceramic indicates the opposite seasons.



In particular, the photographs created intentionally for the hotel, are a tribute to the richness of Chinese craftmenships and artpieces. As well, the "Ink in Water" photographs illustrate a blend of traditional Chinese ink calligraphy and poetry while featuring a contemporary touch.

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One experience for each public room

Through strategic use of space and light, the design base on local cultures and traditions, choice of materials and a special love of art and crafts, Dariel Studio wants to combine modesty with great elegance. The main design concepts of space are synonyms to timelessness, calm beauty and subtle luxury. We believe that comfort does not lie in trivial affluence but in delicacy and rareness.
One will go through a totally different experience when he or she stays in each public room. Rather than a 5-star hotel, a person could relax and spend time in a boutique hotel, all while wine tasting in the wine cellar; reading in the library; watching movie in the cinema room; tea tasting after attending a healthy spa or yoga. Each room will lead the guest on an enjoyable trip through a day by immersing travelers into the soul of the city.

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www.blossomhillinn.com

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The studio

Dariel Studio is a multi-award winning interior design company founded in Shanghai in 2006 by French Designer ***Thomas Dariel***. Since its establishment, ***Dariel Studio*** has completed over 60 projects of the highest quality in the main areas of design: hospitality, commercial and residential.

Dariel Studio manages to reach originality and creativity while also performing in project management, a double focus that led the company to be recognized and honored for its ability to lead projects from concept up to execution.

Dariel Studio's tailor-made approach focusing on clients needs has allowed the company to create a large portfolio of clients - private, entrepreneurs, luxury brands and big corporations - Chinese as International.

The studio counts today a team of 25 professionals coming from various countries and backgrounds driven by the same passion for design.

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By confronting heritage and cutting-edge innovations, playing with sensations, mixing opposites and incorporating French design expertise with Eastern cultural influence.
Dariel Studio aims to transform reality into a **five-sense emotional experience.**

In its search of new forms, ***Dariel Studio's*** open approach unfolds new perspectives and possibilities within the process of "making" while constantly observing rules and clients' demanding standards. Through this way of creating interiors, a new language occurs on each project, driven by a passion for turning upside down traditional codes and clichés.

Boldness, elegance, youthfulness, expertise, innovation and an in-depth understanding of clients' identity and expectations allow the studio to ensure the highest quality design.

IDEA Design Lab

From 2013, ***Dariel Studio*** is going on with larger-scale projects and takes one step ahead with the launch of new initiatives and learning programmes aiming to enlarge and boost the designers' perspectives on major millennium challenges.
IDEA Design Lab is the flagship initiative.
IDEA Design Lab is an action-oriented platform assembling smart ideas and talented people to create innovative designs for the future. It is an incubator for innovation gathering the Best Chinese Universities, scientists, engineers and leaders in the fields of Design and Architecture.

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Awards & Nominations

2013: *- H.D.F Luxurious Projects Asia Awards 2013*
Silver Award Winner of the Top Luxury Hotel Design for "Blossom Hill Boutique Hotel"

- Perspective's 40 Under 40 Recognition 2013:
Selected as one of the Top 40 Young Design Talent under 40

-Top 100 Soft Decoration Award:
Top 10 prize for "Blossom Hill Boutique Hotel"

- AD 100 CHINA 2013:
Selected as one of the Top 100 Talents in Architecture and Design

2012: *- Andrew Martin Interior Design Awards:*
The Best Internationally

- The 10th Modern Decoration International Media Award:
Outstanding designer of the year
Best Hotel Space Design of the year for "Blossom Hill Boutique Hotel"

- Jintang Prize China Interior Design Award 2012:
Top 10 Hotel Design of the year for "Blossom Hill Boutique Hotel"
Good Hotel Design of the year for "GTAS"
Good Office Design of the year for "Dunmai Office"
Honor Mentioned for Best Marketing and Development (Dariel Studio)

2011: *- Jintang Prize China Interior Design Award 2011:*
Restaurant Design of the year for "Yucca"

- International Arch of Europe Award (IAE) - Gold category

2010: *- The 8th Modern Decoration International Media Awards:*
Best Young Designer of the Year
Best Office Space Design of the Year for "Imagine China"

More info

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