



NATURAL FLOW

Spanish design house Lagranja brings its creative flair and love of wood to suites at Hong Kong's newest boutique hotel, Madera.



Hong Kong and Spain unite at a boutique hotel in Jordan, Kowloon. A chance crossing of paths – in initially less than auspicious circumstances – propelled Lagranja Design onto the radar of local property developer David Fong, managing director of Hip Shing Hong (HSH), and a year later stunning designer suites grace his first hotel, Madera, which also has a Spanish touch to its name (*madera* means wood).

Fong met Gemma Fletcher, who opened Lagranja's Hong Kong office in 2010, after she wrote a letter of complaint about the HSH residential building in which she was living. The two clicked, resolved their difficulty and found they shared a vision for good European design. They had hoped for a more extensive first-time collaboration, but time constraints restricted Lagranja's input to the high-rise boutique hotel's nine suites and the lift lobbies on those floors. Quipped Lagranja studio co-founder Gerard Sanmarti, who jetted in from his native Barcelona for the launch, "Our company is called Lagranja Design for Companies and Friends, so our clients become our friends."

In a more serious explanation of their design philosophy Sanmarti says: "We love to work with wood, colour and light – these are the three most important elements to us. The creativity comes in combining them." All three – but especially the first – shine at Madera. Given the limited space, especially in the curved narrow lobbies on each floor, design is kept simple, thoroughly testing Lagranja's originality and creativity. Mirrors are used as a reflective aid,

but taking centre stage throughout is carefully selected and tinted natural wood.

On the 28th floor, Sanmarti's favourite, the lobby wall is an undulating row of thin floor-to-ceiling wooden batons bleached in more than 25 different yet harmonious colours. Backlit with decorative fabric behind, it is an understated and soothing design piece (pictured bottom left). The lengths of coloured wood flow into the airy duplex penthouse suites on this floor. All suites make interesting use of this natural resource, with stools and bedside tables crafted from tree-trunk-like blocks and a distinctive installation on the wall above each bed – from wooden spoons (also displayed in the third floor lift lobby) to wooden hands and from Hakka hats to tatami-mat slippers.

Besides the suites, Lagranja also turned its creative eye to the hotel gym, unusually

conceived as an exercise 'theatre' with photography-studio-style lights and huge mirrors and 1940s-era sepia prints of people in athletic poses propped up against the walls. Opposite, the design house eschews its penchant for the natural world, realising at Fong's request a small state-of-the-art home theatre and games room with race cockpit viewing chair-cum-game consoles and mandatory 3-D glasses. 17

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