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Project

Yas Hotel

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Project location:

Yas Marina Circuit, Abu Dhabi, UAE

The five-star Yas Hotel was always imagined as a spectacle: cloaked in a striking curvaceous grid shell and spanning the Formula One Grand Prix circuit in Abu Dhabi, it has become an architectural icon of the race. Its two elliptical towers are arranged in a T-shaped plan and encompass 500 lavish suites, nine distinct dining spaces, bars, a generously sized function/ball room, a spa and a rooftop pool – ample space for its privileged guests to enjoy a prime trackside location adjacent the Yas Marina and nearby aquatic pursuits.

Consequently, sleek racing machinery and inky bodies of water provided contextual references for much of the interior design by London-based Jestico + Whiles. It has created a world rich with materials, patterns and textures that is enlivened by the passing glamour of wealthy sheiks and their extended families. In contrast to the external canopy of steel and glass, “The interior was imagined to be more tactile,” explains J+W director, James Dilley. “There’s an overlay of the technical side of racing with a welcoming softer finish [such as] perforated leather, natural pigment dyes and organic materials.”

Organic forms shape the joinery, walls and many ceiling treatments in the hotel: from undulating oak tables in guest suites to a glossy aubergine coloured Corian slab that sleekly displays patisserie treats at ground level. The consistent formal language helps to unite the numerous different spaces and textures of the project and the lobby exemplifies this approach. Here, smooth edged diamond-shaped panels appear to float above the entry space, with a sculpted Corian reception desk anchored below. In contrast to the pale shiny surfaces overhead, the curving wall to the rear is wrapped in laser-cut leather panels that emulate fish scales while a small pool of river pebbles studs the floor. Raw textural contrasts continue in the perforated

suede curtains enveloping the adjacent lobby lounge. Recalling the screens of Arabian mashrabiya, they hang like quivering seagrass and can be drawn open or closed to provide varying levels of privacy.

The lobby also greets guests with a subtle interpretation of the Grand Prix theme. Slim lines of stainless steel whip along the ground like racing stripes. Scored into the floor and lounge carpets nearby, the lines are used extensively throughout the hotel as both pattern and as circulation paths for guests. They direct visitors toward facilities while elsewhere soft furnishings borrow the motif, such as in the quilted leather wall panels and bespoke woven carpets of the ballroom.

Contemporary interpretations of traditional Arabic themes continue in the food souq (market), an arrangement of internal streets containing seven dining spaces at ground level that range from a noodle bar to a tandoori restaurant. The souq is usually a site of cultural festivity and trade, a collection of sumptuous wares accompanied by entertainment, refreshment and socialising. Similarly, colour and vibrancy inform design choices here. Screens of varying materials, such as coloured glass or marble, frame each restaurant and accentuate the mashrabiya effect. This allows views to other spaces, guests and the racetrack, while providing a sense of intimacy and enclosure to each restaurant.

Mindful of the elite clients Yas entertains, the VIP tower overlooking the marina includes two fine dining restaurants led by Michelin-starred chefs. Congruent with the food souq, each restaurant expresses its cuisine through a distinct material palette. At ground level a perforated back-lit Corian lining predominates over the seafood restaurant, Nautilus. With variable illumination, the ambition for this space was to recall the dappled light on a coral reef. Other elements such as voluminous pendants and watery projections accent the aqueous theme. A French restaurant and wine lounge, Vine, is snugly tucked at the apex of the building. Here, amethyst and burgundy hues predominate with carpets or deep walnut panels underfoot and further screening depicting vineyard silhouettes.

When sheiks and stars tire of the exhaustive entertainment, Yas guestrooms provide a predictably sumptuous getaway. Arranged into two halves, the deluxe rooms predominate the upper levels of the Land Side ellipse; presidential and vice-presidential suites are accommodated in the Water Side wing above the ballroom and cafe.

All rooms continue the textural contrasts that Dilley describes as a series of layers: “Hard and soft, warm and cold, day and night ... to give a range of feeling”. From carbon fibre headboards with inlaid tattooed panels, to bespoke floor treatments and exclusive lap pools, the presidential suites are sumptuous. However, deluxe and executive accommodation is suitably lush, too. Carved wooden walls, commissioned rugs and carefully designed bathrooms remind visitors that in this world money is no object.

Despite an almost limitless budget, J+W has sought to create a chic interpretation of wealth that is contextual with site and culture. While heavily layered with ideas and materials, Yas allows for a diverse range of programs and resists the ostentatious bling blinding many of its neighbours.





<http://www.australiandesignreview.com/projects/16786-Yas-Hotel-Asymptote-Architecture>