

# LIFESTYLE ASIA

LIVING AT ITS FINEST

NOVEMBER 2018  
P250

THE  
LUXURY  
GIFT GUIDE  
ISSUE

WINNER  
THE  
PHILIPPINE  
AWARDS

Enter the New  
York home of  
China's most  
famous woman

What to  
Give Highly  
Intelligent  
People

MOND  
GUTIERREZ  
& LIZ UY

Captured by Latest  
Huawei Mate 20 Pro





# Q&A: Heidar Sadeki on contemporary luxury living high atop The Morgan

EVELYN LOK Associate Editor



Hong Kong is synonymous with incredible properties; yes, for their notorious sky-high prices, but equally also for the level of ingenuity and design knowhow required to make the most of the spaces nestled within our compact concrete jungle. The Morgan is of no exception: teetering high above Mid-Levels with the heart of the city below, the prestigious 31 Conduit Road address is home to some of the most spectacular apartments one can imagine.

The Robert A. M. Stern Architects-designed tower has won scores of awards since the building's completion in 2016. It's a residential high-rise made to exemplify contemporary luxury living: the 30th floor penthouse, for instance, is designed by Robert Cheng, founder of Brewin Design Office (BDO). The tower features 34 duplexes — the largest of which is the 28th floor Morgan Sky Duplex, a 2,343-sq.-ft. three-bedroom unit designed by Heidar Sadeki, co-founder and creative director of Richardson Sadeki. The renowned architect has designed luxury condos all around the world, including Hong Kong's Tai Koo Place Serviced Apartments, Mount Parker Residences and 3 Julia Avenue in Ho Man Tin. He's also no stranger to the hospitality and spa industry, with notable designs including the Yas Hotel in Abu Dhabi, the Bathhouse Spa at Las Vegas' Mandalay Bay hotel and more.

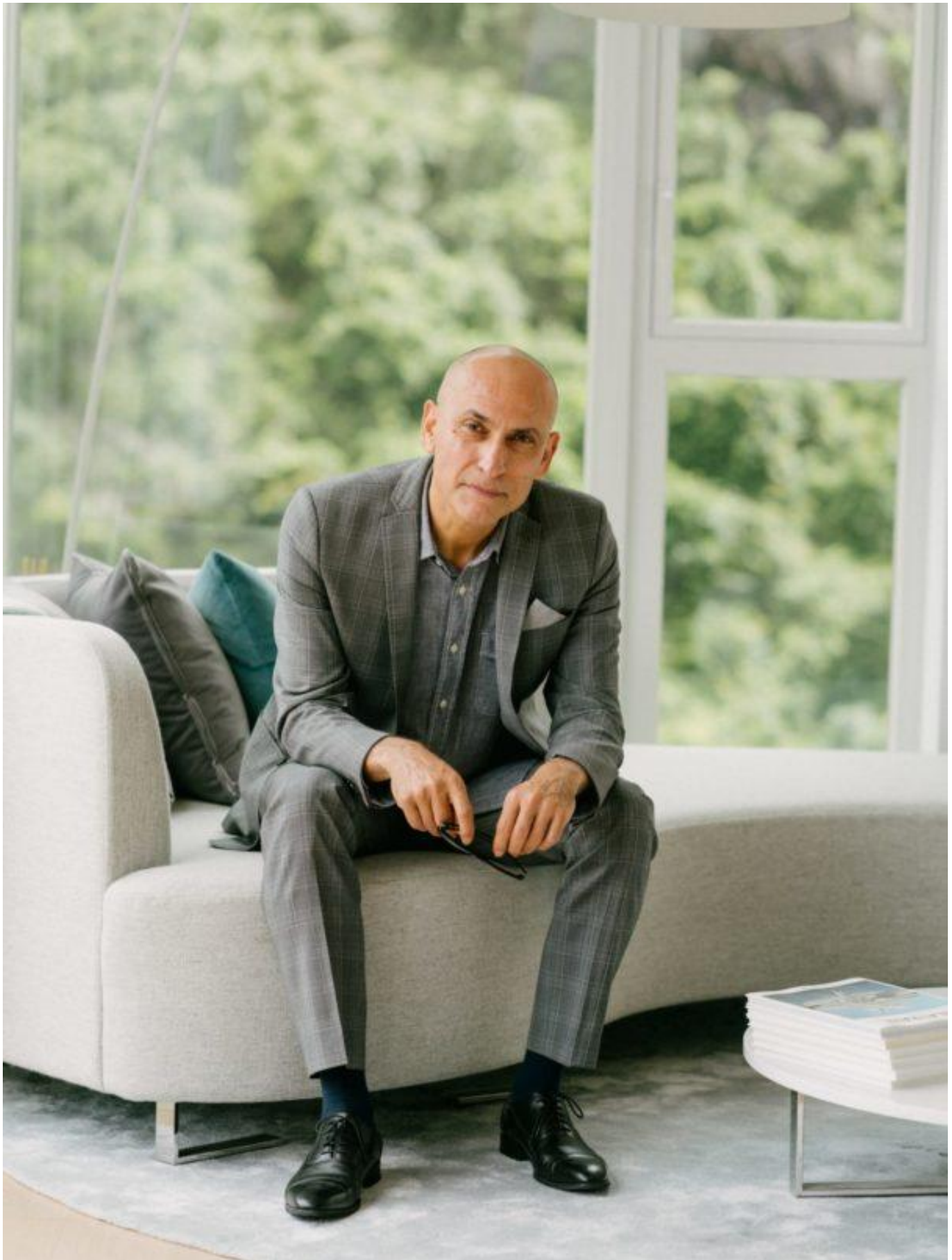




The outdoor terrace is perfect for entertaining guests, and features a roll-out awning for rain or shine.

The Morgan Sky Duplex is the only one featuring an expansive terrace, measuring up to 460 sq. ft., with an 800-sq.-ft. foyer and living room. It was recently purchased for HK\$188.8 million — setting the record for price per square foot for duplexes in the development, and standing as a testament to Heidar Sadeki's design tastes warranting some of the highest prices in the city.

We had a chance to sit down with the architect to chat about his favourite features of the apartment, his overall approach to design and lifestyle, and the next steps for his dream project.



Heidar Sadeki, co-founder and creative director of Richardson Sadeki.





**The Sky Duplex opens up into this incredible foyer and dining/living area that looks out onto the terrace, how did you approach the design of this large space?**

We wanted to create this phenomenological transparency between the indoor and the outdoor, in mirroring the outside. That couch outside is made the exact same way as this sectional inside, but with waterproof material. Outside, there's also an electrified bar and grill. On a nice spring day, you can have a nice gathering here, and do both indoor and outdoor cooking.

The arrangement of the seating gives different areas: one that's more individual, for you to listen to music or read a book; and another area for twos or threes. Within the existing design, you can have up to seven areas of sitting. For the size of the apartment, the socialising possibilities are expansive.

There's also a contrast between the two spaces: if this darker dining room wasn't looking at the living room, it might feel a little congested and heavy. When I'm sitting in the living room, I do enjoy seeing the darker, richer space in contrast. I think it is looking at the opposite space that brings the balance around.

**You did some extensive renovations upstairs, removing one bedroom and one bathroom. The corridor has also been expanded from the usual one metre in most high-end developments to become a wider gallery space. How did you change the layout?**

We got rid of a second bedroom and ensuite, between the guest bedroom and the master bedroom — I actually took half of the bedroom and made it a walk-in closet for the master bedroom. That takes a lot of convincing. The reality is that whenever we have been able to do a good project, it's because we have a smart client, otherwise it's impossible. But it's a product that doesn't come by every day; now at about 2,400 sq. ft., it feels much larger than that. It usually takes a much larger apartment to have that kind of overlap of privacy in different spaces and different options.



This spacious kitchen is a rare sight in Hong Kong, and features a beautiful mini herb garden and breakfast nook, looking out with an urban view over Central.

Once you reach upstairs you'll find the bar; the reason is that we have another entrance here. If your partner or spouse is entertaining downstairs, and you can't stand people — you can just enter through the 29th floor. If you do, it's a kind of family room — where you catch your teenage daughter stealing your scotch, perhaps!

This corridor, now a gallery after opening up, functions as the same kind of gasket, which separates the master bedroom from the other areas. I wanted this to be dark — there's a bedroom there and a bathroom across where you don't see the doors. I wanted it to have its own character as a

space, rather than just be a corridor that just takes you someplace else. It no longer comes across as a corridor, and with the reflection of the black mirrored doors there's an expansive sense of space. I chose these two pieces of artwork: The heaviness and its monumentality references the view of Victoria Peak, but its sensual contours, in my opinion, creates a different dialogue between the work of an amazing sculptor and the inspiration I had for this apartment.

**What's your absolute favourite feature of the duplex?**

Definitely the master bathroom. The bathroom comes with the master bedroom, but if I had to choose between the two, I would sleep in the bathroom! Interestingly enough, there are two "attractions" if you are sleeping in the master bedroom: to your left is the alcohol, and in front of you is the bathroom. And then you can go back and forth! It is a massive bathroom, and it's a bathroom that you'll spend time in. Both the bathroom and the bedroom can be seen like its own little apartment on its own. It's its own wing. You know how some bedrooms kind of result in divorces? I don't think this one will.



The master bathroom is the most striking feature of the duplex, with wraparound views of Victoria Peak.

**You've had ample experience creating luxury spa environments, did that influence you in the design of this amazing bathroom?**

This tepid room so to speak, is designed around the Turkish notion of hammam. It warms up, it's not as hot as a steam room, and it's used for you to soap up. The most extensive of that design I did in the Yas Hotel in Abu Dhabi — there's very large heated chairs in large black rooms, both designed as Turkish hammam. Compared to western bathing, hammam is a place where you spend a lot more time. When I was a child, my mother and my sisters would go to this very elaborate hammam, they would go in the morning, take their food there, and come back in the afternoon. You go for all sorts of massages, there's a nap room where you can nap; in the Middle East, it's not considered something fancy that you do only if you're rich, it's part of the culture.





To the right is the tepid room, inspired by Turkish hammam experiences for a personal home spa — and two rain shower heads to boot.

### Do buyer demands affect how you design?

I don't know or pay much attention to what buyers are interested in but what I bring to the table is what I like — and that's related to a metropolitan lifestyle. What I am selling is my taste. It's a living of leisure. For instance, I think a buyer would consider this as a place for living rather than for working. That's why we thought we could easily get rid of one bedroom and a bathroom, because if you actually want to maximise functionality with the number of bedrooms, this is not the apartment for you.

In fact, I don't think of demographics; I have a specific character in my mind: I think, who is this character, this person has a very specific interest in books, that's how I go and choose my books. That's how we choose the music. What we create is actually more than the design of an apartment, it's a branded lifestyle.





"You know how there are some bedrooms that end in divorces? I don't think this one will."

**To elaborate on that, what kind of character did you have in mind for this unit?**

We imagined the owners of this apartment to be a couple in their mid-40s-60s, who have a grown-up daughter, maybe, who doesn't live with them. The design of the guest bedroom is such that it doesn't feel like your son's room and someone has to sleep in it; hence I wanted it to have more of a hotel feeling, very clean, the tonality of colours used being greys, a slight amount of pinks and purples.

**What's the main quality you focus on when designing a home project?**

My background is in cinema, and I design my spaces based on a cinematic narrative. The details are less important to me than the narrative of the space. The primary approach to my design is: "What is the first thing you see when you walk in? What is the second thing? The third thing?" And then what's the juxtaposition of these experiences... that's what creates the narrative, that becomes essentially your memory of seeing the space. Or, what I call the aura.



The moody, stylish walk-in closet belongs to the second bedroom, potentially imagined for a grown-up son or daughter of the eventual homeowners.

Most architects have an idea of who they are designing for, but most end up in the trap of just thinking about the functions. Thinking of these characters keeps my design approach consistent. You look at it as a whole, then say “ok, it’s not the body of Frankenstein.”

**That consistency also comes across with the materials used in the duplex. Can you tell us a bit more about the significance of the chosen materials?**

One of the design languages I wanted to bring was the choice of Turkish travertine as materiality for the wall. This was an influence from the stones used outside, and also the language that Robert A. Stern used for the tower itself. It’s that neoclassical language of heavy stones that create stability and exclusiveness, to a certain degree. By doing that, an almost exterior language comes into the interior, tying the tower to the interior of the apartment, connecting the public space to the private space.

You’ll be surprised, but in terms of the types of wood and stone that I’ve used in my projects in the past is fewer than the fingers on one hand. I’m very frugal — I keep a very tight palette. Johann Sebastian Bach came up with the 12-note system: essentially, 12 notes, and it’s all variations of the same 12 notes. For me to choose a new material to work with takes years. The challenge is what I do with the same materials. I used carrara marble in the upstairs master bathroom. If you look at the Bathhouse Spa project, I used one material only — Brazilian black slate — but I have treated the texture in five different ways.





Sadeki explains that he enjoys lower coffee tables, as when you place bowls of fruit or flowers on top, they won't dominate the vertical space as much.

**What's your take on designing luxury homes, does it differ when you're looking at a place in Hong Kong compared with somewhere else in the world?**

Absolutely. I do not design in isolation, they are contextual, so what I design in Hong Kong and New York are different. I am not talking just formalistically, I am very aware of the culture here, when I am in Europe I am aware of the culture there, as well as the Middle East. It is a political matter for me: I find it kind of disgraceful and insulting to design for a culture and be unaware of it.

For instance with the dining table, while we were not been able to design a round dining table, which would have been my preference, there are elements of the local culture: we managed to build a turntable into the marble table. That chair, for me, has familiarity with a traditional Chinese lounge chair. It's the subtle influence of another culture into my work, much like if you were traveling to a new country, you would want to develop a taste for the food there.



"There's also a contrast between the two spaces: if this darker dining room wasn't looking at the living room, it might feel a little congested and heavy. When I am sitting on the living room, I do enjoy seeing the darker, richer space in contrast."

**When it comes to your own home, do you decorate like how you do with your projects?**

Yes, I live in Los Angeles and New York, and the places I have designed pretty much look like the places that I live in.

**Have your projects inspired you to add similar touches to your own home?**

Oh absolutely — I would love to go back home to that chair [below, left]: ever since I designed that chair I've been thinking it should be named "Fat Joe" — it's like a playful, chubby child.





Space is a luxury: "At about 2,400 sq. ft., it feels much larger than that."

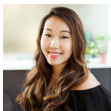
What kind of project would you like to work on next, in Hong Kong or elsewhere?

My dream project is a hotel that is different from your classical hotel. The classical hotel is basically a triangle; a relationship between bar, bed and TV. You are in passivity. My dream project is designing a hotel idea that I've been working on for three years now called Hotel Out of a Box: the name because most of it will be designed in a factory rather than onsite. The idea is to break this triangle, and create an environment of activity. The room activates your body. The room itself is a gym where all your exercises can be done — if you're already in the gym, you don't have to go to the gym!

A few years ago I used to live in Hong Kong and I was a swimmer at the time. I waited for the longest time to live in an apartment across from the South China Association, which has the best swimming pool. That basically just destroyed the whole idea of "do I want to go, do I not want to go?" Gyms are the ugliest things in the world, so how can you design it without it being in your face? Wellness is the biggest generational shift that has taken place in the past three generations. It's shifting what our notion of what a hotel is — it's becoming a destination to be healthy.

All image credits: Lit Ma Common Studio Ltd.

Hong Kong	Interior Design	Luxury Living	Luxury Property	Hong Kong Property	31 Conduit Road	Duplex	Heidar Sadeki
Richardson Sadeki	The Morgan	Victoria Peak	Mid Levels				



EVELYN LOK Associate Editor