

INDIA'S FIRST WASHROOM MAGAZINE

Vol. 9, Issue 3 Price: ₹ 215
March - April 2019

Published by:
Gnosis Services Pvt. Ltd.

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“Since luxury should be timeless, it should transcend trends.”





The washrooms in luxury hotels, as at the Mandarin Oriental in Paris, mirror a quiet statement of consistency and its Paris-based designer underlines her idea of stately design.



DESIGN BUZZ

Paris-based interior designer Sybille de Margerie founded Sybille de Margerie Studio, formerly known as SM Design, in 1989. A member of the Taittinger family, known for its Champagne line and high-end hotels, she has designed interiors for Louvre Hotels, LVMH group (Hotel Cheval Blanc in Courchevel, France), Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group, and private investors amongst many others.

The designer won much of her acclaim in the luxury hotel segment, although her portfolio also includes casinos, gastronomic restaurants and private homes. She develops each of her projects in a unique manner so that it blends with the identity of each place, and the culture, colours and history of its country. She knows exactly what the hallmarks of luxury are and doesn't seek to change them. She says luxury has to be essentially timeless and the layout, design, and plan is where luxury starts. Materials and textures come next.

"I set out to create something unique that is dominated by well-being and emotion. I don't try and put my stamp on my work but to share an art of living that is specific to the town and the country in question."

The Mandarin Oriental hotel is on rue Saint-Honoré in the centre of Paris, surrounded by the leading names in fashion and minutes from Place Vendôme and the Tuileries Gardens.

Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group chose Sybille de Margerie for the interior design and decoration of the lobby, public spaces, rooms, suites and Spa of its first hotel in France. She responded with a Parisian interpretation of Mandarin Oriental's values, in connection with the building itself, the surrounding district and the cultural environment of this new hotel. Her approach is evident in



the layout of the spaces, as well as in the choice of materials, colours and the prestigious artists and craftsmen with whom she worked.

Entirely devoted to well-being and relaxation, the Spa at Mandarin Oriental, Paris offers a holistic experience to promote complete mind-body harmony. At 900 square metres, this is one of the largest hotel Spas in Paris.

The designer has imagined the entrance to this tranquil retreat as a vast pearly sphere to invoke a relaxing mood. The white and carmine glass mosaic floor is studded with butterflies in silver leaf along with an haute couture wall that unfolds over two levels, composed from Origami-fashion stylised flowers.

Mandarin Oriental at Paris has 99 rooms and 39 suites and Sybille has given each room and suite a quintessential Parisian, haute couture style that is evident in the soothing yet striking colours,

elegant, understated lines, and refined, opulent materials. She has imagined innovative transitions between the different spaces, consistently highlighting the uniqueness of a space instead of trying to create a recognisable pattern mark in her designed interiors. She believes that in luxury hotels spaces can be open but also intimate and separate, leaving guests the choice of how they occupy the room.

The washrooms, in glass, wood, white marble and mosaic, form two distinct elements. The basin units are enveloped in ridged leather and finished with bold, hammered bronze buttons for a couture feel. Her company designed the lobby, public spaces, rooms, suites and Spa at the property. The washroom especially got her focused attention.

She responded to Washrooms and Beyond to elaborate on the significance of the right focus on washrooms in luxury hotels.

How do you interpret luxury with functionality in the washroom space? Can the two be mutually exclusive at some point?

I see some changes in the bathroom area, which becomes an extension of the bedroom. A place to live, warm and comfortable, that can receive any kind of finishes. I attach a great importance to fluidity of spaces, light and comfort and the washroom requires all this rigour.

In the context of interiors in general and washrooms in particular, what elements do you think are essential to draw the five senses into an appreciation of good design?

For a long time, my family owned some of the most beautiful palaces in Paris. I therefore had the privilege of growing up in the particular atmosphere of a place that attaches the utmost importance to traditions, the finest service and savoir-faire. When I chose to become an interior



designer, I recalled the sense of wonder I had felt so early in life and set out to recreate it. My goal is to achieve a perfect blend of tradition, innovation and creativity and I see my work as a sensual quest for comfort, and the pleasure of the finest quality in the smallest detail. My designs are equally highlighted by the attention to detail, the choice of materials and the harmony of colours.

You have said that rather than leaving your signature on what you create, you would strive to bring out the soul and uniqueness of a place. Please expand on that.

I elaborate my creative concepts by mixing up the most profound uniqueness of spaces conferred to me. To transcribe an atmosphere or an experience intrinsically linked to the environment or the history of a place, I use key words like culture, emotion and creation.

What is essential to me is to create that "something" about grace and irresistible elegance, this famous intangible dimension which speaks about emotion.

Which washroom design according to you defines your style best?

I could speak of my recent design of luxury faucets handles, created for the Italian maker Zucchetti-Kos. Nude's design reveals itself in a piece of crystal, round shaped and pure as nature, with a tiny air bubble locked inside, and has been inspired by the traditional glass stopper of the wooden barrels which I saw in a wine ageing cellar. This design expresses my personality: femininity and a brand of elegance underpinned by refinement.

Do you think washrooms in heritage properties need to create

new and modern interiors or try to blend the heritage style and retain old aspects of the design?

Respect and humility are essentials to approach such premises. However, past should never be a burden but a deep resource for creativity. To do so, we explore and gather all elements that are part of a city or country heritage – history, architecture, art de vivre, colours,

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know-how, arts. What gives legitimacy to a project is the ability to bring comfort and functions in a place filled with emotions and history.

How do your designs in hotel washrooms incorporate energy efficiency and environment awareness? Any favourites?

In accordance with the client's strategy, we always look for creative solutions and new technologies that allow the lowest environment impact.

I do not have any favourite one for all projects have a distinctive feel and reflect my vision. However,

to illustrate my work we can take the example of a private residence in Moscow which I am currently designing.

The Master's bathroom has a particular size of nearly 40 sqm, which allows a mix of multiple functions: besides the shower and bath, there is a vanity and a lounge corner with a sofa. The atmosphere is chosen to be cosy, and in direct connection with the nearby bedroom, like a lounge or salon. To enhance the feeling of a pure extension to the bedroom even the choice of material is unusual: marble, leather, fabrics.

Why is it necessary to modernise the traditional? Is that to make it more appealing to newer sensibilities or it's just the in-thing to do?

Above everything I look for the right balance between tradition and modernity because I consider that since luxury should be timeless, it should transcends trends.

If I had to define the Sybille de Margerie style, I would say I am an architect of a particular art de vivre that blends tradition and creativity in a characteristically French luxury spirit.



SYBILLE DE MARGERIE