Keeping luxury relevant

ADAM TIHANY CREATES CHIC INTERIORS FOR THE FOUR SEASONS HOTEL DIFC, MAKING A BOUTIQUE-STYLE SANCTUARY FOR BUSINESS TRIPS AND URBAN TRAVELLERS
Quiet and luxury are words that best characterise the interior of the recently opened Four Seasons hotel, located in the heart of Dubai International Financial Centre. Designed by acclaimed hospitality designer, Adam Tihany, the 110-room hotel offers an intimately sized urban oasis for business travellers, blending modern boutique aesthetics with the refined essence of the brand.

“There is a hand-crafted quality to the hotel,” says Tihany. “It is very personal. We wanted the feeling of an inclusive exclusivity, without the ‘members only’ attitude.”

He compares his design to the famous slogan “When your own initials are enough”, introduced during the late seventies by well-known Italian leather manufacturer Bottega Veneta.

“It is a restrained luxury. It is a hotel for people that don’t need to show off.”

They are adults and they expect the best without being in your face.

“I am a custom tailor. I make suits to measure, I don’t buy them off the shelf. It is about designing to the smallest details. I don’t want anybody to come here and be short-changed. We know that our customers are very sophisticated and that they have much better homes and much better technology. But, in our small world we’re going to give them the best we have,” says the designer.

Running a boutique design practice in New York, Tihany has been creating interiors at some of the most iconic properties around the globe, including Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park, One & Only Cape Town and the Beverly Hills Hotel. As he explains, projects in the Middle East didn’t suit his tastes, but then he got a call to design the At.mosphere restaurant at the top of Burj Khalifa.

“Projects in this region were always about ‘the bigger and better’ and who can do the more extravagant and luxurious work and that is against my grain. I don’t need an affirmation on that level, so we were waiting for the right project to come up. The first one was the At.mosphere restaurant at the top of Burj Khalifa.”
Firebird Diner reimagines the glamour of the 1950s. Afterwards, he designed Sea Fu and Suq restaurants, Mercury Lounge and the presidential suite at the Four Seasons Dubai at Jumeirah Beach, and collaborated again with the same developer on its property in DIFC.

“I got to know them better. For me, they are the symbol of new Dubai. People that are assured of themselves and don’t have to prove anything. They understand and know design. They care about design and most importantly, they care about the quality and that is the description of a good client,” explains Tihany.

His design for Four Seasons DIFC focuses on efficiency and functionality, as each space fluidly flows into the next. While designing the entrance area, Tihany kept in mind accessibility and comfort for business travellers. The ground level reception is framed by gold metal mesh and accented by cream and black marble and bronze mirrors.

“The lobby is a transient area but it has to give you a glimpse of what’s to come,” says Tihany. “Design has to carry through; deliberately the scale of it starts pointing to an intimacy and the real concept of the hotel.”

A second lobby at the podium level allows for pedestrian access from the retail concourse. A key focal point in the lobby is a bespoke architectural mural by New York artist Bram Tihany, the designer’s son. He was commissioned to create 19 pieces of original art, which can be found throughout the hotel. His series of work, entitled Morphe, pays homage to the Dubai skyline and has been created by dissecting and recomposing a collection of architectural photographs that he shot in Dubai.

“All of my projects have an important and integrated art component. In an effort to make it site-specific so that you feel that you are in Dubai, the art was one of the most significant aspects of design. My son is a filmmaker, so he has a script in his mind first, the same way we do the design, telling a story.”

The adjacent Penrose Lounge features a custom geometric chandelier, stylish bar front, and gold mirror faceted bookshelves. Interestingly, Tihany has chosen each and every book, more than 200 that can be found on the bookshelves.

On the other side is located the hotel’s contemporary Firebird Diner by Michael Mina, which reimagines the glamour of the 1950s. Three sides of the venue are composed of floor-to-ceiling windows, opening up to views of the city, while three art pieces, also designed by Bram Tihany, display retro Cadillac inspired
The boardroom resembles a living room and has several break-out areas.

Unlike traditional conference rooms, Tihany senior decided to test the concept of a living room, creating several break-out areas for different scenarios of meetings.

“It is not a board room, but the lifestyle room. It is the evolution of conferencing. You can have a teleconference on one side while you have groups of people on the other. We decided to take the whole space and change the way people do business,” he says.

The hotel’s rooms and suites are designed to cater to the needs of today’s traveller without compromising style, as furnishings and fittings employ curved edges to create a smooth and welcoming environment. Rooms feature wood clad walls, hand-tufted custom carpeting and faceted metal pendants. In the suites, a custom metal mashrabia frames the windows, which offered views of the Burj Khalifa.

As Tihany explains, his idea was to create an intimate business hotel that is not designed to cater people’s mechani-
Bathrooms are outfitted with a glass-walled walk-in shower.

Rooms feature hand-tufted custom carpeting and faceted metal pendants.

Rich wood millwork of the secluded Churchill Club creates a masculine space.

Glass pool resembles a tranquil aquarium.

cal needs, but rather the emotional ones, “Today, with all the advancement of technology, you don’t need space, but you need comfort and somebody to take care of you. I wanted to take off the stress of a business person and make them realise that this is not a room, but a shelter and that’s what hospitality is all about.”

On the rooftop pool terrace, an equally relaxing cabana-lined deck is home to an above ground glass pool reminiscent of a tranquil aquarium that transforms at night to resemble a glowing blue jewel.

Luna Sky Bar on the eighth floor evokes the symbolism of the falcon, a national emblem of luxury and bravery. Strong black and gold colours dominate the space while the ceiling light fixtures and bar back mimic birdlike features. From Luna, guests can retreat to the secluded Churchill Club by ascending the decadent showpiece staircase, where curved wall fins and rich wood millwork create a masculine yet classic space.

Commenting on the current challenges designers face both globally and in the region, Tiiffany concludes: “I find mediocrity as the main challenge. People are so two-dimensional. It is all surface and there is no third dimension, which is the depth. The whole design business is about the people that cut and paste, borrowing other people’s ideas and putting them all together. We don’t work that way. We start a project with paper and a pencil and, most importantly, with an idea.”