

BLINK SCOOPS 2012 HD DESIGN AWARDS WITH INSTANT CLASSIC FOR CONRAD IN CHINA

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BANGKOK, THAILAND BLINK Design Group, Asia's 'Hospitality Aficionado', has staged a raid on the world's most coveted architectural awards and caught rivals napping with a return to elegant classicism and French Riviera glamour at the new Conrad Sanya Haitang Bay.

Judges of the Hospitality Design Awards 2012 were swept away by this song of sandstone poised upon the shimmering sands of Hainan Island's five star strip, and pronounced BLINK the world-wide winner of this year's best luxury hotel award.

While others covered the well-trodden shores of contemporary, minimal and tropical modern, BLINK's style council of tastemakers kept its eyes on the prize and intuited that the time was right for a revival of French classical architecture as epitomized by the stately piles and grand dames that grace the most prized perches at Cannes, St Tropez and Monte Carlo.

The eighth annual Hospitality Design Awards (HD Awards), honouring the achievements of superior design and architecture in spaces around the globe, saw over 325 entries received in 17 categories, spanning Hotel (Luxury/Upscale), Fine Dining, Green/Sustainable Project, and Mid-Range/Economy Hotel.

BLINK founder and creative director Clint Nagata said he was happy to pick up what is regarded as one of the world's top two architectural accolades. It was evidence of the Bangkok hotshop's instinctive approach to design in action.

"You never really know where inspiration is going to come from," said Nagata, who will attend the HD Design Awards ceremony on June 6th at the Grand Hyatt New York. "Our approach is to stoke the furnace, open the mind's eye and keep the creative juices flowing.

"It was in the back of our minds that Marseille has been designated European Capital of Culture for 2013. So it wasn't a huge leap to make the French connection, but we've obviously struck a chord and we're proud of the property. When you see it on site, it just works. And it single-handedly hauls Sanya up the style-o-meter by a good few notches."

Conrad Sanya radiates old world luxury with a modern sensibility. "The architectural façade is clad in golden-hued imported Australian sandstone," said Mr Nagata. "It's expensive stuff. But the results speak for themselves.

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"Aside from the busy stone pattern and our careful juxtapositioning of grain, the design is simple yet elegant. Long lines, stone-arched walkways and fluted columns. Sweeping courtyards allow the outdoors to be brought into almost every room. And we have used a lot of water features to soften the stone's hard edges so at times you feel like you are living in a shimmering mirage.

"Upon entering the open-air lobby, the view to the ocean is framed by a pair of frangipani trees surrounded by a black tiled reflecting pool. The four suites of the Grand Spa are located around a central reflecting pool. Blue tiled private plunge pools that vanish into the deep blue ocean. The central landscape is unadorned green space."

He said there were 'wow' elements deliberately underplayed, gauged to elicit appreciative whispers more than 'oohs and aahs'. A sunken restaurant bathed in the golden glow of a stone waterfall wonderwall. The Presidential Villa with an expansive pool and formal manicured gardens.

Fellow BLINK creative director Alan Barr described the award as "huge". Mr Barr, whose New York street smarts and keen eye for the future help BLINK stay ahead of the curve, said he was looking forward to seeing the firm's work in the May/June issue of Hospitality Design magazine, which would feature the winners.

"Hospitality Design is one of the top two design bibles in the United States," he said. "I'm planning to attend its 'Wave of the Future' awards in September, at HD Boutique in South Beach, Miami, another great barometer of what's happening in hospitality."

Mr Barr said the Conrad Sanya Haiting Bay challenge had been capturing a sense of French glamour and European elegance in a way that would suit the location and feel original and fresh.

"There's a difference between homage and pastiche," he said. "We were trying to evoke a spirit. A state of mind. Brigitte Bardot in her heyday in big sunglasses, sunning herself in Saint Trop. Yachts bobbing in the deep blue off Cannes while the beautiful people wander the Croisette. Coco Chanel and Elsa Schiaparelli in the Roaring Twenties. The Place des Lices where old men sip pastis, smoke Gauloises and play pétanque.

"China is the big story, the coming player and because they are new to luxury, these classical themes are what they perceive as the true luxury. We had the insight to realise that, and I'm delighted that what we've created for Conrad has resonated with the design community."

Conrad Sanya Haitang Bay takes pride of place in BLINK's design hall of fame, along with other impressive offerings including Jumeirah Dhevanafushi in the Maldives, and cutting-edge design for international five-star hospitality groups Conrad, Hilton, Langham Place, Le Méridien, Regent, Sheraton, Westin and The Luxury Collection by Starwood Hotels and Resorts worldwide.

Hospitality Design (HD) magazine, published 10 times a year, is the premier trade magazine serving the field of hospitality design. It connects owners, operators, purchasing agents, designers, and architects involved in the design of hotels, resorts, restaurants, cruise ships, nightclubs/lounges, spas, and all other hospitality-oriented projects. HD continues its 30-plus-year



mission to publish the accomplishments of various design teams that collaborate to bring the most innovative examples of new construction and renovation to the industry.

The HD Awards were judged by a celebrated group of industry professionals: David Ashen, dash design; Jeffrey Beers, Jeffrey Beers International; Hans Galutera, BG Studio; Jon Kastl, Champalimaud; and Therese Virserius, Therese Virserius Design.

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Notes to Editors:

Blink Design Group (BLINK) has reinvented the traditional service model to offer clients an integrated stay from Check In to Check Out. BLINK's fully integrated, end-to-end suite of services now spans Advisory, Identity Master Planning, Architecture and Interior Design. Founded by Clint Nagata in 2006 and operating out of Bangkok, Singapore and New Delhi, the company designs hotels, resorts, restaurants, clubs, spas, and residences for leading global brands. Believing each project is a platform to achieve something extraordinary, BLINK draws on the instincts and intelligence of co-Creative Directors Mr Nagata and Alan Barr to lead its team to create icons of design in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. BLINK is owned by Space Matrix.

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