

information

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THE DESIGN CONCEPT AND MATERIALS OF MANDARIN ORIENTAL, TOKYO

Reflecting the very best of the city in which they are located is a core guiding principle of Mandarin Oriental, Tokyo, located in Nihonbashi, the centre of the city formerly known as *Edo*. While retaining its connection to Edo's past, the ultra-modern Mandarin Oriental, Tokyo embodies the respect and appreciation for the natural world that the Japanese people have possessed since time immemorial.

Though it would undoubtedly surprise many visitors to this densely urbanised country, Japan is a land of forests. Within a country surrounded by water, Japan's mountains give birth to clouds that nourish its soil with abundant rainfall and feed the many rivers that flow from the mountains to the coastlines. Therefore, 'Woods and Water' became inspirational themes and formed the underlying design concept of Mandarin Oriental, Tokyo. Fabrics and furnishings have also been created to seamlessly weave together Nihonbashi's past, present and future. Starting with an insistence on discerningly selected natural materials, Japanese designer Reiko Sudo relied upon both her own considerable talents, and those of countless master artisans and weavers throughout the country, to produce original fabrics that express the artistic and cultural traditions of Japan in colour, pattern and texture.

The hotel has been conceived as a single large living tree, providing shelter, comfort and a gathering place for the community. These themes are expressed using imaginative, custom fabrics and furnishings throughout, including wallpaper, carpets, upholstery, drapery, cushion covers, etc...The spiritual elements of the beauty of individual things, and the importance of understatement and reservation, convey traditional Japanese aesthetic values.

No single object imposes itself on the visitor's senses. Rather, all of the adornments blend harmoniously, eliciting a response through subtle, restrained representation.

-more-



Page 2

THE DESIGN CONCEPT'S KEY ELEMENTS:

■ Tradition and Innovation with Quality

Mandarin Oriental, Tokyo shares the vision of Mitsui Fudosan Co., Ltd., the owner of the building in which the hotel is housed. This vision is of a Nihonbashi Renaissance. This project is part of an effort to build a new urban experience in Nihonbashi, returning the district's focus to its celebrated historical and cultural roots.

■ Capturing the Essence of Japanese Culture and Craftsmanship

Ever since Nihombashi Mitsukoshi Main Store opened a fabric shop here more than 300 years ago, Nihonbashi has been synonymous with the kimono. Still a contemporary design today centuries later, the brightly coloured, multi-patterned kimono inspired the idea to make an extraordinarily creative use of fabric the most integral part of the hotel's design concept.

■ Appreciation for Nature

Anybody who has witnessed the love and appreciation the Japanese hold for their country's natural beauty, and the way natural themes are woven into the fabric of everyday life, will clearly recognise that a special reverence for nature exists here.

Mandarin Oriental, Tokyo is perfectly located so guests may easily appreciate the beauty Tokyo has to offer, enabling them to take in the Sumida River and shimmering Tokyo Bay in a single sweeping view. From this idyllic vantage point, visitors can observe the beautiful transitions between the passing seasons, and get a sense of why Japanese culture is attuned to these natural changes. The eclectic fabrics and interiors throughout Mandarin Oriental, Tokyo represent distinctly Japanese aesthetics born from harmony with nature and seasonal transitions.

-more-



Page 3

LIKE A JOURNEY THROUGH A LOVELY FOREST:

Mandarin Oriental, Tokyo can be thought of as a tree. Its entrance on the ground floor of the Nihonbashi Mitsui Tower represents the base of that tree. At the hotel's entrance, rock-clinging, falling sheets of glassy water recall waterfalls that cascade from the mountains to nourish the tree roots. After stepping into the arrival lobby, guests see before them a patina-hued grand tapestry of roots captured in woven metal.

Three shuttle elevators that whisk guests to the sky lobby on the topmost 38th floor are decorated with different fabrics with distinct visual streams. Vertical, horizontal and diagonal flows depict different types of falling rain. The top floor – the 'canopy' of this tree – evokes an image of treetop branches and leaves, with fabrics, carpets and floors, suggesting leaves and branches. Ultimately, this is intended to create the subtle sensation that one is standing in the middle of a forest.

From the top-floor lobby, guests descend by local elevator to the guest rooms below. Even then, the experience of a journey through nature continues. The guest rooms may be likened to a forest clearing, where leisure-seekers can relax in comfort and tranquillity. The painstaking depiction of nature's beauty further manifests itself in the pretty native patrinia flower motif inlaid into the sofa fabric.

'Woods and Water' are indispensable forces in the formation of Japanese culture, shaping and supporting the richness of the Japanese way of life. These natural themes suffuse the interior of the hotel, exuding a unitary beauty that extends to every guest room. Guests feel that they are both staying in a hotel and taking a journey through a lovely forest.

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FEATURES OF EACH FLOOR:

1st Floor

- At the main entrance to the hotel is a dark-grained, grooved wooden counter. Behind this hangs thick, stainless steel mesh, woven like lace or macramé. This pattern signifies the gnarled roots of the tree, and the entrance to the ‘forest’.
- Guests ascend from the ground-floor ‘base’ of the tree, up the trunk, to its ‘canopy’ on the uppermost 38th floor.
- Kyoto brocade artisans have made the walls of the elevator hall closely resemble the normally unseen inner rings of a tree.
- Calling to mind the rain that falls on the tree and the water that vitally nourishes its roots, each elevator is decorated in a unique fashion that smartly depicts vertically falling, and diagonally or fully horizontally descending, wind-blown rain.

38th Floor: Reception, Italian Dining, Pizza Bar, Lounge, Fitness Centre

- In front of the elevators to the guest rooms, a fabric is hung which connotes a Pampas field. This fabric is embroidered in a traditional style employed in the making of tomesode, a formal kimono worn by married women.
- In front of the stairwell from the 37th floor is the reception area, which affords patrons coming and going with a magnificent view of Tokyo, right from the reception desk. Behind the reception, there is a dramatically flickering ‘wall of fire,’ a wall featuring three blazing hearths, while on the opposite side is the stairwell to the 37th floor, beautified by a spiralling water motif. Thus, the reception area sets up the contrast between fire and water.
- K’shiki Italian Dining and the Oriental Lounge are designed by LTW Designworks. The wall’s ornamentation comes from multi-coloured Kunugi oak leaves. Inside K’shiki, The Pizza Bar on 38th opened in January 2014. The prestigious clay-and-brick oven and the eight-seat counter were polished, and a highly experienced master pizza maker (pizzaiolo) was brought over from Italy to provide the best pizzas in Tokyo.

37th Floor: French Dining, Cantonese Dining, Bar, Wine Cellar and Spa

- The two restaurants, bar and wine cellar were designed by Ryu Kosaka of A.N.D.
- The entrance to Signature French Fine Dining is highlighted by a metal pattern in the style of traditional European scrollwork – yet another evocation of cascading water.
- The south-facing part of Signature is furnished with a row of intimate, semi-private dining tables.
- The dining areas are set off from each other by luminous, silver partitions made with carbon fibres, through which beams of natural sunlight bathe the dining room by day.
- The technique of separating semi-private dining rooms with partitions draws from the traditional Japanese practice of creating separate spaces using standing screens and the like.
- Sense Cantonese Dining is decidedly ‘dramatic, sexy, stylish and cool.’ Original tile in a lotus motif is laid throughout. The eye is drawn away from the reception counter and hall by the vivid pink of Sense’s interior.
- The dining room is decorated with Chinese artwork that seems to hover in space.
- The smaller rooms to the back are accented with flourishes expressing the modern, vibrant China of today.
- Sense Tea Corner is situated in front of the ‘wall of fire’ by the stairwell to the 38th floor. Its décor reminds us of the great dancing flames needed to prepare Chinese cuisine. A Chinese motif denoting ‘everlasting’ adorns the floor of the tearoom.
- Mandarin Bar occupies the space between Signature and Sense. It is accented by an earthen wall, built using traditional Japanese building techniques. It fuses traditional and modern aesthetics into modern dining and drinking establishments that embrace both old and contemporary sensibilities.
- Japanese Judas trees have been planted inside transparent boxes that serve as drinks tables.
- At the hotel’s spa, The Spa at Mandarin Oriental, Tokyo, the mood-making fabric design evokes images of water and the forest in summertime.

Page 6

- In the spa's reception area, to impart an impression of softly flowing water, the walls are covered in a glossy, smoky-beige fabric.
- The walls of the treatment rooms and relaxation rooms repeat the theme of gently flowing water with light, monotone fabric bearing ornamentation of suibokuga, Japanese-ink paintings.
- The vitality pool, water lounge and sauna are located in glass-enclosed spaces, offering sublime views of the city.

Floors 30th to 36th: Guest Room Floors

- A significant renovation of all rooms and suites was completed in 2019.
- Guest rooms offer breathtaking views across their entire face.
- Guest rooms consist of two patterns: a bamboo floor 60 square metres in area, and 50 square metres of carpeted and walnut floors.
- Bespoke fabrics and furnishings representing the woodlands and the changing seasons, have been incorporated throughout, with autumn leaf colours of gold, orange and purple and blooming springtime wisteria and sakura patterns embroidered onto headboards.
- Functioning as wall adornments, Isegatas, which are forming sheets for dyeing kimono, are hung in each guest room. In the future, it is possible that Isegata may only be seen in the guest rooms of Mandarin Oriental, Tokyo, as these sheets are already exceedingly rare and valuable.
- Mandarin Grand Room
Contemporary Japanese style and materials abound, ranging from an embroidered headboard depicting weeping cherry blossoms to a light fixture made from bamboo strings. Curvaceous lines, such as the round table and curved back for the chaise longue, create a welcoming, approachable atmosphere.

Page 7

- Suites

Featuring the original Flower Shower textile pattern on furnishings, such as the sofa and chairs in the living room, the hotel's restyled suites are designed to conjure up thoughts of blissful moments with flowers. A wisteria in full bloom is embroidered onto each headboard, while each bedside chest is crafted with wood from the Paulownia tree. A silver-leaf round table and gold-leaf embossed cabinet brighten the living room, while the carpet blends the look of Japanese ink and brush work with a motif of clouds and gentle breezes, a nod to the extensive views of Tokyo that can be enjoyed from the hotel's suites. Another quintessentially Japanese highlight are lampshades inspired by the Andon, a traditional Japanese lamp. Made from washi paper, these have been placed in asymmetrical positions throughout each bedroom, a distinctive characteristic of Japanese design and another example of the attention to detail paid by the designers.

- Presidential Suite

Inspired by gardens and bonsai, the Presidential Suite is a beautiful reference to nature, conjuring a feeling of walking in a park, including specially commissioned photographic wall artwork depicting inspirational treescapes from Tokyo's parks.

Featuring an abundance of natural daylight and several distinctive seating areas, the living room is the perfect spot for enjoying cocktails, and there is also a separate library.

The nature theme continues in the dining room, which is dressed with a photographic mural depicting sun shining through the tree branches from one of Tokyo's stunning parks. The dining room's ceiling light resembles the sun, and its cabinets are decorated with motifs of birds, butterflies and plants.

The bedroom ceiling is created to give the illusion of looking at the sky through trees, while its carpet design evokes the world of Origami. Offering sweeping views across Tokyo, the bathroom is equipped with a bathtub that has built-in fibre optic lighting that turns the bathwater into a brilliant, brimming bowl of colour.

-more-



Page 8

3rd Floor: Chapel, Grand Ballroom

- The chapel, Sanctuary, is furnished with an altar, as befits a holy place. The altar is surrounded by water. Textured stone is used to lend the chapel a garden-like atmosphere of quiet dignity.
- The Grand Ballroom is designed in the image of ‘a forest in springtime.’ Vertical stripes soar up the walls to the top, where they merge with a contrasting checked pattern. Tree trunks and leaves provide the inspirational source of these predominant decorative elements.
- The carpet in the Grand Ballroom also sports a leafy design, in this case a pattern of budding leaves and the breath of spring.

2nd Floor: Ventaglio

- The floors are hewn from wood and stone.
- A radiant shower of light cascades down into the restaurant from the atrium.

Mitsui Main Building, 3rd Floor: Banquet Rooms, etc.

- A fabric decorated in a tree-branch motif is used on the sofas in the banquet sales salon.
- As in the ballroom, the banquet rooms are reminiscent of a spring forest.
- The walls are real wood grain, while the carpets complement the walls with their decorative leaf-vein motif.

NOTES:

Architects:	Mitsui Fudosan Co., Ltd. for Nihonbashi Mitsui Tower
Building design architects:	Cesar Pelli and Associates (Japan) for Nihonbashi Mitsui Tower
Building design and supervision:	Nihon Sekkei, Inc. for Nihonbashi Mitsui Tower
Hotel interior designer:	LTW Designworks
Textile designer:	Reiko Sudo, Nuno Corporation

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Page 9

Guestroom art director and
restaurant designer (37th floor): Ryu Kosaka, A.N.D.

Presidential Suite Room principal
interior designer: Jeffrey A. Wilkes, DESIGNWILKES

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