

/ WORDS SASHA GONZALES

# JEWEL OF THE ORIENT

Combining the quintessential Italian glamour of the jewellery brand with distinctive Chinese cultural elements, the Bulgari Hotel Shanghai is a statement in refined elegance.



Italian brand Bulgari is known for its luxury jewellery, watches and leather goods created with a contemporary style that is rooted in the classical Roman world.

So when it puts its name on a hotel, you can be sure of a space that is nothing short of exceptional.

Such is the case with the Bulgari Hotel Shanghai, which opened in June 2018.

Located on the banks of Suzhou Creek, just three minutes' drive from the iconic Bund, the property is Bulgari's sixth, and

forms part of Suhe Creek, a major riverside urban redevelopment project created by Chinese developer OCT.

The five-star hotel combines a 48-storey tower and the majestically restored Chamber of Commerce building, surrounded by lush private gardens (pictured right).

It houses 82 rooms and suites, restaurants and bars, a ballroom, and the Bulgari Spa, and offers breath-taking views of the Bund, Huangpu River and the Pudong financial district.









**/ LEFT**  
Enter the Chamber of Commerce and be greeted by a well-preserved, intricate mosaic pattern on the floor.

**/ OPPOSITE**  
The ballroom of the new Bulgari Hotel Shanghai is housed within the beautifully restored Chamber of Commerce built in 1916.

**/ 2**  
The hotel's internal entrance is glamorous but refined, much like the Bulgari brand itself.

### EMBODYING THE BULGARI SPIRIT

Constructed in 1916 in the Neoclassical Renaissance style, the Chamber of Commerce building forms a serendipitous connection to Bulgari's Roman roots.

Its columned and patterned brick facade, for example, is adorned with double stone staircases and large windows topped with decorative pediments; while its grand archway gate from the 1920s resembles the triumphal arches of Rome.

From the moment guests enter the property, they are immediately transported

into a world of luxury and sophistication – one that fully epitomises the Bulgari spirit.

"The Bulgari Hotel Shanghai expresses the quintessentially Roman spirit of the brand in many ways," says Patricia Viel, a principal at Antonio Citterio Patricia Viel, the Italian architectural firm that has designed each Bulgari Hotel and Resort around the world.

"For starters, there's the classic Bulgari graphic on the illuminated metal case that wraps around the central fireplace,





not to mention the dark marble lobby framed by double-height windows that look out to the lush garden scenery, alluding to the ambience of the very first Bulgari Hotel in Milan.”

That’s not all. Displayed in the lobby and public areas are glamorous black and white photographs dating from the Dolce Vita era, underscoring Bulgari’s inimitable red-carpet heritage.

In the black granite lift hall, shining marble vitrines, sculpted to resemble those in the flagship Via dei Condotti boutique in Rome, showcase spectacular Bulgari jewelled wonders within.





### ITALIAN GLAMOUR MEETS CHINOISERIE CHIC

While the hotel showcases contemporary Italian flair, there is no mistaking its Oriental charm. Viel points out that fusing design elements from both cultures was easy, thanks to the property's unique location.

"The early 20th-century Chamber of Commerce certainly gives the hotel historical and architectural significance," she explains.

"When a place is chosen as a site for a Bulgari Hotel, it means that it has a story to tell. The narrative merges its past and the particular experience it offers guests at that moment."

To remind guests of where they are, Viel's team reimagined the classic four-poster bed frames in bold contemporary angles, inset with upholstered bedhead panels of ivory flowered silk and velvet entwined with gold thread, conjuring understated Chinoiserie whimsy.

Found in the rooms and suites are glossy black lacquer cupboards, inspired by imperial Chinese furnishings.

Above the leather-embossed reception desks in the lobby, guests will notice the 1930s Shanghai Deco aesthetic in the custom-crafted lamps.

#### / ABOVE

With its oversized windows, grand staircase and Corinthian columns, the entry hall of the restored Chamber of Commerce is a picture of elegance.



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The tabletops in the guest rooms are crafted from Tuscan Calacatta marble.

/ 4  
Floor-to-ceiling windows in the rooms offer spectacular views of the Bund, one of the most recognisable symbols of Shanghai.





### LUXURIOUS ARTISAN TOUCHES

**/ 5**  
Spanning an entire subterranean floor, the Spa is a cave-like oasis embedded with grey Vicenza stone from Verona. This soft marble is rich in prehistoric fossils from the seabed.

**/ 6**  
The centrepiece of the Spa is a 25m-long swimming pool, designed to the grandeur of a Roman bath.

The design team hand-selected or custom-designed each element of the hotel's interior to ensure stylistic consistency, comfort and purity of Italian style.

In the Bulgari Suite, for example, the main bathroom boasts a bathtub and vanity carved from a single slab of rare green onyx from Pakistan.

The red-and-purple-veined Breccia di Seravezza marble used in the hotel's public bathrooms, on the other hand, was sourced from Italy – the designers chose singular marble slabs and ensured that each piece was cut and polished to the highest standard.

This process is comparable to Bulgari's jewellery creation, whereby a rough stone's potential is identified, crafted, cut and polished with care, before being transformed into a fine jewel.

Other artisan touches include pale Navona travertine, which lends warm matte ivory hues and Roman grandeur to the guestrooms and public spaces.

Grey Vicenza stone from Verona boosts the allure of the Bulgari Spa – featuring prehistoric fossils from the seabed, this soft marble is both honed and raw sandblasted to craft intriguing textures and contrasts along the Spa's hallways.







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## **BULGARI HOTEL** **SHANGHAI**

**LOCATION** / SHANGHAI, CHINA

**COMPLETION** / 2018

**GROSS FLOOR AREA** / 25,500M<sup>2</sup>

**ARCHITECT** / ANTONIO CITTERIO PATRICIA VIEL

**LEAD ARCHITECT** / PATRICIA VIEL

**INTERIOR FURNISHING** / B&B ITALIA, MAXALTO, FLEXFORM, FLOS



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These luxurious details are complemented by premium Italian furniture and lighting brands, from B&B Italia and Maxalto, to Flos and Flexform.

While the way the Bulgari experience is offered varies from destination to destination, one thing is for sure, says Viel – every Bulgari hotel is designed to feel like home.

“We treat Bulgari hotels as if they were private houses. The choice of the furniture, the dimensions of the spaces and their interrelationships, the eclectic nature of certain choices that include forms and materials, along with the understated polish we aim to obtain all have to recreate the sense of a sophisticated yet welcoming private space.”