

The Hari Hong Kong

Wan Chai, Hong Kong

With Tara Bernerd & Partners as its design partner, the Harilela family has created a true oasis in Wan Chai with the launch of the second property from its distinctive hotel brand, The Hari.



The successful opening of The Hari Hong Kong in the midst of a global pandemic is testament to the strength and conviction of the Harilela Group. For Dr Aron Harilela, who took the company's reins in 2016 following his father's passing, this project was steeped in a real sense of homecoming. Though the group operates a well-established global portfolio, this is the first property from its luxurious flagship hotel brand, The Hari, to open on home soil – and what an opening it is.

Bridging the commercial heart of Causeway Bay and the creative district of Wan Chai, just moments from the convention centre, The Hari Hong Kong cuts a striking architectural figure, courtesy of Atkins.

The hotel's elegant interiors, exuding The Hari brand's signature predilection for 'approachable luxury', are of course the work of Tara Berner & Partners, with which Dr Aron Harilela partnered for the brand's inaugural property, The Hari London. This pairing brings together two likeminded individuals, whose synergy shines through in the cohesive, considered nature of the design.

"Aron and I share a love of great design, so we often find ourselves bouncing ideas off and challenging each other. We are almost telepathic in our vision, which is a magical combination," Tara explains.

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– assimilating the local culture, heritage, and energy of Wan Chai into a multi-layered, authentic environment. This look is principally achieved by a focus on materiality, with an artful interplay of finishes, furnishings and unexpected touches.

This is evident from the moment guests enter the lobby, passing a wall of Crittal windows through to the entrance lounge and concierge desk. A green wall to the left adds a serene, natural feel, while the timber panelling throughout the rest of the lobby forms a pleasing contrast with the grey marble floor.

The concierge desk is a bespoke piece, striking a sculptural form with its marble base, bronze inserts and timber top. The space is finished with a blend of custom low sofas,

mid-century coffee tables and neutral, textured linens.

The predominant use of timber extends through into the reception and lobby area, where it has been used to striking effect for the floors and for an eye-catching timber-slatted feature wall – lined with petrol-blue suede inserts – behind the reception desk.

Formality is dispensed with here, as an array of comfortable seating areas welcome guests to relax, or to peruse a curated selection of books from the library wall. The palette incorporates a rich blend of blues, greens and earth tones, while the furniture is a mix of mid-century and modern contemporary pieces, many of which have been custom designed for The Hari Hong Kong.



When it came to the hotel's two restaurants, Tara wished to create very distinct environments that best serve their respective cuisines. "The two restaurants bring a charming microcosm of local life to the hotel itself," she explains. "Lucciola captures the spirit of Italy with its encaustic-tiled floor, Tadelakt plaster walls and banquette seating. Whilst in Zoku, the Japanese restaurant, we have taken a different approach that is more moody and atmospheric, with a beautifully crafted slatted-wood ceiling, inspired by traditional origami. This complements the semicircular booth seats and partially screened-off kitchen, tucked behind a wall of Crittal-framed fluted glass."

The terrace bar takes guests from day to night – the striking three-storey green wall on the facade above creating an oasis in the heart of Wan Chai. The light, fresh palette enhances this feel, blending neutral linens with the bold pop of patterned aqua fabrics and a statement wall of patterned, book-matched marble.



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When it came to the guest accommodation, achieving a flexibility in the layout was key for Tara. "We opened up the space in the guest rooms as much as possible, echoing a theme from the restaurant, with Crittall-framed glass doors allowing the room to be either as open or closed as the guest prefers," she says, "whilst the woven padded headboards, bespoke rugs and sofas contrast with the marble in the bathroom, adding to the feel of understated luxury."

"The penthouse suites each have a full-length terrace running outside from the bedroom to the sitting room, and we have designed the layouts so that it is possible to walk between both rooms, either inside, or from the terrace itself, allowing guests to enjoy the stunning views across Wan Chai."



The suites boast a warm palette of navy and grey tweeds and velvets, which contrast beautifully with the yellow velvet sofa. The wardrobes feature a rich, dark timber finish, while a glass-topped marble coffee table, armchair and pouf reference the lobby's aesthetic.

Highlights of the king and twin rooms include fluted bedheads – finished in a deep, amber-textured fabric – bespoke rugs, and open-plan bathrooms in a rich marble, with a bold green vein.

www.thehari.com/hong-kong
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In conversation with Tara Bernerd ...

You've mentioned a symbiotic design partnership with Dr Aron Harilela – could you describe the design process behind The Hari Hong Kong?

I have known Dr Aron Harilela for many years, and Aron is a close friend, as well as a valued client. We originally worked together when we designed The Hari London, so it was a joy to be able to bring The Hari home to Hong Kong.

Building on the design DNA, The Hari Hong Kong brings the charm and elegance of The Hari London, while simultaneously delving into the energy and dynamism of bustling Hong Kong as inspiration for our design.

With each project we undertake, we look to the local culture, the history, the climate and the atmosphere of a place, to create a design DNA that completely embraces the character and identity of the place it is set in. We place a huge value on interior space planning and the interior architecture, from there it is the alchemy of lifestyle design and the layers that this involves, which we have placed such an importance on.

Could you tell us more about the sense of 'homecoming' surrounding this project, and the inspiration you drew from Dr Aron Harilela himself?

Hong Kong is somewhere that I have been fortunate enough to visit regularly since my teens, and my studio, Tara Bernerd & Partners, has been working in Hong Kong since 2008. When Aron asked us to design The Hari in Hong Kong, his hometown, it felt like something of a homecoming not only for the hotel brand, but for myself as well.

Aron has great personal taste, and on one

notable occasion he arrived in my office wearing a beautiful tweed jacket, and I teased him that I would use the jacket as inspiration for the palette for the project. You will find some tweeds amongst the rich fabrics and colours in the palette for the hotel, so I stayed true to my word.

How is the spirit of Wan Chai, and its 're-emergence', reflected in the hotel's interior?

The hotel is in Wan Chai in an area I remember well from my early design years. It has a lively and rich heritage, and we are thrilled to be a part of its re-emergence. We have drawn on the culture and history of the area as inspiration for our design. The area has such an eclectic and layered mix of old and new architecture, and it is known for its commerce, with a vibrant bar and restaurant scene that is also intermingled with arts and culture. Throughout the hotel we have drawn on this inspiration and sought to capture this mix in a harmonious whole.

How does The Hari Hong Kong's interior connect/contrast with that of the inaugural The Hari hotel in London?

The Hari Hong Kong brings the charm and elegance of The Hari London, while simultaneously delving into the energy and dynamism of bustling Hong Kong. Both hotels have a laid-back, relaxed, approachable luxury that makes them feel like a home away from home, and it is this spirit that we have brought home to Hong Kong.

The heart of both properties is the lounge, which in Hong Kong is on the first floor and is lined with bookcases and booth seats. These are familiar themes seen in The Hari London, but

they have been reimagined with a Hong Kong twist, using a different palette and fabric finishes more in keeping with the locale. A signature petrol-blue lacquer and fabric can be seen in both the entrance lift lobby and in the reception of the hotel.

Which aspect of the project did you find most enjoyable?

While we're increasingly known as a designer of hotels, The Hari Hong Kong actually marks our first hotel in Hong Kong itself. We have a longstanding working relationship with Couture Homes, Asia Standard and Grosvenor Asia, designing a mixture of beautiful residential projects in both Hong Kong and mainland China, so it was a real joy to be able to bring our hotel design knowledge and expertise to this up-and-coming part of the city.

However, I would say the most enjoyable part of the project was working both with my own team, whose energy and creativity are the reason I enjoy coming into work every day, and of course with Aron and his team, whose vision, positivity and professionalism made this such a fulfilling and pleasurable collaboration.

What were the main challenges you faced during the project, and how were they overcome?

The biggest challenge we had to overcome was completing the project in the midst of a pandemic and working remotely via video calls and WhatsApp groups. We have such a synergy with the client's team, and they were as passionate about the project as we were, and were endlessly patient.

