



LIVING BY DESIGN

Internationally renowned designer Tara Bernerd talks design philosophy, career evolution and the essence of good design.

Words: Joel Chua

IT'S NOT WITHOUT reason that Tara Bernerd, founder of interior architectural practice Tara Bernerd & Partners, has been christened the doyenne of hotel design. Boasting a global portfolio – stretching from Conrad Los Angeles to The Hari Hong Kong – her studio is known for its remarkable projects with some of the most reputed names in hospitality (Four Seasons, Belmond and Thompson Hotels, just to name three).

This year, Bernerd celebrates a significant milestone with the 20th anniversary of her eponymous studio. “While our design aesthetic has of course matured, our fundamentals and principles have remained the same,” she reflects. This entails a design philosophy that’s both holistic and layered, seeking to preserve a sense of place that’s “indigenous to the surrounding environment”. The most recent example being Four Seasons Fort Lauderdale in Miami – a stunning beachfront hotel and residence – with a mid-century modernist design inspired by the location’s yachting heritage.

When I first opened Tara Bernerd & Partners, we were known for our commercial and residential projects. It was always an ambition of mine, however, to design hotels as well – my first office overlooked Sheraton Belgravia and I used to dream of redesigning it. So, it was a wish come true when hoteliers Jason Pomeranc and Aron Harilela asked me to design what was then Belgraves London (since rebranded as The Hari London). That really launched us into the arena of hotel design.

As a designer, it’s important to evolve with changing lifestyles and needs. Though our designs have a certain timelessness to them, understanding how people use their spaces remains pivotal.

A poignant memory of design that I have is visiting an exhibition at the Royal Academy featuring Norman Foster and Richard Rogers. As a young girl, my father used to take me to hear Foster and speak with him, which developed into a lifelong passion for interiors and architecture.

I’ve had some notable success in yacht design and relish the challenge of changing its language. In a similar vein, I would love turning my hand to private jets as there is so much potential there.

Good design is holistic. Even if everything else is perfect, a poor layout can ruin an entire design.

My must-haves in any home are beautiful art, great lighting and a layout that works.

In life – just like in design – balance is key. **RB**