

# AI Surprise



Architect  
K. Jeffries  
Sydness

four additional restaurants, a fitness center, a swimming pool and conference facilities.

The arc theme expressed at the top of the tower is carried out through the building's entrance and into the fifth floor swimming pool area, which features a softly curved glass wall with open views to the south. "We played with the spaces a bit to give them personality," Sydness explains.

Because American architects cannot stamp architectural drawings in China, Sydness prepared all of the documents in New York and delivered them to a Shanghai firm. When construction began in 1998, the local firm also managed day-to-day proceedings with the building's contractors.

Sydness claims he was highly impressed with the construction process in China. "I visited the site five times during construction, and I was amazed at the order of work, the cleanliness and the attention to safety issues," he says.

The Hong Kong office of Hirsch Bedner won the project's interior design competition, which took place in September 1999. Fronting the Hirsch Bedner team throughout the two-year project was Mathew Lui, senior designer, and Paulo Dias, senior decorator. During the busiest periods, the designers'



Ameubles-laden  
bathrooms

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Shanghai St. Regis Hotel Lodging Hospitality Magazine

# SHANGHAI

**The new St. Regis Shanghai adds drama and excitement to the city's expanding skyline**

by Grace Wagner  
Senior Editor

**I**f Starwood Hotels and Resorts wanted to make a splash introducing the St. Regis brand to the bustling Shanghai market last summer, it undoubtedly found just the right vehicle. Located in the booming Pudong area, the year-old St. Regis tower is unmistakably elegant, its gently curved peaks set at different heights pointing in opposite directions toward the sky.

The hotel's architectural design was already complete in 1999 when its owners, the China-based conglomerate Hong Ta, selected the five-star St. Regis brand. While Hong Ta had negotiated seriously with two other international luxury brands, Starwood's gutsy enthusiasm helped it win the contract. "From the beginning, they made it clear they wanted the project, and they did what it took to get it," says Architect K. Jeffries Sydness, who helped initiate the first meeting between the parties and whose New York-based firm designed the hotel. "They just sort of sailed in and signed the deal."

By that time, Sydness Architects had already won its own heated competition to design the project in late 1997. "Most of the significant buildings in Shanghai have resulted from juried competitions. These are anonymous, invitation-only events where you are paid to compete," says

Sydness, who served as design principal on the project. The firm had previously created a large headquarters building for another Chinese company in Shanghai (an office glut ensued and it was never built), which Sydness believes prompted the invitation from Hong Ta. Also participating in the competition were Miami-based Arquitectonica and two Hong Kong-based firms.

Although his firm was honored to participate, the risks involved in such competitions are considerable, Sydness claims. "You're given very specific written criteria, and there's no one breathing down your neck," he says, "but there's absolutely no feedback that occurs throughout the process."

The firm's entry represented the 38-story tower with adjoining podium structure as it stands today, Sydness says, adding "Hong Ta was very faithful to our design." Inside the tower are 318 oversized rooms (500 square feet, making them the largest rooms in Shanghai). Sandwiched between the tower's stone slabs is a glass-enclosed central corridor, flooding the guestroom floor hallways with natural light and enabling sweeping views of the city from a restaurant and lounge near the top, where the St. Regis logo glows. The four-story podium houses the hotel's multi-level lobby, ballroom,



The dramatic three-story lobby



Luxurious guestrooms

## SHANGHAI *Surprise*

### St. Regis Spreads Its Wings

Shanghai is by no means the last stop for St. Regis Hotels & Resorts. The luxury Starwood brand has charted an aggressive growth course focusing not only on key Asian markets but throughout the United States and across Europe.

Ultimately, the 11-property chain aims to double in size over the next two to three years, says Michael Matthews, vice president of marketing and development. "That would put us right there alongside Four Seasons," he says, referring to the Toronto-based luxury competitor.

In addition to Shanghai, St. Regis currently operates hotels in New York; Aspen; Beijing; Houston; Los Angeles; Dana Point, CA; London; Rome and Washington, D.C.

St. Regis' intended growth venue is a mix of new construction and conversions. "The wonderful thing about conversions is that you don't have that three-year lag time," Matthews says. "But at the same time, the only conversions we'll consider will be of properties that already meet our five-star standards, or those that have the funding in place to bring it there immediately."

Matthews notes there are a number of former Ciga properties in Europe that are now under the Starwood Hotels & Resorts Luxury Collection umbrella that have excellent conversion potential.

St. Regis currently has properties under construction in San Francisco, Fort Lauderdale and Tokyo and is in the final stages of development on projects in St. Thomas, USVI, Barbados, and Winter Park, FL.

support structure included 12 additional people.

"They really picked up on our design and carried it all the way through," Sydness says of Hirsch Bedner's work. Inspired by the grandeur and opulence of ancient Chinese opera houses, the interiors feature elegant furnishings with richly colored finishes and sensuous fabrics. Touches of Asian art and antiques are evident throughout the spaces.

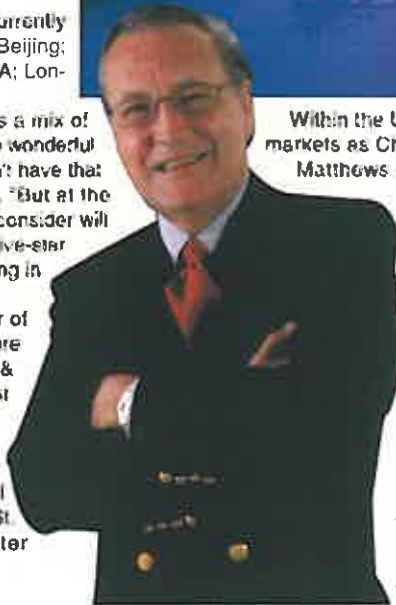
The hotel's triple-height lobby has a strong theatrical feel, with dark, voluminous, floor-to-ceiling draperies overlaid with powerful suspended artwork of exaggerated

proportions. Soaring bamboo groves and a custom water feature serve to heighten the senses. A mezzanine-level bar and lobby lounge are accessed by a grand staircase. Curving floors overlooking the lobby lead to the grand ballroom and pre-function areas.

For the St. Regis' 318 guestrooms, all of which feature private butler service, the designers sought a "sophisticated and luxurious residential feel," says Lui. Accessed through large glass and timber sliding doors, the adjoining bathrooms featured oversized soaking tubs and televisions.



Starwood hopes to mimic the success of the new St. Regis Monarch Beach Resort in California in other resort destinations.



Within the U.S., the brand is eyeing such gateway markets as Chicago, Boston and Atlanta. Overseas,

Matthews counts such locations as Paris, Hong Kong and Singapore as "immediately desirable."

The brand also seeks resort development opportunities. Its newest destination property, the St. Regis Monarch Beach Resort in Dana Point, CA, has been highly successful, Matthews says. Other markets under consideration are the Turks & Caicos Islands, Belize and Punta Mita, Mexico. —G.W.

Michael Matthews serves as vice president of marketing and development for the five-star St. Regis chain.

The hotel's crown jewel, the Imperial Suite, occupies the top two floors of the guestroom tower. Windows in the suite's double-height living room are draped in yards of silk, while velvet and gold brocade fabrics cover the furniture. A grand piano and hand-painted wallcoverings further enhance the space.

"Both the building's exterior and interior design work well for the St. Regis product," says Sydness. "While the spaces are grand, the hotel feels very intimate, almost boutique-like." **LH**

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