

GENTRY

HOME

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2018



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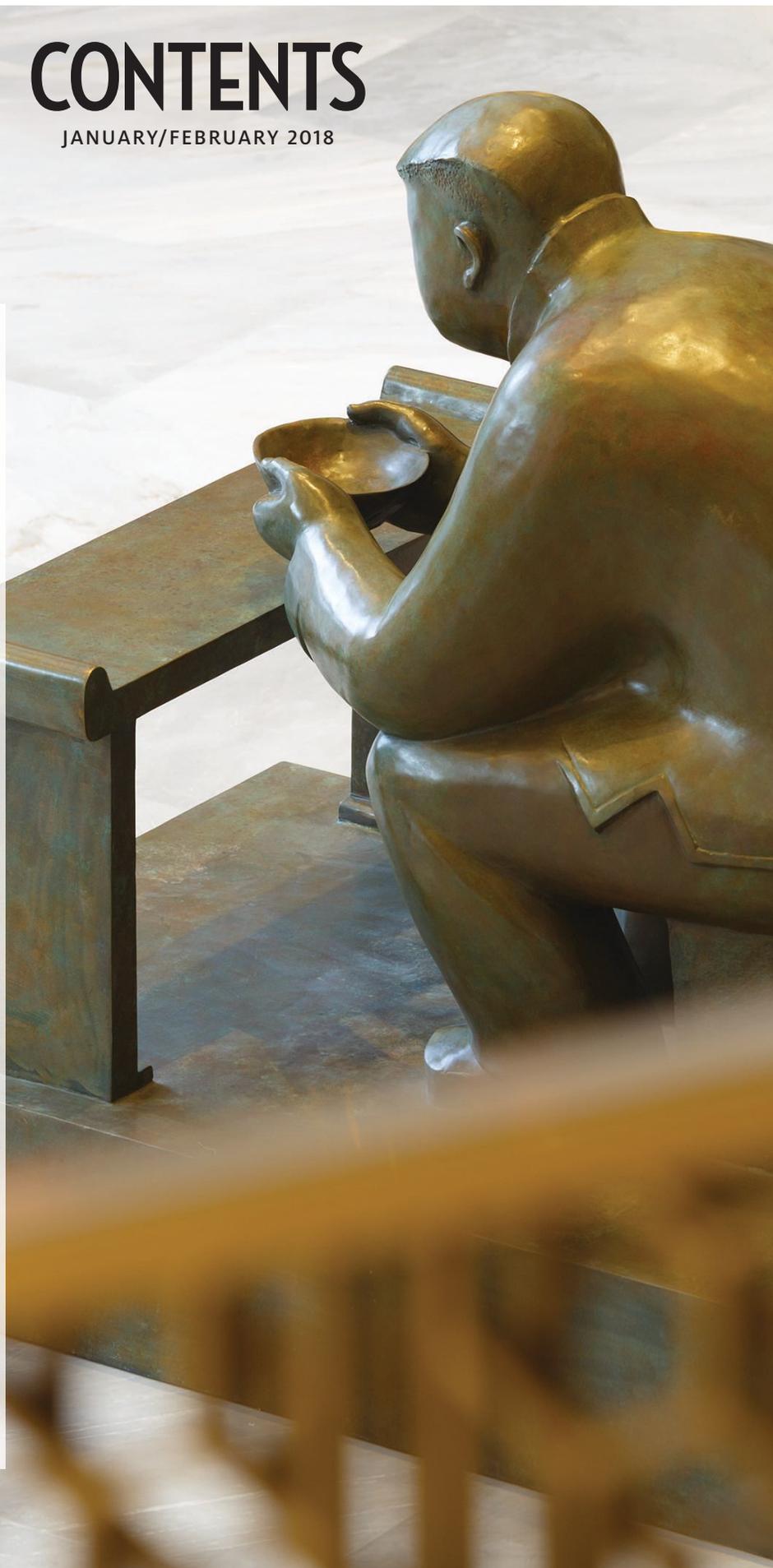
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A Jewel Unveiled. Award-winning interior designer Henry Leung of Hong Kong's CAP Atelier coalesces tradition and modernism at The Peninsula Beijing. Senior Editor Corry Cook reports.

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ENTRANCE ONLY

A JEWEL UNVEILED

Award-winning interior designer Henry Leung of Hong Kong's CAP Atelier coalesces tradition and modernism at The Peninsula Beijing.

STORY BY CORRY COOK

For three decades, The Peninsula Beijing has witnessed China's explosive growth and change. To that end, the luxury hotel has recently undergone a top-to-bottom refit—a new hotel for a new China. The result is a luxurious blend of time-honored tradition and cutting-edge chic befitting a hotel that represents the Peninsula brand.

Henry Leung of CAP Atelier in Hong Kong was tapped to reimagine the hotel's public spaces and elegant guest rooms and suites. Leung's resume includes some of Asia's most magnificent hotels and resorts. The Peninsula Beijing proves that this young designer's creativity knows no bounds.

For The Peninsula Beijing's new design, Leung took inspiration from the city's iconic architecture and symbols. Upon arrival, guests are greeted by a traditional Chinese *paifang* or *pailou*—an architectural archway or gate once reserved only for royalty. Inside, Chinese inspirations and symbolic references are integrated on every level of the hotel.

The drop-dead-gorgeous, hand-carved onyx "Spirit Wall" in the lobby (conceived by artist Belinda Chow) is just one example of the artistic treasures in this special hotel. The Spirit Wall features a noble phoenix (symbolizing the auspicious *feng shui* of the hotel), peonies (representing fortune), and noble goldfish (symbolizing luck, but also a nod to the hotel's location on Goldfish Lane). The lobby is layered in design and motifs—most notably, the more than 160,000 hexagonal shapes, partially inspired by a tortoise shell, that represent longevity. The shapes are seen in everything from the lobby's six hand-carved pillars to the bronze work on the main staircase.

Integrated throughout the hotel are original Chinese artworks that position The Peninsula Beijing at the center of this dynamic global art capital. Curated by Michael Suh, director of the Museum of Contemporary Art Beijing (MoCA Beijing), the hotel's collection of original Chinese paintings, sculptures, installations, and photography is combined with an Art Residency program, which nurtures promising artistic talent. In the lobby, along with the Spirit Wall, guests can gaze at a pair of abstract ink paintings

by Chinese contemporary artist Qin Feng depicting the sun and moon that were commissioned expressly for the hotel. A whimsical pair of bronze sculptures of tea drinkers by Zhang Du holds pride of place on either side of a sweeping marble staircase, evoking Beijing's history as a heartland of Chinese tea culture and The Peninsula's legendary Afternoon Tea tradition.

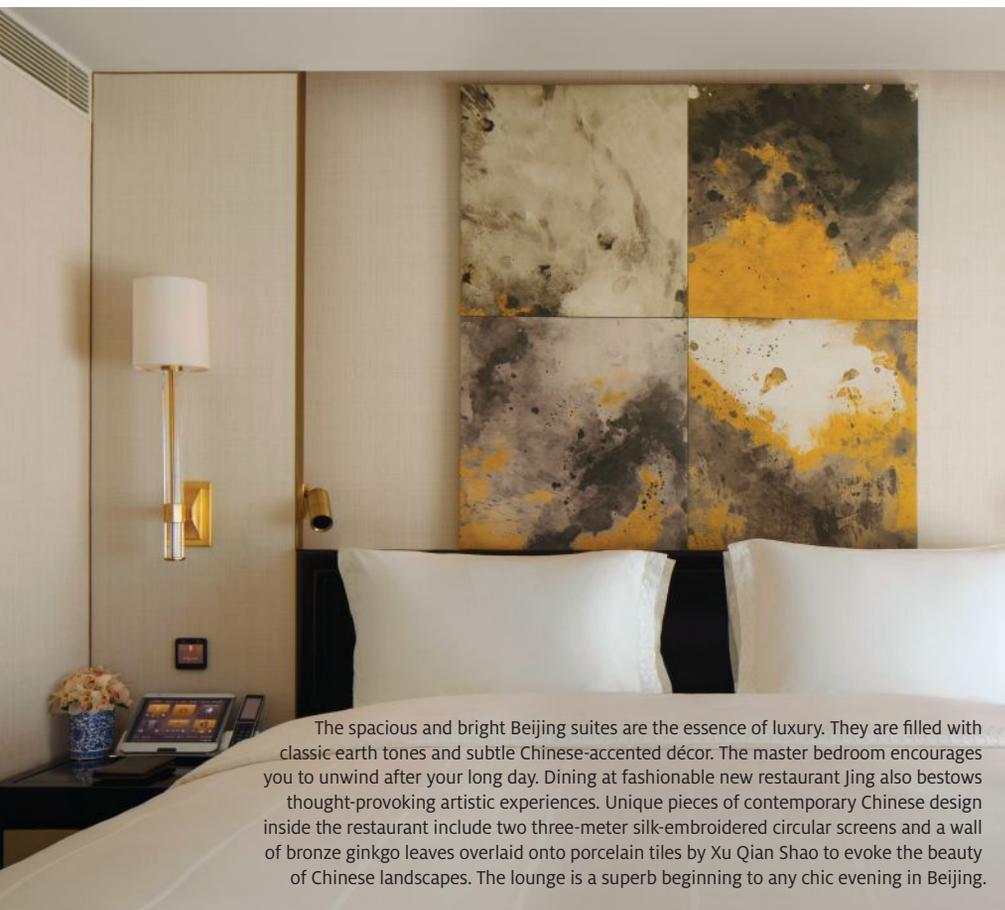
Technology is integrated throughout The Peninsula Beijing. Guests are given star treatment upon arrival, bypassing the usual check-in process with a personal escort to one's suite for quick and easy wireless check-in. And ahh!, the rooms. The hotel's original 525 rooms and suites have been reduced and reimagined to just 230 suite-styled spaces. Each one offers a separate bedroom, living room, bath, and an ample dressing area with a valet box and nail dryer. The suites boast proprietary in-room technology delivering 11 languages at the touch of a fingertip and paperless hotel and city information and services just a click away.

A loft-style collection of Duplex Suites on the top floor of the hotel offers a chic and sophisticated twist on contemporary Beijing living. Unique in China, the duplex suites feature floor-to-ceiling windows affording expansive views over the capital skyline from





The Peninsula Beijing's art gallery (far left). Jing Restaurant (above left) celebrates international "farm-to-table" dishes with a hint of Western inspiration in a stylish setting evoking a mystical Chinese garden. One of two twin bronze sculptures (above) of tea drinkers by Zhang Du sits on either side of a sweeping marble staircase in the lobby. The Peninsula Spa is a luxurious and tranquil sanctuary for body, mind, and spirit.



The spacious and bright Beijing suites are the essence of luxury. They are filled with classic earth tones and subtle Chinese-accented décor. The master bedroom encourages you to unwind after your long day. Dining at fashionable new restaurant Jing also bestows thought-provoking artistic experiences. Unique pieces of contemporary Chinese design inside the restaurant include two three-meter silk-embroidered circular screens and a wall of bronze ginkgo leaves overlaid onto porcelain tiles by Xu Qian Shao to evoke the beauty of Chinese landscapes. The lounge is a superb beginning to any chic evening in Beijing.



the master bedroom upstairs, and from the entry lobby and living room downstairs.

Chinese artistic expression extends to these beautiful spaces as well. The walls of the suites are embellished with hand-embroidered blossoms juxtaposed with abstract photographs of Beijing's modern architectural masterpieces, including the CCTV Tower and Bird's Nest Olympic Stadium, by Chinese photographers Sun Min, Yang Min, and Huang Yongjin.

Art and architecture lovers will rejoice in The Peninsula Peninsula's "Keys to the City" experiences. With 3,000 years of history and 860 years as a capital, Beijing is loaded with heritage sites. To that end, guests participating in the Keys to the City program enjoy use of the hotel's Rolls-Royce private car to reach destinations like Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City—the imperial palace during the Ming and Qing Dynasties. It is the largest and best-maintained ancient structure in China, and a grand physical representation of China's imperial history.

One of the Seven Modern Wonders of the World, the Great Wall of China is a bucket-list item that The Peninsula Beijing delivers with luxurious ease. At the hands of the Peninsula's expert guides, hiking along the Great Wall is substantially different from

simply making the usual short visit. The adventurous can even make their way along two of the "wild" sections of the Great Wall, broken in places, beaten by the weather, not repaired by government funds, but still proud and strong. It is an enjoyable physical experience, but also a once-in-a-lifetime chance for deeper understanding and appreciation of Chinese history and culture, as well as man's creative power.

Art aficionados will also enjoy a VIP visit to the 798 Art District. The original 798 was a state-owned industrial plant left abandoned in the late 1990s. Upon the dawn of the Millennium, artists moved into the warehouse lofts, repurposing the derelict area into what is today a hot spot for dozens of established studios, galleries, bookstores, cafes, and restaurants.

Whilst modern China continues to develop at breathtaking speed, The Peninsula Beijing remains very mindful of preserving the local heritage and traditions. To reimagine the hotel, some of China's finest craftsmen and artists were commissioned to work with time-honored materials, including gold leaf, red Zi Tan wood, onyx, Chinese jade, bronze, and marble to create a new vision with an ageless sense of grandeur, elegance, and sophistication. ♦

