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The Lana

DUBAI

Omniyat teams up with Dorchester Collection and Foster + Partners to make a splash on Dubai's waterfront, creating an urban oasis that exudes understated luxury.

Words: Guy Dittrich • Photography: Courtesy of Dorchester Collection

Amidst the jumble of towers and flyovers that make up the Dubai skyline comes a new jewel; one of understated luxury. Real estate developer Omniyat, in conjunction with Dorchester Collection, is putting down a refined marker that offers accommodation at a more human scale. One that is open for community connection and year-round living. With architecture by Foster + Partners and interiors by Parisian firm Gilles & Boissier, The Lana brings a discreet level of outstanding comfort that flies in the face of the big-and-bling culture that has thus far characterised the hospitality landscape here.

The project comprises two buildings wrapped around the bowl of the Marasi Marina between Downtown Dubai and the Dubai Design District. One is a 225-key hotel, the second is home to 39 branded residences. The new development sits at the heart of a 12km waterfront promenade featuring floating villas and an extensive yacht berth. It is the first of a number of projects in the Emirate that sees Omniyat working with Dorchester Collection and Foster + Partners. "The Lana forms part of our long-

term ambition to transform Marasi Bay into a globally recognised waterfront destination," explains Omniyat's founder and Executive Chairman, Mahdi Amjad. "This collaboration offers a unique synthesis of modern design and bespoke living, reflecting our unwavering commitment to elevating lifestyles in Dubai."

And in the case of The Lana, he means elevated in the literal sense. Foster + Partners' visionary architecture has a lightness that sees two loosely 'hinged' wings seemingly float on pillars above the ground. "The narrow floorplate has a hole 'punched' through the pivot between the two buildings," notes Partner Will Plowman. This openness is enhanced by remarkably slim supporting columns. "The columns in the large voids are structural steel casings filled with concrete, which enhances their strength compared to concrete-only pillars," he continues of the bridge-building technique that eliminates the need for bracing. An additional benefit is the large column-free space for the ballroom, the centrepiece of a comprehensive events offering.

The relative permeability of this



The lobby is characterised by high ceilings, imposing archways and pink mosaics

interconnection creates a breeze-way for passive cooling aided by the hotel's seven gardens and water features. The façades of both buildings have a horizontal lamella of deep reveals and overhangs that provide shading to guestrooms, reducing the building's reliance on air conditioning and minimising heat gain through self-shading. Furthermore, as Plowman comments: "We have optimised the orientation to minimise exposure, which sees one building partially shading the other." Such green genius enhances outdoor spaces, which along with the walkway running between the hotel and the marina's berths, are part of this waterside porosity. Retail and third-party F&B venues will activate this public margin.

Perhaps most striking of all about the architecture is its celebration of 'horizontalism', as illustrated by the façade. The two buildings are a mere 30 and 31 storeys high – diminutive amidst the surrounding skyscrapers. Simon Ford, Director of Architecture at Dorchester Collection, comments: "It was a smart move on Fosters + Partners' part to be different and stand out in Dubai where height dominates."

Omniyat's ownership of the marina serves to secure the westward views across its clear span of still water. A location that delivers two spectacular daily shows for free. The sunset across the Arabian Gulf and soon after the light spectacle that races across the topmost facets of the Burj Khalifa.

Up close, the hotel glows with an understated lustre forged by Gilles & Boissier. "We want to be humble and say to Dubai that it is possible to create a five-star hotel without putting too much money on the floor," explains Dorothee Boissier. Questioned on this, because no doubt the hotel's interiors represent a major investment, Boissier qualifies: "We are moving from a period of show, show, show in luxury hospitality to a more discreet, more modest setting. You can create luxury with different materials and organisation of space."

When it comes to materials, Gilles & Boissier are masters. "We are crazy about materials," Boissier enthuses. "We love the richness coming from them." Amongst the stone alone are a beautiful façade treatment of fluted pink onyx that flanks the entrance before guests walk onto a patchwork of Volakas, dark Grigio Carnico and grey Emperador sweeping

across the lobby floor. Travertine for guestrooms, spider green marble stairs to the ballroom, White Beauty marble in lift lobbies.

Spatially, two aspects stand out. First the lobby. "It has a very high ceiling, quite imposing, and it's difficult to create human scale in such a proportion," explains Boissier. "We wanted to announce the hotel in a feminine way," she explains, referring to the pink onyx façade entrance. A similar treatment is seen in the sumptuous pink leather of the lifts.

Within the lobby, Boissier points out the influence of different cultures, noting the curved elements of intriguing quarter and half domes that soar above the pink mosaic-covered walls. Ceilings have diagonal beams. A hidden alcove, home to speakeasy Bitter Honey, is lined with dark-tinted matte finish oak panels – something that is, for Boissier, very British. So what of the local connection? The authenticity that all are clamouring for currently? The owner held sway here. "Mahdi loved the Baccarat Hotel we designed in New York," he explains. "And he wanted to move away from certain Arabic-style elements, something different."

Local is of course there, particularly in the pink and pale yellows of the colour palette. At once feminine but also of the desert, its vivid sunsets and sandy wastes. But the desert is also rocky and mountainous, and Boissier captures this in the lobby's grotto-like asymmetric sofas with their darker tones and columnar form. "There is also a link with the sky and the stars; from this comes the round suspended infinity lamp over the reception," she expands. More prosaically, there is a strong local connection not only in the stone – Omani beige for the pool surround, for example – but also the craftspeople used to create the furnishings, all bespoke by Gilles & Boissier.

The hotel's artwork tells a similar tale of cross-cultural association. The appointed art consultant, Amélie du Chalard of Amélie, Maison d'Art, took this brief and researched suitable artists. The result is an eclectic array of pieces differing in scale and format, largely by non-Emirati artists but absolutely expressing Arabic content.

Second of the spatial standouts are the bright and light guestrooms. All have floor-to-ceiling windows accessing



a full-width balcony. Some corner rooms are magnificent duplex arrangements. All are beautifully appointed with walnut and oak panelling effectively enwrapping guests. Many have standalone bathtubs overlooking the marina, with brassware by THG Paris. Bedside tables are another delight – pale poplar burl wood drawers are suspended within a bright metal frame and topped with an incredible pink quartz slab.

Of the guestroom layout, Boissier notes: “This is very European. Each foyer distributes the bathroom and walk-in dressing room in a very classical organisation. This brings added luxury.” The latter is indeed a treat. “I love the dressing room. I’ve never seen such sophisticated wardrobes,” she celebrates of the Dorchester signature.

Another nod to the London flagship is the afternoon tea served in the lobby’s Gallery, with incredible panache and attention to detail. There are delicate sandwiches, cakes and pastries from award-winning pastry chef Angelo Musa, whose



produce is also available at the marina-level Bon Bon Café.

Other F&B offerings include High Society and Jara by Martín Berasategui, both with interiors by Verhaal of Sydney and Dubai. Adjacent to the rooftop pool, High Society serves light bites by Michelin-starred chef Jean Imbert. Jara meanwhile, is rich in colour and pattern – a fiery tree of orange lights rises from the island bar station, strong enough to sit alongside the open fire over which the freshly displayed fish and aged cuts of meat are prepared.

The hotel's other significant dining option is the airy, Mediterranean feel of Riviera by Jean Imbert, which complements the French chef's long-standing relationship with Dorchester Collection at Hôtel Plaza Athénée in Paris. Riviera is an indoor-outdoor space of extensive terraces furnished with Amalfi armchairs and Inlaid stools by Janus et Cie, while shading is provided by Tuuci umbrellas and plenty of planting. Diagonally arranged vertical screening frameworks keep things informal.

Boissier talks of the overall interior design being timeless. "If you're not in fashion, then you're never out of fashion," she quips. Of being contemporary but not in vogue, more luxurious than obvious, she comments: "Timeless is about designing what is useful, what is important, what guests really need. It is about not putting detail where it's not needed. Nor putting money when it's not needed. We have to question whether we really need something."

As a result, The Lana Dubai is an oasis. An oasis of statement architecture that elevates the site and seamlessly integrates sustainable initiatives. An oasis of amenities – including a Txakolina cigar lounge and the UAE's first Dior Spa – that is matched by the impeccable service expected of Dorchester. The feminine delicacy and edited timelessness of Gilles & Boissier's interiors are the perfect antidote to the local competition. Cool, calm and collected, The Lana is an outstanding start in the region where much is to come from Omniyat, Dorchester Collection and Foster + Partners.



EXPRESS CHECK-OUT

Owner / Developer: Omniyat
Operator: Dorchester Collection
Architecture: Foster + Partners
Interior Design: Gilles & Boissier, Verhaal (High Society, Jara)
Art Consultant: Amelie Maison d'Art
www.dorchestercollection.com