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## Milan jewelry designer turns ruins into oasis, dreams come true, and the castle is resurrected

2021-03-30 19:39 United Daily News / Article / Chen Jingkuan (Founder of Kuanting Aesthetics)

+ India



The old castle over 220 years old is located in the famous historical area Shekhawati. Picture / Provided by Kuanting Aesthetics

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The global epidemic has not ceased, and travel may take a long time, but the heart of travellers can be as usual. Thinking of friends from afar, I slid away an IG from an ancient castle in India. In the short film, the courtyard is deep and the fountain is gurgling. Listening, the first irritability will be quiet. I remember that when Maria bought the castle, the photos that came from were still the scene of the ruins billowing in sand and dust. I did not expect that there is now a n independent paradise garden.

My Italian friend Maria Grazia Baldan is a well-known jewellery designer in Milan. She is good at combining antique antiques and creative designs. Each piece is unique. At the invitation of Lane Crawford, Hong Kong, she worked with Cartier, Van Cleef & Arpels and other international Famous jewellery brands, together on display and sale of old pieces. In order to search for beautiful and unique ancient objects, she spent more than 30 years of golden age to explore the mysteries of the East. She traveled all over China, Tibet, India, the Middle East... Five years ago, she started to establish overseas in India, where she had become acquainted with each other. home.

### The cause of the start of children's books

"The first book I read was "The jungle book" by R. Kipling." This is a gift from her parents for her sixth birthday, a fable with an Indian background; the book; Mowgli, a child raised by a wolf, and animal playmates such as the tiger Shere Khan and the bear Baloo, have been with her all the way in her life. In 1976, Maria's journey to the east set sail for the first time, and the India she dreamed of in her childhood began to become her real life adventure jungle.

"India is the source of precious gemstones. Later, because of the demand for jewelry design, I came often." For this reason, Maria always wanted to settle in the northern state of Rajasthan, but the nest search was not smooth. "Introduced to Mine is not too small a house, or too big a palace." Until one day, she walked into the dilapidated castle Deeppura Garh, looking up inside the slumped wall, you could see a blue sky, and the living conditions were almost zero. However, The incredible exquisite murals on the wall have firmly attracted her.

"I fell in love with it at first sight. However, as a residence is too big, consider turning it into a small Heritage hotel." This old castle over 220 years old is located in the famous historical area Shekhawati, and it is rich in heritage. Cultural assets. Two or three hundred years ago, local wealthy people advocated building luxury houses. The boudoir built for women in the house is called haveli. There is a specially designed balcony on the second floor for women to peep into the outside world, and the facade murals are unique, usually the owner. In order to show off its wealth, it was hand-painted by an artist at a high price, which evolved into a major feature of the local architectural aesthetics. Later, with the social changes, a large number of them were abandoned, and the left over haveli murals gradually became the focus of cultural tourism, and they were dubbed "the world's largest open-air art gallery".

Seeing the magic in decay is Maria's unique insight and taste. There is an extraordinary haveli in the castle, where the last Sikar prince was born; legend has it that he loved architecture and built the castle into an artistic building. The exquisiteness of mural paintings can be imagined. "The mural is beautiful, but the damage is quite serious." Maria told me that the castle had been abandoned for hundreds of years, and the painting was covered with a thick layer of dirt.

Fortunately, Maria found Philippe de Villegas, who is experienced in restoring ancient houses. This Belgian architect has lived in Rajasthan for more than ten years. He is well versed in the unparalleled craftsmanship of local craftsmen. With his help, from carpenters, stonemasons... to masters of hand-painting, everything is responsive. The restoration of the mural was completed by a team led by a master painter. The project was long and painstaking. However, when the hand-painting was freed from Chen Gu, the century-old patina reappeared in the sky, and the instant moving was beyond words.

The entire restoration project was completed after four years. At different stages, roughly 50 to 160 workers are stationed on the site, including craftsmen, artisans, painters, etc., to cooperate with architects and engineers in the division of labor. In the reconstruction part, there are many methods used in the past, ranging from ancient stone pots for planting flowers and trees to the archeological stone pillars of the newly built courtyards. I also noticed that there is a large and unique carved wood wall decoration in the study. It turned out to be a ceiling removed from an ancient local haveli building. The fine carvings and inlays above are all handmade.

Perhaps in the eyes of most people, there are bound to be difficulties in this process. However, Maria told me: "It is an exhilarating experience to see one's wishes come true in the hands of a simple but highly skilled person. In the West, I call these things. The skills for craftsmanship have been lost. As for difficulties, they can only happen when they encounter public administration. India is very complicated and slow in this respect." Maria, like me, loves craftsmanship and respects craftsmanship. Even if repairing takes time and effort, she is willing.

### True luxury

After a reincarnation, the current castle has flowers and trees, the water is shining, and the green lawn has the graceful blue peacock strolling leisurely. Maria keeps her private realm here. The hotel has only ten houses planned, and there are four or five large and small gardens. "The space here is so big that you can be alone and focus on self-exploration." After seventy years, Maria invested in the operation of a boutique hotel for the first time, still maverick. In addition to professional services, she wants to provide travelers with stability and peace of mind and body. Quiet, because for modern people, she thinks this is true luxury.

"I like walking in the garden very much, staying in front of the large fireplace in the study at night, and then swimming at night in the big swimming pool that I am proud of." This magnificent swimming pool built next to the majestic city wall is made of granite, and I can't help but imagine how healed swimming under such a starry sky! Whether in Indian or Islamic culture, water symbolizes life energy and purification. In addition to the expensive swimming pool, Maria has built a total of six fountains of various shapes. The sound of the gurgling water is relaxing and also activates the vitality of the garden space. .

There are winding paths everywhere, interspersed with a number of leisure spaces with full visual effects, and Thai Ban is named after colors. The meditation room is painted with the bright yellow and dark red of saffron to provide meditation. The Orange Room is the only space in the castle where the original appearance is preserved. There are precious restored murals in the interior; Maria revealed that the princess may once lived here, and Maharaja Thika was born in this room.

There are three pavilions in the existing buildings of the castle, which have been transformed into blue houses. The main interior is navy blue and gold, combined with lotus flowers hand-painted on site by local artists and murals based on ancient Indian myths. "The pavilion has no windows or doors. It is most suitable for resting on a hot night." It sounds interesting, and Maria chooses to read, chat or dine here.

In addition, there is a small green house with plants and animals painted on the wall, as if you are in a mini jungle. Obviously, this is a children's book that has influenced Maria deeply. I think that maybe Mowgli's various adventures between the world and the jungle have already provided her a virtual life vision: freely shuttle between Eastern and Western cultures, and uninhibited.

### Rest is to start again

The ancient fort is located between the two tourist cities of Jaipur and Bikaner. Maria expects it to be a stop for tourists to replenish energy. Maria chose Kuanting bedding in the guest room. She told me: "After every long journey to India, I look forward to falling into the bed covered with Kuanting sheets to have a good rest. It is quality, comfortable and elegant. It is the priceless enjoyment of life's bliss." However, it was just completed at the end of the previous year, and the epidemic spread to the world in mid-February, and the castle was temporarily closed at the government's order.

"I often wonder, why do I have to spend so much effort and money to build Deeppura Garh?" Thinking about it, Maria's mental journey was complicated during the four years of the resurrection of the castle. "In the end, I figured it out: Bringing an abandoned castle back to life, I saved some good things." From the creation of new jewelry designs to the restoration of the castle, Maria is driven by unanimous enthusiasm-wanting to preserve this The beauty of the world is passed on. Perhaps before she realized it, it was her life's ambition to save the beauty.

Since it is a career, I will not give up lightly. The rebirth of the old castle only needs to wait, just like the sitting camel on the hotel's logo, it said: "Take a rest before moving on."





The facade murals were hand-painted hundreds of years ago by an artist hired by the owner of the castle. Picture / Provided by Kuanting Aesthetics



The guest room chooses wide court bedding. Picture / Provided by Kuanting Aesthetics



In the reborn castle, life aesthetics can be seen everywhere. Picture / Provided by Kuanting Aesthetics



The murals in the blue house are taken from ancient Indian mythology. Picture / Provided by Kuanting Aesthetics





The walls of the small green house are painted with plants and animals, as if you are in a mini jungle. Picture / Provided by Kuanting Aesthetics





Chen Jingkuan, founder of Kuanting Aesthetics (left) and Italian jewelry designer Maria Grazia Balzan. Picture / Provided by Kuanting Aesthetics



The Orange House is the only space in the castle where the original appearance is preserved. Picture / Provided by Kuanting Aesthetics



Craftsmen are repairing with unparalleled craftsmanship. Picture / Provided by Kuanting Aesthetics



The fountain in the atrium of the castle. Picture / Provided by Kuanting Aesthetics



A modern bathroom that blends the old with the new. Picture / Provided by Kuanting Aesthetics

India mural

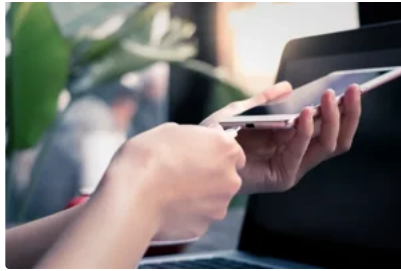
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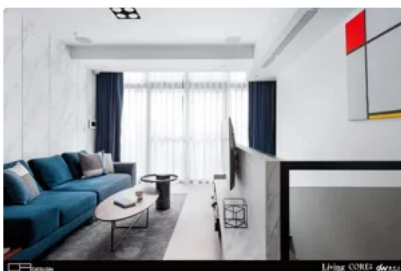
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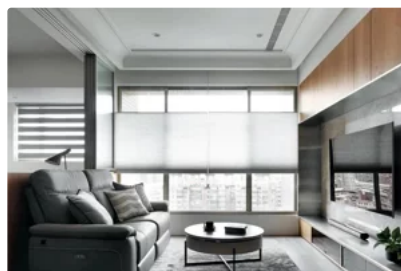
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