

Press release – 10 pages

A Paradise for Free Spirits MUZA Lab designs for the GYP.set at Kanuhura Maldives



(24 April, 2017) Inge Moore and her London-based Muza Lab design team of Caitlin Miller and Nathan Hutchins have reimaged Kanuhura as a unique island retreat in the atolls of the Maldives. They have redesigned every existing area and introduced new spaces, working from the big picture through to every detail, from creating larger guestrooms and reimagining the F&B outlets to amenities such as crockery and picnic baskets and even uniform collections for the staff.

In their ambition to create a truly different destination for this part of the world, the designers took as their starting point the word “GYP.set“ N \’jip-set\, a lifestyle that combines the unconventionality of the gypsy fused with the sophistication and speed of the jet set. Familiar with the best things in life, gypsetters are free in spirit and roam the world, finding places to escape. They have an intuitive understanding of modern sophistication and international tastes, and they seek to be emotionally and creatively connected with wherever they land. Kanuhura has become a place full of this bohemian spirit - unconventional, chic and enticingly laid-back.

“We found inspiration in the legends, culture and natural world of the islands - their stories, colours and sculptural forms,” explains Inge. “By bringing these influences into the experience of Kanuhura, we have created a sense of free-spirited timelessness and wellbeing where guests can escape from their normal lives and find a place to create their own special memories with family and friends.”



Arrival

The inspiration of these spaces is the black and white sarong of the local Boduberu performers, who showcase tales of heroism, satire and romance. This monochrome palette contrasts beautifully with the soft colours of sea and sand. Upon landing in Male, even before taking the sea plane to Kanuhura, guests enjoy a private lounge at the airport where they can unwind at the small bar with a welcome cocktail or lounge on the black and white striped sofas while reading from the curated collection of books on display. The Boduberu Lounge, a jetty lounge built over the sea, and Home Base, the reception area, are also part of the arrival experience. Here, guests begin their island adventure as their shoes are replaced by Kanuhura flip flops while they wait for their plane.

These areas are filled with organic forms and natural materials, playful elements, creature comforts and, of course, views of the Indian Ocean. The previous lounge was a dark structure. Rather than replace it, the designers have lime washed the timber beams and timber floors, making the space not only lighter and contemporary in feel but highlighting the lovely local thatching to the roof. The existing walls were removed and replaced with simple rope handrails and soft sarong inspired drapery. Oversized wicker armchairs, poufs, black and white textured upholstery and feature beaded lights that look like large jelly fish fill the spaces. The custom-designed kitchen counter allows guests to be served cocktails or freshly brewed coffee upon arrival.

The bespoke staff uniforms pick up on the sarongs of the Boduberu with casual black striped kaftan-style shirts, white linen tunic tops, striped sarongs with leather belts and cropped trousers. All the table top has been carefully collected to match the spirit of the lounge.



The 'Heart' of Kanuhura

Shaded under large palm trees and other local vegetation, the centre of the resort is a social lawn for lazing and also serves as the perfect place for events. Surrounding this lawn is the heart of the village where you get the basics: easy eats, pampering or play. The cluster of buildings includes a coffee and ice cream shop with essential sundries, beauty salon with private bridal suite, a playroom for grown-ups and teens, a boutique offering chic collections of island fashion and the dive and marine biology centre.



The Deli is a grab-and-go, where a coffee or ice cream can be enjoyed while lounging on the nearby lawn. The colour palette is inspired by the soft shades of ice creams; there are café tables and chairs in a turquoise-toned weave and a delightful collection of variously shaped beaded pendant lights, carefully handcrafted.

The beauty salon is elegant, natural and refreshing in tones of mint green and white accented by the high-pitched thatch room and collection of rattan mirrors. Comfortable furniture is artfully combined with the technical seating and kit required by the therapists. Nestled inside is the bridal suite, a delicately detailed jewel box where filigree leaf lights twinkle and mother-of-pearl encrusted side tables add a particularly feminine air. The suite is a perfect backdrop for wedding memories.



The décor of the playroom is joyful and fun. Cushions in bold prints and eye-catching clusters of bright coloured woven lampshades made of recycled soda bottles contrast with the simplicity of the white painted wood walls. Table tennis, table football, screens for gaming and a wide variety of board games are on offer along with a large pull-down projection screen for viewing big sports games.

This poolside area comprises A Mano island kitchen, Fogo evening Brazilian BBQ, Bottega Italian restaurant, The Cowry Club bar and Kokaa Spa.



A Mano

A Mano translates as “touched by the hand”, an ethos that is celebrated throughout every aspect of the island kitchen. All produce is local, free range, seasonal and mainly from small growers and producers – a celebration of traditional home cooking found on the trade routes. The design embraces all that is handmade and natural, with lime washed timbers, local stones, and woven fabrics. Table settings are eclectic handmade ceramics. Home cooking kitchen counters and an air-conditioned, glazed cold kitchen allow guests to interact with the chefs and feel as if they are inside a personal kitchen. A separate coffee bar produces a wide range of coffees and provides a perfect location to read the newspaper over a cappuccino. Waiters and waitresses wear bohemian multi-patterned and vividly coloured outfits.

The building is now a light-filled, open-plan space inviting guests to walk in off the beach and hang out while the chefs are cooking. The thatch eaves have been raised to provide better views, low walls have been removed to allow guest to wander in and out of the space, and enlarged cut outs in the roof let in light over central arbours. Seating spills out from inside to under the palm trees close to the water. At night, the outdoor seating transforms into a Brazilian beach barbeque and fire pit area under the stars, fully embracing the gypset spirit.



Bottega

The Bottega Italian Restaurant & Wine Bar rejoices in vivacious colour – fiery reds and corals mingle with sandy pinks, yellows and bright blues - the colours of the Indian Ocean. Every detail has been considered for the table top, including modern glassware and brightly printed crockery, as well as the waitresses’ glamorous multi-colour dresses that contrast with the waiters’ simple white tunics embroidered with a dark ochre stripe. An herb wall freshly scents the air and provides delicious flavours for the cuisine, while an air-conditioned wine room creates the perfect venue for small group private dining.

Cowry Club

The existing, inward facing pool bar has been demolished and replaced with The Cowry Club, an organically shaped venue built with 360-degree views of the sea, pool, or back towards the lushly landscaped Heart of Kanuhura. Named after the local cream and black cowry shell that was once used as currency between regional traders, the bar celebrates the natural beauty of local materials and their colour palette.



A beaded ceiling canopy and beaded lampshades cast enchanting shadows at night, poufs pick up on the colours of the cowry shell and soft white sheers dress the columns and soften their appearance. The bar comes right to the edge of the pool, so guests can easily place their feet in the water while swinging on the feature swings. Bright green punches of colour in the cushions catch the luscious tone of the fronds of the palm trees, which the pool is built around. Lime-washed teak floors reflect the hue of the trees' bark. Here, as throughout the resort, solution-dyed acrylic fabrics are used on all outdoor pieces to resist weather and sunlight.

Kokaa Spa

Named after the all-white local butterfly, Kokaa in Maldivian, the spa has been re-created as a space full of grace and elegance, where one can emerge feeling refreshed and new. As elsewhere, the existing wood structure and floor have been lime washed to create a light, fresh feeling instead of the previous dark, heavy structure. The soothing palette of whites, soft lilac, silvers and aged gold is seen in the furniture, upholstery and fittings. The therapists' dress continues this narrative with linen sarongs in muted colours. Sporadic displays of delicate butterflies are a delightful sight in this peaceful retreat.





For little gypsetters

The kids club is designed with much the same values as the rest of Kanuhura, but for young adventurers. Vibrant colours and patterns begin with the encaustic tile floor and continue through the patterned drapes, rugs, and play areas. Fun and unexpected furniture mix with a unique outdoor activity area.



Dagas Restaurant

Located towards the furthest point of the island, this restaurant takes its name and its design muse from ancient Maldivian folklore. This tells of a fabled seafarer, Bodua Niyami Kalefanu, who travelled very close to the Dagas, the mythical tree at the end of the world, to find the great tuna fish and bring it back to the Maldives. This “end of the island” restaurant offers numerous intimate seating areas, all with unique features. From the indoor yakiniku grill tables, where guests can grill fish they caught earlier in the day, to the curved sofa and stool seating in the gardens under umbrellas, to the private dining platform overlooking the edge of the island, there is a place for everyone. The colour palette draws on the natural world, layering greens, pale browns and white in a way the makes each area seem to nest in its tropical surroundings.



Iru Beach Lounge

The new beach bar is the epitome of design for the free spirited, sophisticated and creative souls of gypsies. With a colour palette of sea and sand and patterned accents in tones inspired by the sea, from a bright green turquoise to a bold deep blue, the Iru Beach Lounge is full of barefoot chic style.

Curvaceous blue wicker rocking chairs, rough wood picnic benches, hand-carved tables and feature tents with hanging pendants and bohemian seating cushions create the perfectly edited collection of furnishings. The bar structure, a traditionally thatched hut with beaded swings, allows a perfect escape from the sun. Iru is the ultimate place to surrender to a laid-back day.

Take a Picnic or a Boat

The team has also designed woven picnic baskets and leather-clad storage trunks to ensure that guests can visit neighbouring island, Jenuhura, with all the accoutrements for a very civilised picnic on the beach. The Dhoni Boat is a unique venue where guests can enjoy oysters and champagne at sea while lounging on bohemian pillows made of vintage textiles in vibrant patterns.

Palm Houses

The bedrooms on the beach, the Palm Houses, have all benefitted from an extension to the entrance lobby giving uninterrupted views towards the ocean and from a colour palette inspired by the palms. The bedrooms flow onto the garden terrace outside with the bed centred on this outdoor view. The crisp white bed linen, white painted walls and lime-washed teak are juxtaposed with a rattan textured feature wall and vividly coloured upholstery on the poufs and cushions. An oversize abstract painting of palms adds further colour, and there are locally crafted furniture and objects. Most of the villas have been upgraded with private pools including private sun loungers and an outdoor dining area.



The bathroom flows from the inside vanity area with stone composite bathtub to an outdoor feature shower in the courtyard garden. The double vanity counter is in natural stone. Below, custom-designed storage trunks are made of teak inspired with nautical details. Simple and elegant, these rooms offer all the design details that make for a luxurious holiday stay.



Shell Houses

Raised over the Indian Ocean, the Shell Houses are truly for the sophisticated castaway. Similar in their interior details to the Palm Houses, their additional width means space for larger bedrooms and a separate social library area. Their bathrooms have indoor showers next to a floor opening, allowing guests to shower while watching the fish below. In the outdoor courtyard, a feature bath creates the perfect place to bathe under the stars. The Shell Houses have large terraces outside the bedroom with ocean views all the way to the far horizon and nets with large, fluffy cushions over the ocean. Coral colours are the accent.

Suites

The one, two and three-bedroom suites have additional features to the typical villas. Water Suites have infinity pools directly over the sea, while the Grand Beach and Duplex Villas have large, shared living quarters and extended-sized pools. Turquoise and blues provide a vibrant accent.



“The concept of luxury is changing,” reveals Inge. “Luxury is now about what you get to feel inside rather than what you have to show off. As designers, this means it’s our thought process that sparks these feelings, and that really excites me. So with Kanuhura, we loved translating the values that bring happiness to sophisticated, well-travelled Gypsetters into experiences designed to elevate their sophisticated, free-spirited souls.”



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About MUZA Lab

MUZA Lab is the highly-specialised studio founded by Inge Moore and Nathan Hutchins to create exceptional, unparalleled interior designs inspired by their heartfelt passion for discovering the legends, culture, colour and crafts that make every location special. With a focus dedicated exclusively to one-of-a-kind luxury projects around the globe, the team infuses each concept with thoughtful consideration and deep creativity to create moving designs that evoke memorable magic.

Current and recent work includes several Belmond projects: Andean Explorer luxury train, Peru; Copacabana Palace, Rio de Janeiro; two Afloat barges, France; Savute elephant lodge, Botswana; Villa San Michele, Florence; and Mount Nelson, Cape Town. Additional projects include Rocco Forte, Shanghai; Four Seasons, Kingdom Tower, Jeddah; Ananda resort, Goa; Six Senses, Tuscany; and Grosvenor House and Luxury Collection Park Towers, London. www.muzalab.com

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