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# THE DESIGN HOTELS™





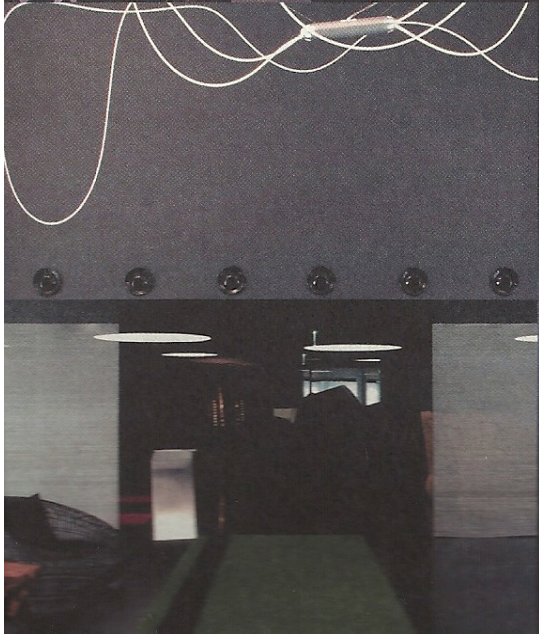


# BLACK & WHITE

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*Brilliantly conceived by Portugal's star interior designer Nini Andrade Silva  
and run by general manager Jorge Cosme, Fontana Park Hotel  
in Lisbon is a sophisticated game of light and shadow  
in a refurbished historic building.*









On the one hand, overlooking the verdant gardens from which it takes its name, Lisbon's Fontana Park Hotel is a fitting reflection of both the lush nature found in the nearby Fontana Park and the cosmopolitan, lively atmosphere of one of Europe's long-standing port cities. On the other, it's a beacon of modernity with a striking colour scheme and an avant-garde vibe.

Once an iron foundry, the building stood empty and neglected for a long, long time. But both nature and nurture were lodestars for Portuguese architect Francisco Aires Mateus, who achieved what Fontana Park's general manager, Jorge Cosme, proudly describes as "a combination of the modern and Lisbon's one hundred years of recent history" by preserving the original building's façade and romantic details.

Amongst the latter are distinctive doorframes crafted with curves in the style of Lisbon's beloved 25 de Abril Bridge. But hotel guests who visit the masterpiece that Mateus summoned from the former factory prefer to focus on the hotel's high-end modernist qualities, like the long, dark corridors, as well as its calm and gentle details, like the abundance of plant life and the soft pillows on oversize furnishings. "Fontana Park isn't a hotel for everyone," Cosme explains. "[With the black and white,] it's a full-on concept from A to Z, but the concept is simple. We just want the hotel to be a home for discerning people, modern people, young people and people who are young at heart."

This youthful allure derives from a fresh and friendly atmosphere that delightfully contrasts with the historical details and visual drama. It's a place in which décor and ambience are distilled to their essence, but

are not limited by abstract constraints of minimalism. The mind-bending effect is the brainchild of leading Portuguese interior designer and artist Nini Andrade Silva, who decided to look to nature's palette as inspiration for her sharp design concept.

With a colour scheme centred on black and white with touches of rich purple and green,

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JORGE  
COSME

**"THIS IS A COSMOPOLITAN HOTEL. IT COULD BE IN BARCELONA, IN SCANDINAVIA OR IN RUSSIA. PEOPLE WANT TO IDENTIFY WITH A GLOBAL FEELING."**

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Nini fully realises her ambition of bringing the elemental beauty of the real, outdoor Fontana Park inside the hotel building – where guests are invitingly met with glossy and glassy surfaces, smooth contours, peaceful restaurants serving both Japanese and Portuguese fare, and an outdoor garden lined in bamboo. Not to mention the rooms – open-plan, light-filled, ultrasmooth spaces with outsize beds and sweeping views of Lisbon through black-framed windows (a well-placed window even allows a view from the interior bathroom).

"The black and white idea came first," Nini says. One realises she's explaining the starting point of the hotel's chromatic concept as well as connecting her thinking as an interior designer with the creative process central to her work as an abstract artist. Her vibrant personality is an interesting contrast with her consistent love of the colour – or non-colour – black. But as she sits in the light-filled, white-hued restaurant Saldanha Mar, the designer confesses that she loves black less than the other colour that reigns over Fontana Park's overall scheme. "What is my favourite colour?" she asks herself musingly, almost humorously. "Well, it's white. I really like turquoise. I have always loved black. But it is definitely white." (Cosme, on the other hand, says he definitely favours black. Both, by the way, are wearing head-to-toe black.)

What about the green of the nearby parks? As an American art critic who once stayed a few nights in the hotel noted, "The missing colour has been reconcentrated in a thick green stripe of carpet leading from the door, like the mossy tinge of Lisbon's old buildings. It's as though the designers have used novel minimalist strategies to refract Lisbon out into the traditional elements of its own spectrum." The blacks provide warmth and depth, while polished black-and-white floors might remind a few travellers of Lisbon's Moorish tiling. At the same time there's the hotel's generous vegetation, and there's even a wall of water in the outdoor garden. "I wanted green trees and big pictures of trees; and then you have all these trees in the restaurant," explains Nini, offering a *raison d'être* for century-old bonsai trees adorning the sun-soaked Bonsai restaurant. The swathes of green and dashes of purple manage to brilliantly ground it all. »







