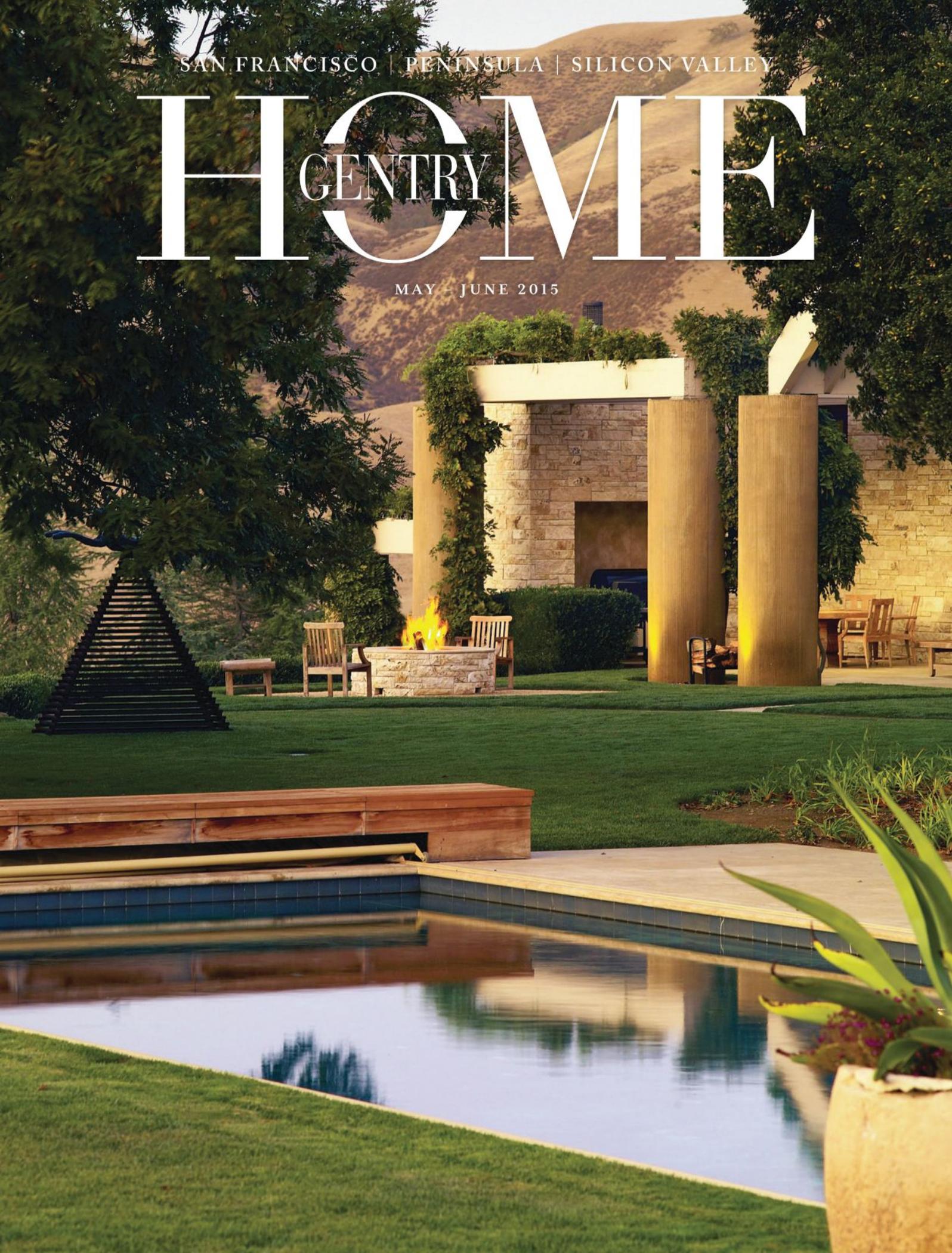


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What's NUO?

One of the world's most luxurious hotels is about to be unveiled in Beijing.

BY CORRINE E. MEHIGAN

California-based Hirsch Bedner Associates (HBA) is a recognized global leader in interior design. With offices in Santa Monica, San Francisco, and 18 major cities around the world, HBA's reach is nothing short of extraordinary. They are the firm responsible for such award-winning resorts and hotels as the Four Seasons Seychelles, Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise, The Alpina Gstaad, The St. Regis Rome, and the Hotel Alfonso XIII in Seville, amongst others. HBA's latest triumph is the soon-to-be opened NUO in Beijing.

Designed by HBA's Co-CEO Ian Carr, the NUO Beijing project aims to give luxury a new dimension with a refined Chinese sensibility. The hotel will be a reflection of Chinese heritage and culture—modern, yet rooted in tradition, with a heavy focus on contemporary Chinese art. The 28-story property will offer a five-star modern experience while paying homage to China's celebrated era of scholarly pursuits. Carr explains, “NUO is an important project for HBA, not only for its unique, high-profile design, but as the flagship hotel for the NUO brand. Being involved in developing the hotel's distinct ‘look’ was a very exciting process and experience. It stretched our team's creativity to →



destination design



another level and enlivened our imagination in the most rewarding way. This is 21st-century luxury at its best, luxury *from China for China.*”

The most standout feature of the property is a jaw-dropping lobby filled with up-lit seven-foot-tall blue and white Ming-style vases that are intricately hand painted, flanking a large sculpture centerpiece by famed contemporary artist Zheng Fanzhi. Above these monumental pieces is a light installation that spans the ceiling and can project multiple images at a time. The result is a bold and dramatic space that serves as the signature element of the hotel. “The balance has to be there for the guest to participate in the design, but also to retire from the design,” stresses Carr. “This important space is further enhanced and complemented with more quiet gestures, such as the library lounges and retiring corners.” →

NUO’s guestrooms are uniquely contemporary. “For Nuo, celebrating Chinese culture means looking forward. Our civilization is an endless source of inspiration to building our future,” says Ian Carr. With Zeng Fanzhi as the art consultant, each piece of art at NUO has been carefully selected and reflects a dimension of Chinese culture, be it traditional or emerging.

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NUO's first property in Beijing uses an original theme dubbed "New Ming" across the hotel. Taking its cues from the prosperous Ming dynasty, it gives a unique flair to the place that is sophisticated and contemporary. More than simply décor, "New Ming" is a spirit that can be felt through the whole experience, from the tea pavilion to the style of service.

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The property's guestrooms include furniture schemes that evoke an updated twist on Ming style. The guestroom experience is based around the very simple premise of the Chinese tea ceremony. As Carr points out, "Arriving in the room and participating in the presentation and consumption of the Chinese teas is a process that roots the guest into the many aspects of the room. This interaction between guest and design, with cultural practice intertwined, was a real fundamental asset of what we designed. Design creates the soul of this hotel; it makes it a special place to be. That innate feeling of belonging is what we wanted to achieve to help guests feel at ease with the elements. Architectural elements are added and subtracted over the years, but the feeling of belonging is intrinsically what NUO is about. The design elements and concepts are all there to deliver that one exceptional feeling." ♦

Drawing inspiration from China's 5,000 years of rich heritage celebrating traditional Chinese culture, NUO Beijing takes its cues from the prosperous Ming dynasty. HBA designers were tasked with creating luxury spa and dining areas that are a distinct reflection of Chinese heritage and culture, being modern yet rooted in tradition with a heavy focus on contemporary Chinese art.