

Rosewood Hotel
São Paulo, Brazil



In the heart of São Paulo's Cidade Matarazzo complex, on the site of a former maternity hospital, Rosewood has opened its first Brazilian location, crafted by a supergroup of designers that included Jean Nouvel, Philippe Starck, and Brazilian lighting designers, **LD Studio**.

To mark the importance of its first destination in Brazil, luxury hotel brand Rosewood assembled a “supergroup” of designers for its São Paulo location, fully opened in late 2024.

From architectural legends Jean Nouvel, Phillippe Starck and Rudy Riciotti to leading Brazilian lighting designers Monica Luz Lobo and Daniele Valle, and their practice, LD Studio, in collaboration with lighting designer Orlando Marques and his team from OMstudio Lighting, Rosewood aspired from the outset to create something special for São Paulo.

Spearheaded by entrepreneur Alex Allard, the hotel is situated in a former hospital – Hospital e Maternidade Umberto I – and is the centrepiece of Cidade Matarazzo, a complex of elegantly preserved buildings from the 20th century that has been transformed into a 320,000sqft mixed-use lifestyle hub.

Central to the design ambition for the hotel was the idea of honouring the rich history of Brazil, while also looking to a more sustainable future. This is characterised by the introduction of a striking new vertical garden tower, designed by Nouvel, that sits amidst lush greenery and beautiful gardens.

The tower houses more than 160 guest rooms and 100 purchasable suites, while the hotel also includes six, diverse dining restaurants, a jazz bar, and leisure amenities.

Monica Luz Lobo, Founder and Creative Director of LD Studio, reflects on her first meeting with Allard, where she discovered the true scope and ambition for this project: “We first heard of this project from an architect, Paula Aoki, that we had worked with on another big hotel project. She arranged a meeting for us with Alex Allard, and advised that this project would be a huge challenge, involving a visionary who believes that nothing is impossible, and a fantastic team of designers like Phillippe Starck and Jean Nouvel. The architect believed that we could face this challenge.”

“Mr Allard is a brilliant mind, and a romantic soul who has the strong belief that you should follow your heart for everything, and accept nothing but your soul in a project. In our first meeting, for him to know if he wanted to hire us, a true connection had to be made, and we made a deal that we would search for excellence on every detail and move mountains to reach his vision. He also gave us one very special piece of advice: fight for your design; do not let commercial people restrain what is important to the project.”

Having the backing of such a passionate and supportive creative director, and collaborating with architects and interior designers of such renown meant that developing a lighting concept to match the grandeur of the hotel was a surprisingly straightforward task. “We had the luck of having such a dreamer as Mr Allard as creative director, and a master of storytelling like Starck thinking about all the spaces,”

Lobo continues: “Starck always creates a story to each space, creating a character, a storyboard, and thinking on every detail like in a movie. So, it wasn’t difficult to enter into this fantastic world and translate that into light compositions.”

As a brand, the Rosewood Hotel Group is known for its “Sense of Place” philosophy, through which the character and essence of a locale is woven into the design language and identity of the hotel. In keeping with this philosophy, the interior design team collaborated with a group of 57 Brazilian artists and artisans, who were approached by Allard’s team to treat the hotel as a vast art project. Following the principle that the works must respect the past while looking to the future, the project produced more than 450 works of art across the hotel, from graffiti-inspired paintings to carpets threaded with local wildlife motifs.

Lobo explained how the lighting design approach echoed the Rosewood Group’s philosophy: “Each space has its own story to tell. With the owner’s support, by saying ‘do your best to bring this fantastic world to life’, we conducted a large-scale search for local products and manufacturers that could develop lighting tools to make our ideas come true. This was a big commitment for the project: to use local manufacturers where possible, foster local industry, and aim towards sustainability. The majority of the lighting fixtures have been developed or adapted specially for this project.





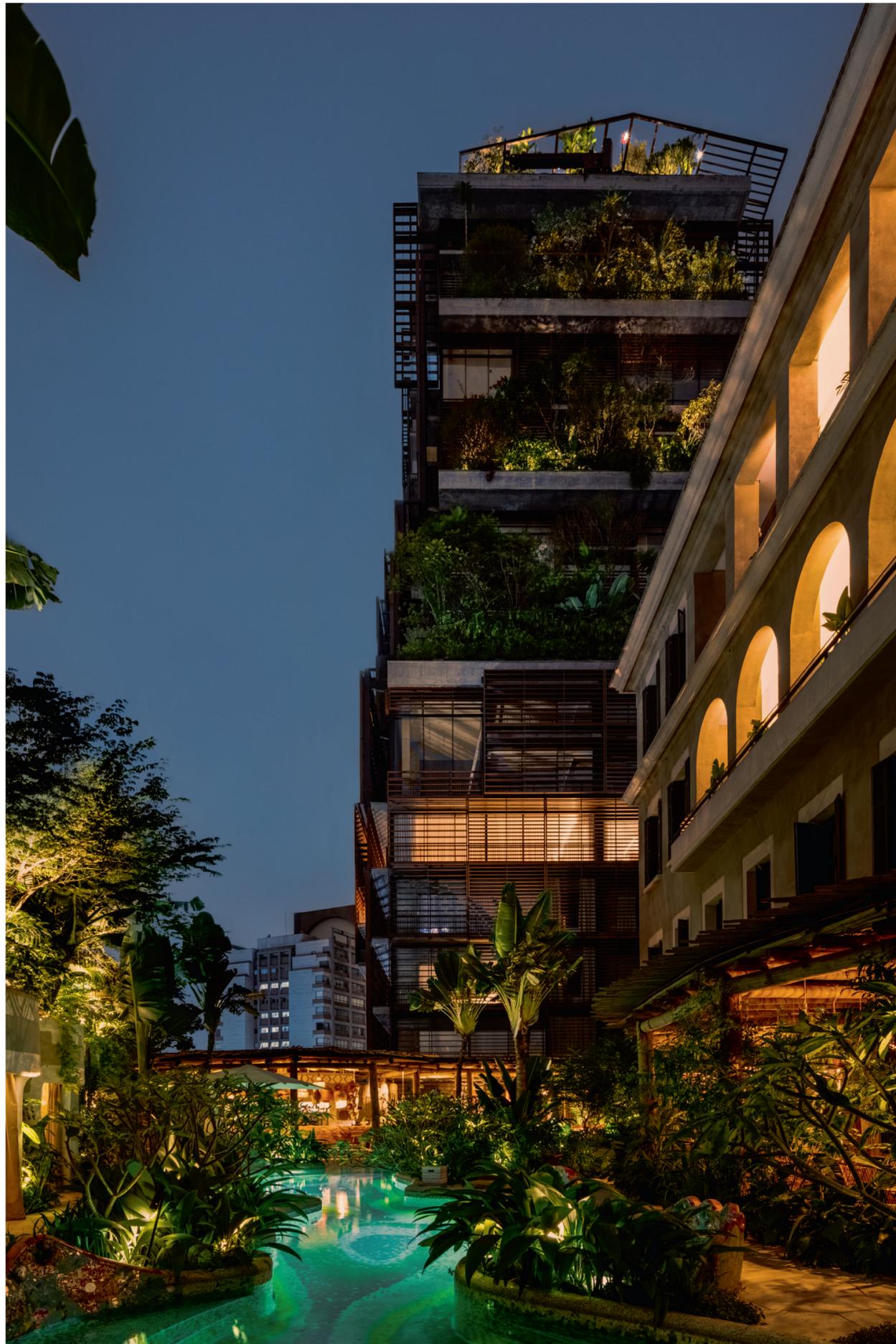
“Rosewood relied on the vision of the creative director to deliver a whole new, tropical, fantastic experience that celebrates diversity, design and art. The Rosewood brand was a reinforcement of excellence and attention to detail – nothing but perfection was accepted. We counted on great partnerships with manufacturers to achieve the special, right tools, optics, and aesthetics that match the incredible vision and world created.” While the exterior of the hotel has been transformed thanks to the vast, 328ft vertical garden tower covered in wood and wrapped in 10,000 trees – envisioned as a symbol of São Paulo’s future – the interiors were designed to reflect the bold aesthetic of Philippe Starck, mixing modernity with the natural landscape and earthy palette of Brazil. The goal, Starck has said, was to create an island paradise in the middle of the city, that “becomes the centre of life in the city”. The lighting design is an extension of this, honouring the site’s former life as a hospital, while complementing the bold new interiors. Lobo adds: “A great deal of charm of this project was its history – the old buildings give personality, and a sense of time and space.” “We used warm tones of light, as we wanted to bring in a time from the past, like the golden time of the hospital, and Count Matarazzo’s apogee. Uplights and general light was set at 2400K, with

accent and direct light at 2700K. We searched for the essential and precise intensities, calculating with care and diligence all of the specs, as well as using controls to balance it.”

“We took a delicate approach to the light composition, emphasising the transparencies and bringing life to the buildings. We pursued the essential, putting light only on what really gives meaning to this vision. For instance, there is only façade lighting on the chapel, as it has direct access to the street and is free to the public. It was tricky – we search for less when using light, but look for every detail that is important to highlight. It is a delicate balance.”

This delicate balance also came to the fore when the designers looked to pair aesthetics with functionality throughout the hotel. “It is all about layers,” Lobo adds. “As we searched for a beautiful transparency from the interior spaces to the façades, layering generous diffuse and indirect light on the ceiling and walls, with highlights and accents on special features, as well as using decorative fixtures to add a sense of scale and personality was key. All of that together provided a luxury experience for guests, and creates a great look from the outside.”

The lighting designers used this layering approach throughout the hotel, from the guest rooms to high-traffic areas, and more intimate spaces such



as the restaurants and spa, as they believed such an approach was “key to be able to achieve the needs of visual comfort”, while enhancing the overall, sophisticated experience.

Alongside the visual needs of patrons, the lighting design also had to consider the artwork collection on display throughout the hotel. However, due to the unique nature of each piece, there was not a “one size fits all” approach, as Lobo explains. “There is no simple answer, every inch of this hotel is special. Every room has design innovations and delicate secrets. For example, in the guest rooms, one of the beautiful wooden wall panels is a door that, when opened, a sensor switches on an accent light that highlights the artwork hidden inside. Nothing in this project is taken for granted. As Mr Allard says, you can come back to the hotel several times and discover a new nuance that you hadn’t seen before.”

Although the support of a “visionary” creative director may be a dream to many, Lobo adds that the commitment to excel in every approach and detail was one of the biggest challenges in the project. “However, we overcame these challenges by putting our hearts into every move, following Mr Allard’s inspiration that this is an exceptional project, something never experienced before. Besides the usual challenges faced on time constraints and budget, we are happy to look back on it now and say that the result met the intentions and thoughts.”

The Rosewood São Paulo has been a lengthy project for LD Studio and OMstudio Lighting – from joining the project in 2016, the first spaces opened at the end of 2022, following “a lot of planning, nurturing, reviewing, and endurance”. While spaces like the spa and fitness centre and some private

owned apartments opened last year, the lighting designers are still working at the complex.

Reflecting on her experience, Lobo describes the hotel as “a huge success, and a reference on well-thought luxury”.

“It is a complex and meaningful space, where light brings soul, and enhances the overall experience. It is an extraordinary environment, filled with meaning, stories, art, and diversity, and something that we are proud to have been a part of.”

“It was a learning process, but one that we took strength from to excel ourselves. One very special aspect of the experience was the exercise of collaboration at the broad spectrum of the concept; beginning with LD Studio’s team, and our special collaboration with OMstudio Lighting, based in São Paulo. We knew from the beginning that it would be crucial to have a local presence, and so the collaboration with OMstudio was key. “In a broader sense, the collaboration expanded with all other disciplines – mainly with Mr Allard’s team. It was key that together, we had more strength to face all challenges. The trust and bond that we achieved allowed us to endure and to thrive.”

www.ldstudio.com.br
www.omstudio.lighting

Client: Boulevard Matarazzo, Rosewood Hotels
Lighting Design: Monica Luz Lobo, Daniele Valle; LD Studio, Brazil; Orlando Marques; OMstudio Lighting, Brazil
Lighting Design Team: Alessandro Eger, Ana Paula Laronga, Caio Firmino, Débora Torii, Fernanda Leite, Ivone Szabó, Julien Caquineau, Pedro Portela
Architects: Ateliers Jean Nouvel, France; Rudy Ricciotti, France; Spo!, Brazil; Triptyque, Brazil
Interior Design: Philippe Starck, France
AoR: Atelier De France, Brazil
Lighting Specified: Alfalux, Cia da Iluminação, Erco, Flos, Geoceramica, IGuzzini, Ingo Maurer, Interpam, Itaim Iluminação, Kawa, Ketra, LEDProfiles, LedPlus, Ledvance, Lemca, LightDesign + Exporlux, Lightsource, Lumicenter, Lumini, Lumisheet, Luxion, Osvaldo Mattos.
Photography: Andrés Otero, Pedro Mascaró