

# Martian Aspirations

Text / Shonquis Moreno Images / Courtesy of MAD Architects

Mars has been scoured by a solar wind for billions of years, its thin atmosphere sputtering away past its two moons to dissipate into the cosmos. The planet's climate is usually frigid, swept incessantly by dust storms and prone to carbon dioxide blizzards in the winter, but can also be scalding. As unappealing as this may sound, China's National Space Administration has announced plans to launch its first mission to Mars in 2020, giving new reasons for space enthusiasts to dream.

Indeed, galactic dreams were the inspiration behind the MAD Martian Collection of futuristic furniture by Ma Yansong, founder and principal of Beijing's MAD Architects. Fascinated by the history and material language of sci-fi, Ma says: 'I enjoyed creating a hybrid condition for this fictitious interior space that highlighted nostalgia for Earth and a reflection of the Martian environment.'

A former Zaha Hadid staffer who launched his own studio in 2004, Ma has been designing work that isn't afraid of curves: residential towers, master plans, museums, opera houses and hotels like the slinky Sheraton Huzhou Hot Spring Resort, a horseshoe-shaped building that rises from a lake, illuminated by 19,300 programmable LEDs. Widely recognised as one of the world's most creative thinkers, Ma has a large office in Beijing, another in Los Angeles and a New York City outpost in the works.

Through his new Martian Collection, Ma imagines what the Chinese colonisation of Mars might look like. Produced in collaboration with Gallery ALL, the series consists of four molten-looking pieces: a taffy-like candelabra cast in bronze or stainless steel that appears to be fixed in flux, a voluptuous leather-upholstered aluminium chaise longue, a melting console or dining table also in aluminium, and a pendant light that resembles the reflection of a rugged landscape, made of polyurethane and bronze. The pieces were produced using a combination of traditional and cutting-edge methods that bring together CNC milling, 3D printing and sophisticated mould making by Chinese craftspeople, as well as dextrous hand polishing of complex undulating surfaces.

The series is an expression of the designer's Shanshui City design philosophy, a manifesto published two years ago by Lars Müller in a book designed by Kenya Hara. Shanshui City posits the need for architects to imagine a new ideal for cities of tomorrow: 'My philosophy is an ideal regarding future human habitats,' explains Ma. 'The futuristic design for the Martian Collection holds true to this philosophy, which delineates a new ideal for the city of the future, to gradually construct an urban environment that embodies both the convenience of the modern city and the ancient Eastern affinity for the natural world.'

Perhaps we don't need those forlorn colonies in butterscotch-hued worlds of outer space, after all.

The new MAD Martian furniture collection developed by architect Ma Yansong, founder of MAD Architects, and commissioned by Gallery ALL alludes to extraterrestrial environments through its contoured forms

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The collection's dining table (top) and chaise longue with upholstered leather (bottom) are made from CNC-ed aluminium and come in a variety of finishes

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