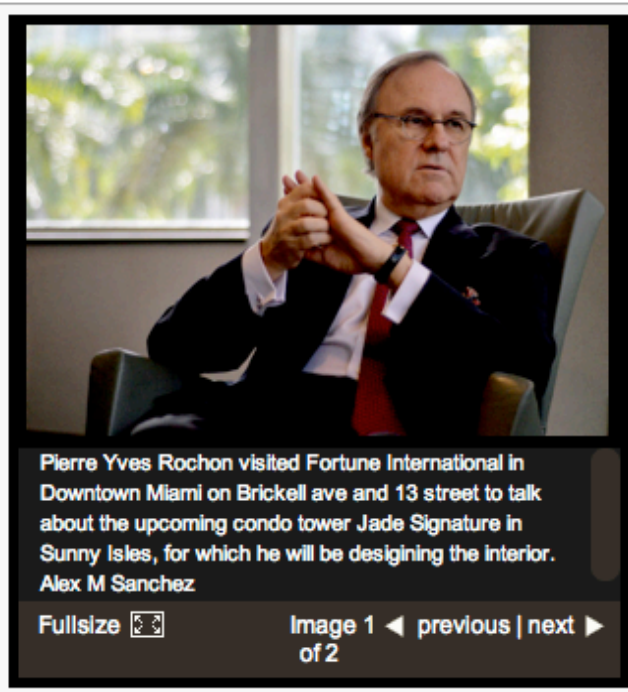


# Miami Herald Lunch With Lydia

## A Parisian has designs on Miami Like 0



BY LYDIA MARTIN

Among projects by famed French interior designer Pierre-Yves Rochon are an impressive collection of five-star hotels around the world. They include some of the most iconic and historic, from Four Seasons to Ritz-Carltons to Sofitels to Peninsulas. He also has dreamed up restaurant interiors befitting some of the world's biggest culinary stars, such as Joel Robuchon, Alain Ducasse, Paul Bocuse.

Now he's bringing his imprint to Sunny Isles with his latest project, the beachfront, 57-story Jade Signature. It was designed by the renowned Swiss architecture firm Herzog & De Meuron, which is behind the sleek new home for the Perez Art Museum Miami on the edge of Biscayne Bay, now within months of completion; the acclaimed stark and angular parking garage at 1111 Lincoln Rd., plus landmarks such as the Tate Modern in

London, the "bird's nest" Beijing National Stadium and the CaixaForum art gallery in Madrid with its towering vertical garden.

"The first thing is the architecture. It is important to study it very carefully because what I do is to translate the outside inside," says the always dapper Rochon, who even on a sweltering Miami morning wears a signature, dark navy pinstripe suit and tie, round-framed glasses offsetting neat grey hair.

"The developer for Jade Signature has chosen very famous contemporary architects. The building has of course a modern feel, with inspiration from the 1960s and 1970s. It has a bit of the style of [late] Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer. For me, the challenge is always to design according to the building and according to the city. I don't believe in being ego first. I respect what is there."

Rochon, amiable and softspoken, designed impeccably classic interiors for the Four Seasons in Florence, in a former 15th century palazzo. He redid the historic Four Seasons Georges V in Paris; the very British, legendary Savoy London; the Shangri-La Hotel in Paris, originally built in 1891 for Prince Roland Bonaparte.

What inspires him about the decidedly nonhistoric strip of standard-issue glass towers along the beach on Sunny Isles?

"For me, all of Miami is white. The incredible light is one of the most significant characteristics of the city. It is especially obvious when you come from a country with not too much sun. After the white, there is the blue of the ocean. And then the green of the tropical landscape."

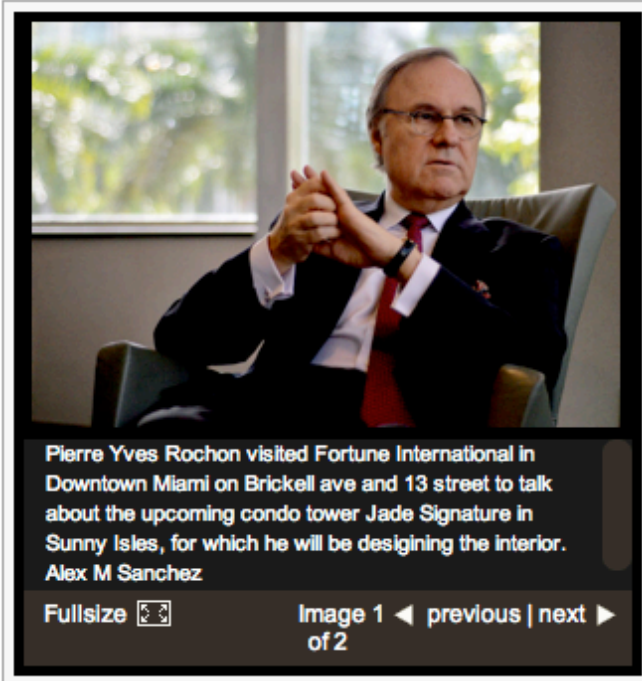
He'll incorporate the blues and the greens. "But the queen of the colors will be white," he says. "White marble, white terrazzo. These will also bring the element of cool, which in a place as hot as Miami, you should have. When people arrive from Latin America, Europe, wherever they come from in the world, they should feel like they are on holiday. That's what we're trying to translate, too. That kind of lightness."

With the kind of star power the project has behind it, it's no wonder units at Jade Signature, by Miami developer Edgardo Defortuna, are priced at a stratospheric \$2 million to \$25 million. Which means this is one more sexy glass tower off limits to most locals with Miami-sized salaries and tailor-made for monied globetrotters who'll hang out here just a few weeks out of the year. But never mind about that.

Rochon is internationally known for designs that are always elegant, always warm, always harmoniously balanced between the contemporary and the classical.

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In addition the general elements in the lobby, other common areas and the units themselves, he'll also be designing some of the fixtures and furnishings for Jade Signature. For those, he says he intends on an eclectic feel, drawing from different periods from the 1930s to the 1970s.

"We will include some vintage pieces. It's interesting that we call something that is more than 60 years old modern, but more than modern, some of these designs feel still contemporary."

While Rochon is the master of adopting the classical for the modern age, he doesn't believe that the often heavier, more ornate style always works well in the context of a fresh city like Miami. And don't get him started about all the faux Mediterranean architecture he has spied around

South Florida.

"Interpretations can be good. But copies are always terrible. If you live in Europe — in France, in Italy, in Spain — you know certain proportions by heart. You live with them every day. I live in a very classical apartment in Paris. The streets around are filled with classical buildings. Immediately, I can feel what it classical. The same with the Spanish style. It can make sense in Miami because like Spain there is the sun here. And there are many people who come from Latin American where there is Spanish architecture. ... When you play the piano, you need to play the classical first. You need to have a base."

Rochon says he hopes to spend more time in town, get to know a city he says feels "very European." So far he has been charmed by South Beach. The Florida Keys, not so much.

"I love the Art Deco. The French love the Art Deco. It is wonderful that so much of it has been preserved. And I love the pastel colors. They give a great impression."

But the Keys?

"I spent only a little bit of time. It can be beautiful. Or it can be ugly. Sometimes you can feel like you are in a private paradise. But the rest can be tacky. And poor. I was surprised."

Rochon won't offer his assessment of the endless new glass towers encroaching on the Greater Miami skyline. "I'd have to spend more time and really see what is here," he says.

But he's troubled by the proliferation of the same style across the globe.

"It used to be that in America, people wore jeans, but in Europe they did not. Now everyone wears the same jeans, in Europe, in the Middle East, everywhere. I like jeans. But I don't like to see them everywhere. You turn on the TV in any part of the world and you see the same game show. Just the language is different. Also, everywhere you go, you see the same glass boxes now. Globalization is good for some things but not for everything. Cities start to lose their identity."

So what if Rochon wound up spending more quality time in that white, wet heat of Miami? Would he consider putting aside some of the suits and ties in favor of lighter, perhaps less formal business wear? In the summer, anyway?

"One of the privileges of getting old is that you can do what you want. In the old days, people showered more than once a day. If I lived here, I would shower and change three times a day, but I would still wear my suits and I wouldn't care if it's not what people think I should be wearing."