

THING OF BEAUTY | RICHARD LORD

The intriguing, visually ravishing neo-noir mystery *Mulholland Drive* (2001) is seen as director David Lynch's masterpiece. On the surface the story of an aspiring actress' relationship with a mysterious amnesiac woman whose past they try to piece together, it confounds viewers with its surrealistic mise en scène, dangling plot threads and unexplained actions, and is open to numerous interpretations, none of them entirely satisfying. Hong Kong-born architect and interior designer Alexander Wong, who has designed homes for film stars such as Jackie Chan and Michael Wong Man-tak, explains how the film changed his life.

I first saw *Mulholland Drive* around the time I was starting my own business, Alexander Wong Architects, in 2001. It's like the work of (American director Stanley) Kubrick – the film is so many different things. The 21st century is like that – everything's open to interpretation, and everything has multiple levels and meanings. This applies across all disciplines – not just film and architecture, but also science, journalism and fiction. With *Mulholland Drive*, you can go back and see something new every time.

With this film, David Lynch changed the way filmmakers approached narrative, lighting, camerawork, set design, editing, costume and make-up. It's a culmination of all of his movies and like a punctuation mark for the great films of the 20th century.

Mulholland Drive is a whodunnit on the surface, but a warped one. It's like a shape-shifter – just when you think you've understood it, you realise you haven't.

What we do as architects doesn't have to be about a space or a building; it's an experience – a mystical journey. You can't explain it. You have to experience it. Architecture is like film in that everyone will have their own interpretation.

We started designing cinemas in

2007 and have done more than 20 in mainland China and Hong Kong, including UA iSquare (in Tsim Sha Tsui) and Cinema City, Langham Place (Mong Kok).

Cinema also offers a mystical journey – you have to travel to it for it to have any effect; you can't describe it in words. Cinema is not as relevant and powerful as it used to be. You can't just tell people to watch movies – you have to create a sense of community for the cinema, and a sense of belonging and loyalty.

People can't relate to architecture, so for us everything is personal, very much like *Mulholland Drive*. And this film covers a lot of ground: Hollywood, the way we perceive and interpret reality, the way we perceive happiness, and what we think is good and what's bad.



Alexander Wong