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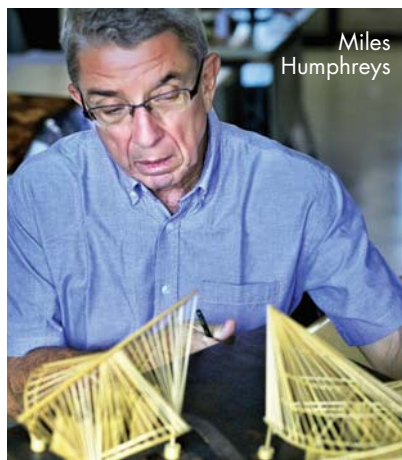
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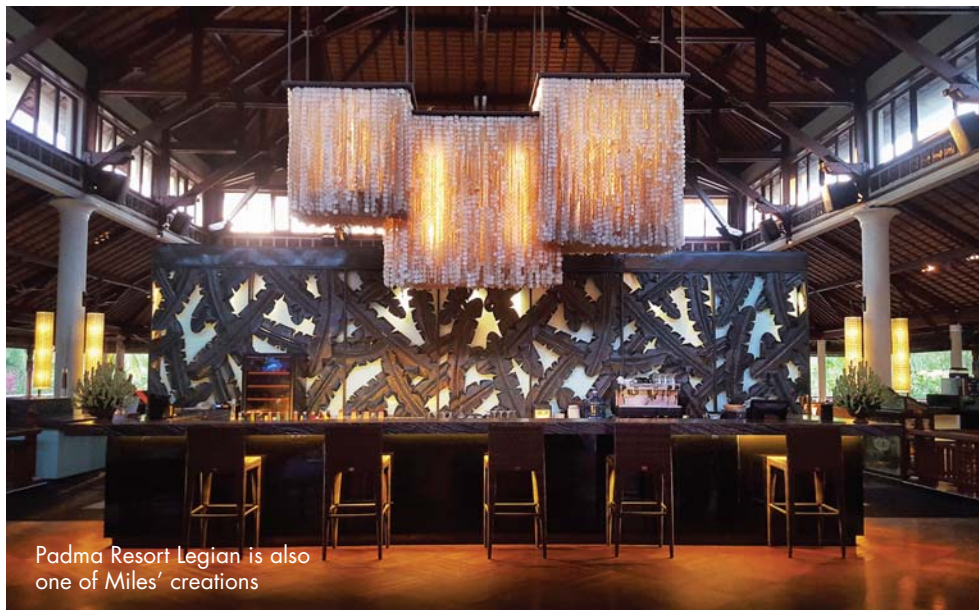
# The Beautiful Mind

MEET THE BRAIN BEHIND THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NUMBER OF FIVE-STAR RESORTS IN BALI...



Miles Humphreys

He was only a kid when he started to visit construction sites, a hobby that continued until he was in university. Then life took him around the world until finally he was sent to Bali to help reactivate an Australia-based company he was working for at that time, Grounds Kent Architect. Three years later, Miles Humphreys decided to start his own business. And that's when everything started to roll like a snowball as he became one of the



Padma Resort Legian is also one of Miles' creations

most wanted architects to design five-star resorts in Bali – Mandapa, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve, Padma Ubud and The Oberoi to name a few – and around the world in Seychelles, Costa Rica, and more. To Bali & Beyond (BB), New Zealander Miles Humphreys (MH) talks about his passion for architecture.

**BB: You've built homes with your dad since you were a kid. Could you tell us a little bit more about it?**

MH: It was a pretty beautiful memory. Truth be told I wanted to be a farmer in New Zealand, but my father who had farming experience said, "Don't do it." Being a farmer is hard and unpredictable. He had been a contractor in Auckland and my grandfather was a master builder. So when I was eleven years old I started working building houses, and as I went through school and university I went to work on construction sites to get money

for the next term. By the time I was in university, I already know how things went together. For instance, drawings can really look good on paper but then the contractors will say, "Tell me how that's going to work." Drawing is one thing but getting the workers to actually make it into a reality is another skill that you only get through experience. My dad is also a perfectionist, so I learned a lot about quality too.

**BB: Has it always been your dream to work in Bali and build five-star resorts?**

MH: No, actually I never targeted Bali let alone dreamt of living here. I think it's a progression in life. I've worked as far north as the Arctic Circle and as far south as South Africa, as well as across Europe and Australia. But it's the tropical environment of Bali that I like – we don't have to deal with extreme weather. Here, all you have to do is

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MILES HUMPHREYS COLLECTION

keep away from the sun and rain all year. And of course Indonesia has so many artistic layers and heritage, and the architecture in Bali is really rich and tangible.

**BB: Do you have a signature touch in each of your designs?**

MH: No, I don't. As an architect, you process what the client wants. When a client comes to me, I want to understand, interpret, filter and start to manifest what's in their mind, and hopefully more than what is in their mind. For instance, we are currently working on a bamboo resort on a private island – it's made out of thousands of cubic meters of bamboo and I have to engage with a bamboo architecture specialist in Bali for this project. We have to be flexible enough so we can take on new projects.

**BB: How do you find new innovations and inspiration?**

MH: That's also a challenge. I have to feel it. It's not an automatic process. I have to get the masterplan – that's the key to building resorts. The site is often the driver. I have to

feel the chemistry with the site and the clients too as we are constructing a building that will last for years hopefully, so all aspects should work. To me, design is like an evolution. For instance, when we were appointed to design Mandapa, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve, we asked for some guidelines about the brand. The only guideline they gave is that the finished product should be on the cover of every magazine. So I guess I really wanted to pay tribute to what I have experienced in Bali up until then and to develop something really eclectic, look handmade and tailor-made but actually designed by many people. Inspiration is an evolutionary process.

**BB: All your staff is local. Is this your way of giving back to the community?**

MH: I used to say to them that my idea is to bring them up to a level so one day they will come to me and say, "I'm leaving, I'm opening up my own business." But they never did. For me, the giving back is giving them the skillset and experience, and pushing them. I can't be at

all the sites at one time. We have to address the issues, and if you delegate, you have to give them responsibility and support them as well. There are so many talents in Indonesia and the dedication they give to you and themselves and how they work together is remarkable.

**BB: What does it take to be a dedicated architect?**

MH: Just try. There's no formula or recipe. I've been set to design huge projects that didn't get built, but I always think, "Yes, I'll try. I'll give it a go." So don't be scared. And get to know the basics and what happens from under the ground. Go to sites and pester your employer, even on the weekends when you're not working, just to see how everything comes together. And don't think just because you have a computer, you'll be a wizard. It's just a tool to help you get it right. It's the experience that counts, a real life situation. You have to see it from the day they hit the ground to the day they put the key on the door.

**BB: What are your next projects?**

MH: We've been asked to reinvent two hotels, one is already operating and another one is still unfinished. We did a masterplan for a lovely piece of land in an area called Pujung. And also beachwalk II that will be home to more retail outlets. As for outside Indonesia, we have a project in Japan. ■

**By Risty Nurraisa**

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