



Going the Extra Miles

Born in Auckland, **Miles Humphreys** is no stranger to architecture. By the time he reached boyhood, he was already building homes to help his father, a master builder for their family and friends. Academic was never Miles' strong suit. He was one of the last two names to be admitted to Auckland's only university that offers an architectural degree in that period. But as soon as he graduated, there was never a time where he wasn't working as a designer.

PHOTO BY Will Wiriawan & Miles Humphreys Doc.



At the time, Perth-based Grounds Kent Architects' was in the middle of a pitch that could reactivate their Bali presence. Miles was designing car showrooms and Industrial establishments in Perth when he was eventually tapped to run their Bali operations in 2004. In three short years, he spearheaded a team that completed luxury resorts in Bali and Thailand, among them, the Nusa Dua Golf Resort, Sentosa Villas Seminyak and St. Regis Resort.

With those portfolio under his belt, he went solo and Bali Anugrah Dewata Architects was born. **Will Wiriawan** speaks to him about his recent two projects featured this issue and what makes him tick.

What was the real challenge in designing a site like Mandapa, a Ritz Carlton Reserve?

Mandapa was really challenging in many accounts. I was not the first choice, nor I was on the Ritz-Carlton's radar. Peter Muller was first approached for his work with the Amandari. His kind commendation and the owner's generous support lead us to where we are now. The original site was basically a random forest with active rice paddies at the lower side. Once it was tended, the rice field with the valley surrounding it was showing its true potential, regardless of the many challenges lying ahead.

How far was the final result from the original project brief? Were there any course-changing limitation that took your original design to a completely different direction?

GOING FOR THE EXTRA MILES
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

- Mandapa's draft 3D view of the 1 bedroom villa
- Mandapa's draft 3D modelling of the main building and piazza entrance
- Mandapa's bird eye view across from the other side of the Ayung river

When we got the brief, it resembled many other brief of its kind — certain numbers of keys and budget — basically it would have manifested as a carpet-bombing the site with villas. When we did our initial

presentation, we basically gave them that, like any other competent architect would do. However, I strongly believed that just blindly following that objective would not honor the true potential of the site. It had that magical factor in it, and such master plan would destroy it. So we pushed to preserve the majority of the rice field, and came up with a much more emphatic master plan that is

basically the Mandapa that you see today. As for technical challenge, our design was pretty much true to form. There was not any major limitation that rendered it to a different direction.

There is a certain familiarity in Mandapa's design language, but also some fresh visual cues; it is identifiable, but it's not that obvious to an untrained eyes, is that by design?

When I asked the design rep from Ritz-Carlton what makes a Ritz-Carlton Reserve property different than the rest, he simply stated "Should be on the cover of every magazine!" The site itself carries most of that weight, so I need to make sure we did not bury that treasure with some over-designed super plan. Our approach since the beginning has been to undertone the design part, so that the



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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT
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Padma Ubud's 3D bird eye view
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Padma Ubud's 3D pool bar

surrounding nature becomes the artwork. I wanted it to look that it has been there forever, but for every visit it will render some new experience. That's why we build a piazza as the grand entrance, which is basically a static empty space enclosed by a terracotta colonnade. We also designed the Pandawa, the main lobby area, to be a sort of a neutral zone for incoming and outgoing guests, where expectations, and imaginations may get a reset from the bustling village life around Mandapa. We also wanted to generate an eclectic and handcrafted feel to the Mandapa Village and this was achieved in large by designing many different types of building materials and building styles. So I guess in short, we tried to pay homage to the natural beauty of the site and to ensure that the guest experience remains as exotic and as authentic as possible.

You also designed Padma Ubud in Puhu Village, also featured in this issue, almost at the same time with the Mandapa, how did you and your team manage to maintain clarity, despite the possible creative conflict(s) between them?

Our clarity was maintained through the different dynamics of our clients; each sites and the briefs. As such there was no confusion in the design delivery — in fact there were more mutual benefits that we could cross-fertilize on each project especially related to materials that were relevant to the Ubud region.



What requirements did Padma have during the planning stage, and how much were you able to incorporate into your design?

Initially, the client wanted us to generate a suite-only hotel but further study proved this would not be viable. However, he still wanted to maintain a good room size and achieve a 5-star resort that offered about 149 keys that included 5-6 suites. With this in mind we recommended to keep the rooms not only in a use block-style format for ease of construction and operation but also to retain in an uncompromised fashion the beautiful natural landscape that made up this magnificent site.

As an experienced architect, how do you find Bali as a destination, and as a subject of design?

I came to know Bali as a “crucible

of design” on so many different levels; be in architecture; jewelry; fashion, etc, and I've been fortunate to be able to setup a design practice here with so many talented people that allow us to tap into this amazing resources. All of my staffs are from Indonesia, and I am still amazed by how creative and diligent they are. Bali is an island blessed with a rich and vibrant culture set in a natural beauty, and it's not difficult to draw inspiration from if you know where to look.

What's next for you and your team?

Having determined that we offer a carefully tailored-made design service to the high end of the architectural spectrum, we are now focusing our attention abroad once more; this time in northern Japan where we learn much that will compliment and strengthen of design skills here in Bali. ^{id}