

INDEPTH
Phuket Design

PHUKET DESIGN SCHEME

ROYAL PHUKET MARINA WAS THE LOCATION FOR A DESIGN WORKSHOP HOSTED BY THE AMERICAN CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE IN MARCH. GUEST SPEAKERS AT THE 'PHUKET DESIGN EVOLUTION' INCLUDED MARTIN PALLEROS, DESIGNER OF TWINPALMS, ADRIAN MCCARROLL OF ORIGINAL VISION WHOSE LATEST WORK IS KATA ROCKS, ALONG WITH PAST PROJECTS SUCH AS LUXURY ESTATE, SAMBARA, AND THE SAVA VILLAS, AND CLINT NAGATA OF BLINK DESIGN GROUP, INTERIOR DESIGNERS AT PHUKET'S NEW UPSCALE RESORT, REGENT PANWA AND CONRAD PHANG NGA.

|by **ANDREW SCOTT**

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The function room at RPM was bursting with participants eager to hear what three leading lights in the design world had to say about the past, present and future of design on Phuket. The general consensus for the present and future revolved around the idea of intertwining the exterior with the interior of a property and opening up designs so the transition between outdoor and indoor space becomes fluid. Techniques to do this include the use of sliding doors that disappear into walls to maximise cross ventilation and bring the island environment inside the building, linking a property to its surroundings to offer a more natural, earthy feel.

Amanpuri was highlighted as a major design standard for Phuket. Built back in 1987 and set amongst a lush coconut plantation, the architecture and design was so innovative at the time it has not since needed an upgrade. The resort's Thai style pavilions and elegant villas have since been emulated by various developers, but rarely bettered. Banyan Tree in Laguna was also singled out for special praise as another project that has led the way since it opened in 1994. The three designers felt that in many ways, these iconic developments on Phuket still lead the way in certain aspects, although design trends have undoubtedly changed in the last 20 years.

Confluence of ideas

Traditionally, most buildings are characterised by a clear divide between the human and natural world, but designers on Phuket are increasingly breaking down the walls and allowing people to experience a smoother transition between spaces.

Adrian McCarroll highlighted the new Sava Villas at Natai in this respect, a development that allows the views and tropical climate to permeate every aspect of the living experience. The villas' living and sleeping spaces can all be opened up front and back to allow natural ventilation to flow through the property. "This progression of the architecture allows the walls to fold away and the indoors becomes the outdoors," said McCarroll.

Original Vision's Villa Amanzi is a property on Kamala's exclusive millionaire's row that also comes with a difference. The villa is built on to the side of a cliff and encompasses the surrounding environment into its design. The 15 metre infinity pool juts out and actually looks like it is part of the sea, while the open plan design allows for the cool sea breeze to sweep through the rooms and the lush green surroundings add to the privacy and serene feel of the villa.

Clint Nagata is a firm believer in

BAAN YAMU

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VILLA AMANZI

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simplicity and also using traditional materials in tropical locations like Phuket. He tends to import furniture from Bali for the sole reason that the specific designs they produce cannot be achieved by Thai craftsmen. He also follows the ethos of linking the outside with the inside. Clint's design company, Blink, operate in the visual sense and focus on how the sight of something makes a person feel. Blink tends to cater to the hospitality market and has played a key role in the designs of Marina Bay Sands in Singapore, the Regent Phuket Resort and Spa and Conrad Phang Nga Resort amongst many others.

In many ways, the designer of Phuket's stylish Twin Palms Resort in Surin, Martin Palleros, reads from the same script as his fellow creators when it comes to the use of outdoor and indoor spaces. At the workshop he referred to the movement from expanse to enclosure — enclosure to expanse. He sees the building of properties in modern Phuket as a 'green journey', with internal spaces maximising the surrounding environment. Examples of his vision are creatively displayed at Baan Yamu, where the upper villas look out to sea drawing in the views while the lower villas are linked directly to the tropical garden enclosure surrounding them.

As Phuket's luxury residential market evolves and international design firms apply their knowledge and aesthetics to the island's new projects and residences, the island is fast becoming a showcase for design innovation. Concepts and techniques are continually being introduced that increasingly blend and benefit from the tropical landscape, while at the same time offering owners a practical, comfortable and in many cases, pioneering resort lifestyle experience. ■



REGENT, PHUKET