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# LAND AND SEA

BY YVONNE XU | IMAGES COURTESY URBNARC AND ALILA SEMINYAK

Gaurang Khemka, principal of URBNarc and co-designer of The Indian Heritage Centre in Singapore, is no stranger to the cultural nuances and construction complexities a building or a site can present. When asked to masterplan, design, and fit out a luxury Alila resort in the saturated holiday destination that is Seminyak, Bali, Khemka took an approach respecting local vernacular — looking at everything from traditional architecture to the fauna of Balinese life for inspiration. Not least, of course, the ocean the property faces was also a key starting point.



What is the relationship of architecture and the sea? How should buildings on land meet horizon, or, as it were, touch water?

In designing Alila Seminyak, Gaurang Khemka is interested in the dynamic interaction a beachfront property can have with its environs. This is explored in both the resort's outlook towards and its reception of the ocean.

Facing southwest towards the warm Indian Ocean, the property is bordered by the pristine Petitenget beach, a regenerated river stream to the east, and the popular Potato Head Beach bar to the north. A traditional Balinese Hindu *pura* or temple, belonging to the landowners living nearby, is also on the site.





On seeing the site, Khemka was struck by three things. First was the coastal location and the sense of connectivity to the ocean. 'I instantly decided that I would play this up through the design of the property and create a dynamic interaction with the hotel and the ocean. Not just sea view rooms,' the architect says, referring to the client's request for maximising ocean view rooms, 'but corridors that capture the sound and wind of the ocean, and public spaces and pools that would make the guest feel like they are floating on the ocean.'

The site's serenity and sense of disconnectedness from the hustle and bustle that is Seminyak was also inspiring for the architect. 'I knew I would have to lose some of the greens to develop the site and meet the client's objective of maximum rooms – but swore to find creative ways to capture this green garden like feel back into the finally designed hotel.'



A traditional Balinese Hindu pura or temple at the centre of the site



ROOF PLAN



GROUND FLOOR PLAN



LOWER GROUND FLOOR PLAN



drop off lobby spa parking existing temple

<b>ALILA SEMINYAK, BALI</b>	
<b>SITE AREA</b>	19,205M <sup>2</sup>
<b>GROSS FLOOR AREA</b>	38,350M <sup>2</sup>
<b>ARCHITECT &amp; INTERIOR DESIGN CONSULTANT</b>	URBNARC PTE LTD
<b>DESIGN TEAM</b>	GAURANG KHEMKA, ALEJANDRO MORAN, MAVERICK LARIOSIA, VEBRIYANI VALENTINA, ABHISHEK MATHUR, AGUNG PAMUDJI, RIKA LAM, KAROLINA VAISNORAITE, ANITA RAHMAN
<b>LANDSCAPE CONSULTANT</b>	SALAD DRESSING PTE LTD
<b>LIGHTING CONSULTANT</b>	HADI KOMARA & ASSOCIATES
<b>STRUCTURE CONSULTANT</b>	ATELIER 6 STRUCTURE
<b>MECHANICAL, ELECTRICAL &amp; PLUMBING CONSULTANT</b>	ARNAN PRATAMA CONSULTANTS
<b>BUILDER CONTRACTOR</b>	PT ACSET INDONESIA, TBK



Lounge area and reception







Beach suite and floorplan



Thirdly, Khemka wanted to celebrate the *pura* on the site, which was in active use by the landowners and their families.

The development, while fairly dense due to land and commercial pressure, is designed as a cluster of multiple buildings – of several blocks laid around this central temple to break the massing so the resort building is not monolithic. This planning layout borrows from the typical Balinese home compound consisting of several buildings centred on a temple or a pond. These separate resort wings are connected by garden corridors.

Inspiration was also drawn from the Balinese Hindu concept of *nista*, *madya* and *utam*, a sacred hierarchy corresponding to the low, the middle and the high. In the

resort, the classic heavy base of the traditional Balinese building is reinterpreted into a terraced base (most apparent in the wide, stout pool bases). The middle level is lightweight, ‘perforated’ through by way of a structure of posts that is further softened with micro, vertical, and roof gardens (together, these gardens generate over 15,000m<sup>2</sup> of landscape, equivalent to 80% of the site area). Finally, a hovering roof floats above.

To make this modern building truly befitting of its locale, the project uses completely local building materials and traditional craft skills. Like the gardens and paddy fields which all take cues from island culture, the property’s overall palette – mostly naturalistic, with sand and stone tones, and, at places, blue of water – is



Ocean Suite



Garden Suite



Beach Bar

also culled from everyday Balinese life and island fauna (specifically, the *Jalak Bali*, the Balinese national bird identifiable by its blue bare skin around its eyes). There is a controlled sense of material, comprising mainly only of *batu jyoga* (a soft stone), timber (reclaimed from local sites), steel, and a light terrazzo which the design team created from prototype as an alternative to imported stone.

A pattern was also developed for the resort to be applied in various architectural elements and surfaces. Generated and evolved through a mathematical sequence that took its cues from Recursion Theory, the pattern, in its sparsest iteration, would have also been applied to the decking stone and timber floor in the restaurant as

an abstraction of waves coming in from the ocean. While this detail was unfortunately not executed in accordance to design, the pattern was still successfully applied throughout the property and can be seen across devices such as sun shading screens, fabrics, signage, furniture and guestroom key cards. It is a beautiful design device; as a thread it brings together the buildings and various resort experience touchpoints, and as the pattern through which one would look out to – and let in – the sea, it also weaves together building and horizon, land and sea. +