

DESIGNER
PLATFORM



Eclectic creator

This quirky Shanghai-based British architect on his inspiration for a new KL hotel that melds history, heritage and a design-driven luxury

Text **Anandhi Gopinath**

WHO: ANDY HALL

British architect and interior designer Andy Hall is behind the creative direction of The RuMa Hotel and Residences, the latest luxury hotel by Shanghai-based Urban Resorts Concepts (URC) and its first foray outside China.

A graduate of Westminster University and Leeds University, Hall is now based in Shanghai and runs his own architectural practice, MQ Studios. His creative handprint can be seen on previous hospitality projects by URC, like the PuLi Hotel and Spa in Shanghai.

Famous for the independent spirit he applies to his work, Hall starts off with careful research and much thought. "All our work starts from research," he explains. "When I start, I have no preconceived notion about how things will end up. So, we don't have a particular style, in that I don't know what the end result will be. But what I do know is that once research begins, the ideas will start developing in my mind, and that's where forms, textures, objects and spatiality come from."

WHAT: INTERIOR ARCHITECT

Hall poured his creative energy into the unique concept that is The RuMa — a 253-room hotel that takes guests on a voyage into the culture and heritage of

Kuala Lumpur, past and present. Named after the Malay word for home, RuMa is designed to be a home away from home. It is filled with the most modern of creature comforts and yet is totally representative of the city it is in.

"The way we approach our work is to make the hotel site-specific and it cannot be replicated — if you took this and placed it in another city, it would look out of place," Hall explains. "The research we did is from a complicity of ways. We started this project six years ago and in that time, we have been to museums, talked to people on the streets — through that, stories and ideas started developing. For us, the name was a good starting point, and then we started thinking about how this project could be representative of the city's history. To us, there are two major stories — tin mining and rubber plantations."

Ideas that emerged from his research on colonial rubber plantations were applied to the guest rooms while references from tin mining appear in public spaces. For example, drawing reference from the metal cages that once homed the canaries used to check for gas leakages in mines, the entrance foyer of the property is anchored by a dramatic terracotta bird cage that surrounds a custom-designed bronze water fountain. This space is also dominated by a grand double stair-

case that appears to “drill” through the copper-tiled ceiling, calling to mind our vast mining past.

“We have used a wide variety of local materials, like *kain pelikat*, and in the rooms, everything is handmade for a truly authentic experience. The final product is, I think, better than the initial design that we came up with and has surpassed my expectations. One of my favourite elements is probably the ceiling in the foyer because we got the chance to be creative with it. I also really like the staircase because fabricating it was such a challenge, and it was a process that I was able to witness.”

Every detail in the hotel tells a story with an emphasis on reinvigorating local craft, culture and community — from a central showpiece by Datuk Seri Bernard Chandran to the *kelarai* hand-woven walls, RuMa traces the city’s history as well as the colours of present-day Malaysia.

WHERE: THE RUMA HOTEL AND RESIDENCES

Located in the vibrant heart of Kuala Lumpur’s Golden Triangle, RuMa embraces a new form of hospitality unlike any in the region today, where genuine and intuitive care is at the centre of every guest experience. With benefits that include round-the-clock check in and check out, all-day butlers for selected suites, complimentary access to an impressive in-room mini-bar and the freedom to have breakfast in any restaurant in the hotel, RuMa welcomes guests just like the host of a home would — going the distance to provide a serene refuge from the hustle and bustle of downtown life.



Hall has drawn from Malaysia’s history in tin mining to inform his designs for the hotel’s public spaces

Dining options at the hotel subscribe to the same aesthetic ethos as the rest of the property — decidedly local, yet modern and functional. Atas is a delightful dining space that celebrates local artisan traditions in terms of aesthetic, and craftsmanship as well as food, while the Seven lobby bar and the Santai pool lounge are set to be destinations in their own right. **H**

The RuMa Hotel and Residences is located at 7 Jalan Kia Peng, KL, and is scheduled to open in October.

