

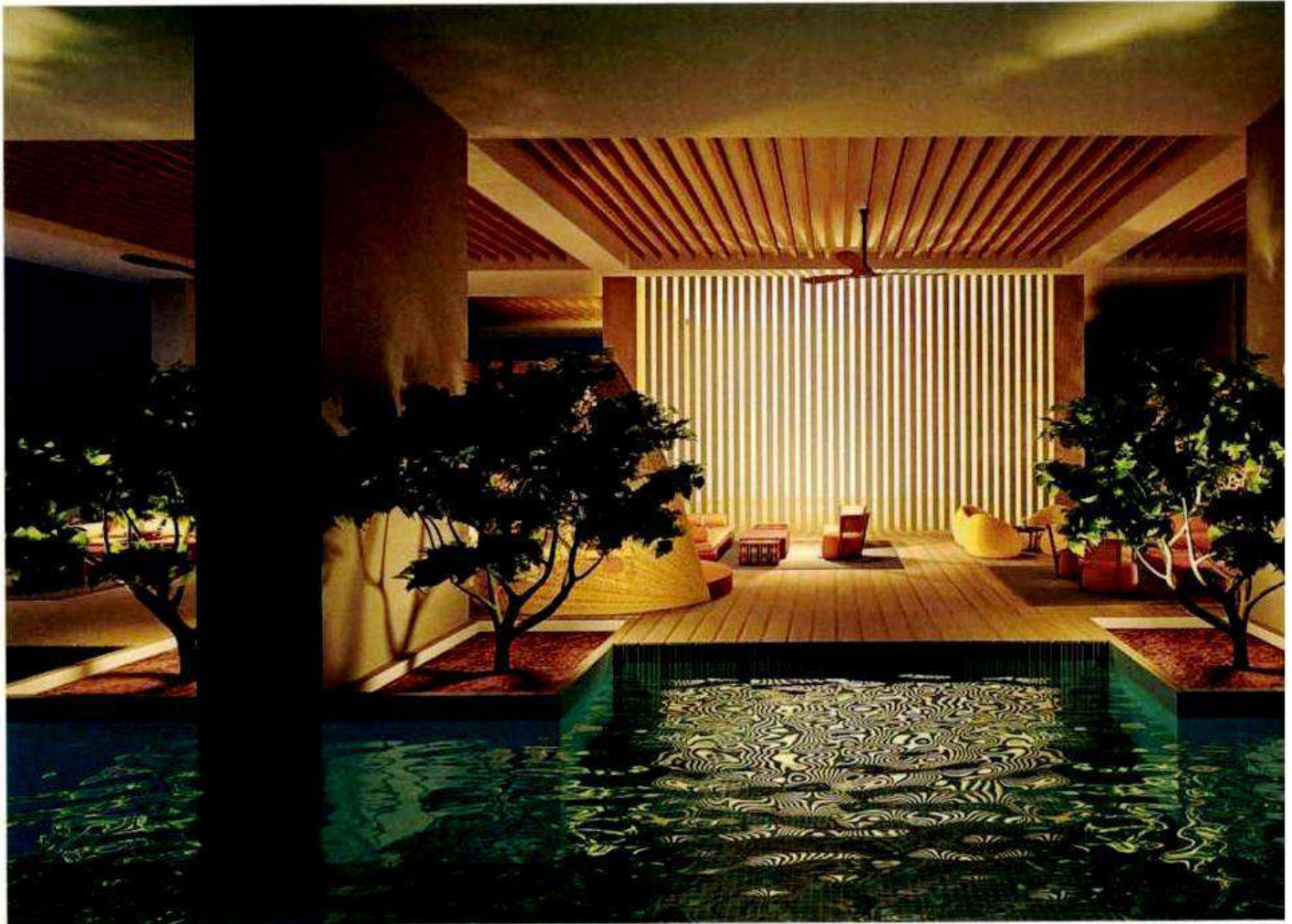
The House We Built

Markus Engel, CEO of Urban Resort Concepts, takes Renyi Lim through the finer details of transforming The RuMa Hotel and Residences into a one-of-a-kind urban haven in Kuala Lumpur.



In Markus Engel's eyes, every detail at The RuMa Hotel and Residences counts – floor lighting patterns, stonework, bespoke furniture, the copper-tiled ceiling. Gesturing towards the floor of the lobby in which we're seated, he says: "These tiles are a sort of signature of Urban Resort Concept's hotels, and they're the same type of tile that were used in the Emperor's sleeping chamber in Beijing's Forbidden City. They're called century tiles as they're so difficult and intricate to make that they used to take 100 years to produce, so they're very special."





The hotel's gorgeous 25m outdoor pool and sundeck is cantilevered from the building and overlooks KL's landmarks.

Making a hospitality space outstandingly special, however, is what Engel and his company, Urban Resort Concepts, excel at. So enamoured was Datuk Lai Voon Hon, Ireka Corporation's group managing director, of Shanghai hotel The PuLi that he went straight to Urban Resort Concepts once he'd decided to build The RuMa. "Datuk's view on what to do with such a fantastic plot of land, right in the heart of Kuala Lumpur, was of a disruptive hotel capable of breaking the status of the 'vanilla ice cream' hotel offerings here," Engel remarks.

Out of this "extremely productive and collaborative" working relationship has

sprung a hotel that eschews formulaic, cookie-cutter hospitality in favour of a truly warm and welcoming approach. "The guest experience philosophy of Urban Resort Concepts is what we refer to as 'hostmanship', which encapsulates everything we feel a luxury hotel experience represents. It's returning to the craft of being a host, and providing a guest experience that's much more human, intuitive, generous and devoid of these petty bureaucratic charges that we're often confronted with when we stay at hotels.

"If you arrive at six in the morning, your room is ready, no questions asked. Should you need the room until 8pm the following day,



“If you arrive at six in the morning, your room is ready, no questions asked. Should you need the room until 8pm the following day, you keep it as long as you want. All services and facilities are included in the rate – the minibar, Internet, breakfast, secretarial services, laundry and the use of a meeting room – things that you’d take for granted were you to visit someone’s home.”

you keep it as long as you want. All services and facilities are included in the rate – the minibar, Internet, breakfast, secretarial services, laundry and the use of a meeting room – things that you’d take for granted were you to visit someone’s home.” Woven into the fabric of The RuMa and all of its 253 guestrooms and suites, too, will be its sense of place inspired by Malaysia’s rich history and expressed through uniquely crafted designs by local artisans.

A golden kebaya created by designer Bernard Chandran, Kelarai hand-woven walls and a bronze water fountain built by Kuala Lumpur craftsmen are all prominent showpieces of the hotel, which opened its doors at the end of last month. “With every hotel, we start with a blank sheet of paper and really tailor it to the needs of a particular locale,” Engel continues. “That’s something we take very seriously, and hopefully it’s present and noticeable in The RuMa.

“It’s placed all the way through, from the aesthetic and physical product, to the food, uniforms, music and the way we deliver our guest experience. We try to connect every dot for it to be as authentically Malaysian as it possibly can.” www.theruma.com 

Santal Pool Bar and Lounge is an oasis for relaxation, where guests can treat themselves to a refreshing cocktail, snacks or refreshments throughout the day in the Kuala Lumpur sun or a nightcap amidst the glittering night’s skyline.

