



SAMIR R. WILDERMANN & JOANNE KUA

REDEFINING LUXURY

RSK Land Managing Director **Joanne Kua** and General Manager of Siam Kempinski Hotel Bangkok and Senior Vice President of Operations in Southeast Asia for Kempinski Hotels **Samir R. Wildermann** speak to Justin Ng about redefining luxury through 8 Conlay

THE 8 CONLAY development by RSK Land first came into my consciousness a while ago. It was during a routine drive to work when its commercial came on air on a radio station. One word caught my attention and it was 'Kempinski'. Having personally wowed by Siam Kempinski's exceptional brand of hospitality in Bangkok, I was naturally excited that Europe's oldest and most established luxury hotel group is coming to Kuala Lumpur.

Joanne herself has spent many cherished holidays with her family in Kempinski hotels, including the Çırağan Palace Kempinski Istanbul and Hotel Adlon Kempinski in Berlin. The impressions they have made on her were profound. "In every city where Kempinski is present, its hotel stands out like a

gem. Take the Çırağan Palace, which overlooks the Bosphorus Strait, for example. When we checked in, we were awestruck," she reminisces. "Every Kempinski feels different; it feels unique, like it's part and parcel of the city."

When RSK Land first mooted the idea of developing a hotel and wanted an experienced hospitality partner to come into the fray, signing up Kempinski was a no-brainer. "We want a development that feels unique in the city and we have to partner with someone who appreciates that fact, someone who shares the same DNA," Joanne states firmly.

The uniqueness of Kempinski lies in its seamless integration with its hotel's location; from the dress of the iconic Lady in Red, its restaurant's signature dishes, choices of buildings, greetings of its guests when they walk into the lobby to its welcome drinks, scents and spas. "All will be adapted to each country," says Samir, who offers assurance that Kempinski Hotel Kuala Lumpur will be one of a kind.

But 8 Conlay is more than just a Kempinski hotel. This mammoth RM54 billion GDV mixed-used development consists of a 68-storey Kempinski hotel that will offer magnificent views of KL on its roof top, 57-storey and 62-storey Kempinski-serviced, YOO-branded residences called YOO8, and nine-storey lifestyle retail quarters. As part of the Tourism National Key Economic Area, both hotel and residences will open their doors in end-2020, while the retail component will be ready by late 2018.

"For 8 Conlay, we want to allow people to understand what we mean by redefining luxury. Luxury is in everything we have thought through for you. That's what branded residences are and that's what branded residences around the world have progressed to," Joanne says.

To ensure that it will be a huge success, plenty has been going on behind the scenes. Joanne has been meeting the various stakeholders once every two months in person to get everyone on the same page, sharing the same vision. What



TEXTURED WALLPAPERS ACCENTUATE THE AMBIENCE OF WOOD-THEMED UNITS



KEMPINSKI'S CHEF CAN BE REQUESTED TO COOK UP A FEAST IN THE COMFORT OF YOUR OWN HOME

they hope to achieve is to create liveable architecture, design carefully planned spaces and bring in personalised services.

However, it's not as easy as it sounds when you have building's architect Ar Hud Bakar, Kempinski, YOO8 Tower A's interior designer Steve Leung, design firm YOO and Bangkok-based landscape firm TROP, all come from a different, diverse background. "So what we did was to take them around KL. We didn't just take them to visit other luxury hotels and apartments but also the National Museum, the Islamic Museum, experience local food, and that was what they did," Joanne says. "It's difficult for us to tell them what Malaysia is all about. We are a melting pot of cultures and we are totally integrated."

The result is a thoughtful design that takes in

elements of local cultures. The building's architect Ar Hud Bakar took cue from the Chinese philosophy of Yin and Yang and interplay of convex and concave forms, shaping the character 'eight' in Chinese, paying tribute to its 8 Jalan Conlay address. It's this balance that inspired interior designer Steve Leung of YOO to utilise wood and water elements for the design of the Tower A residences.


The wood-themed unit is accentuated by the luxurious presence of brass and gold. Its walls are wallpapered with textured, bark-inspired panels. On the other hand, the water-themed unit is designed with symmetry in mind, including a feature wall that emulates waves. All units come with tie-dyed curtains, in which their colours fluidly transition from white to royal blue, inspired by Steve Leung's visit to a batik factory.

The thoughtfulness, which Joanne is so proud of, can be felt the moment you step foot into the residences. "When it comes to the comfort of your own home, you don't want to feel the cold marble on the floor, you want the warmth from the wooden flooring," Joanne explains. After the front door, there is a powder room that comes to the convenience of guests and an umbrella stand. The master bathroom is paved with chevron marble wall tiles, with a bathtub as its centrepiece. All units come fully furnished with aesthetic-pleasing yet practical furniture and fixtures, which match either the wood or water theme.

Amenities-wise, TROP conceptualised a hardscape and softscape that make residents feel

like they are coming back to their little oases. The Water Lounge on the 26th floor is equipped with a 25m lap pool, ripple pools and pod-like cabanas, boasting views of the KL skyline. On the other hand, the Green Refuge on the 44th floor includes a multi-tiered park in the sky, greeneries and an elevated jogging path.

Design though is only one aspect. Having Kempinski on board to manage these residences can only mean exceptional service. "If you have an emergency, we have a full engineering team, housekeeping team, or if you have last-minute dry cleaning request, shopping request, catering, concierge, we are there," says Samir. While the management team for both the hotel and residences will be the same, they will have a separate entrance and their own facilities. "When residents come home, they have all the services of a Kempinski hotel but they aren't staying in a hotel," Samir continues.

8 Conlay will also house a lifestyle retail podium, which Joanne foresees that it will be the liveliest part of the whole development. Although not much detail can be shared, it will no doubt complement the retail offerings in KL. "If there is a doorman opening the door in the hotel, there should one opening the door in the residences and another in the retail podium, all of that bring a completely different feel," Joanne says. "Luxury isn't just about providing homebuyers with expensive materials alone; it's also about getting the delicate point right and that's what we mean by redefining luxury." 



BATHUB TAKES THE CENTRE STAGE WITH CHEVRON MARBLE WALL TILES IN THE BACKGROUND