

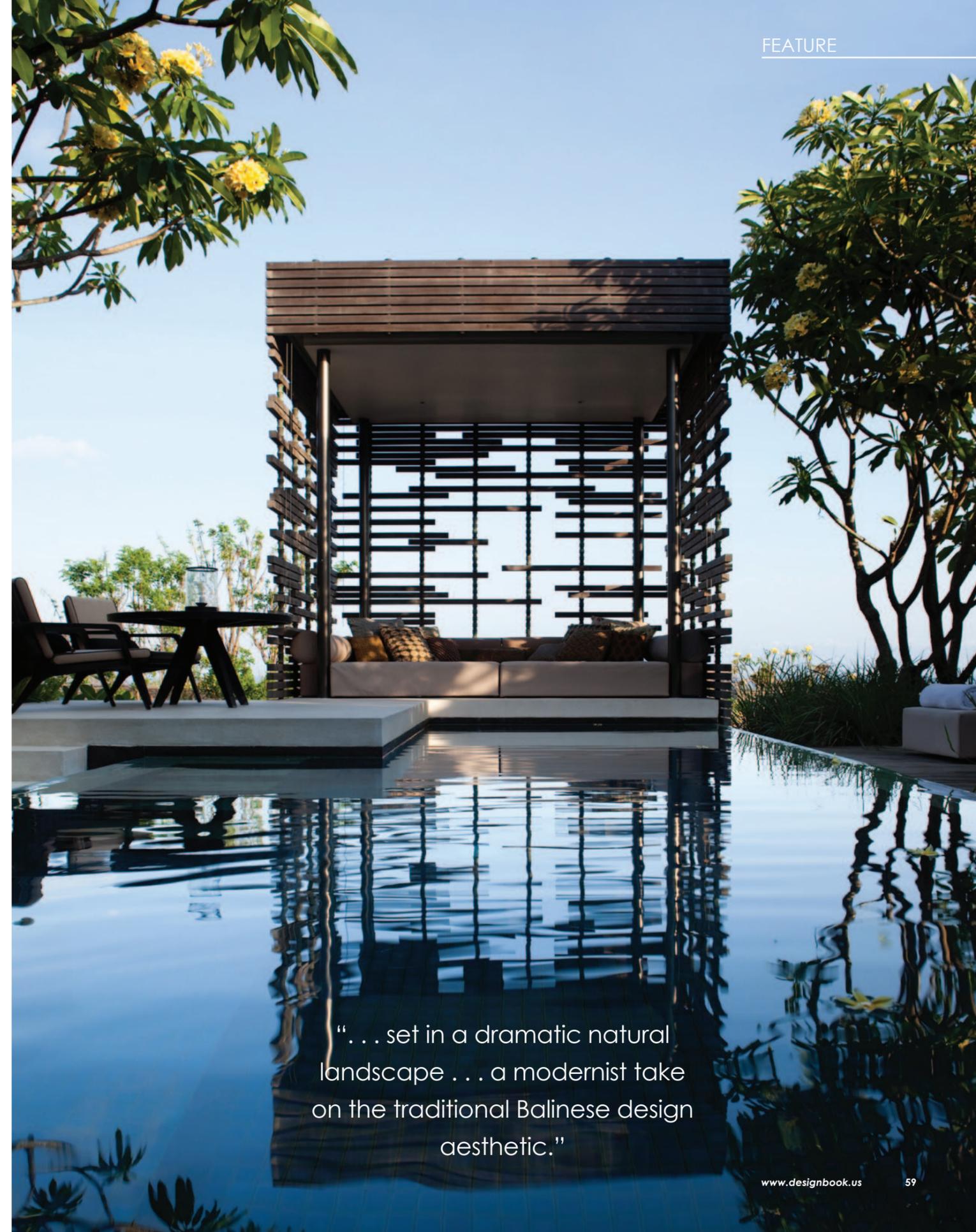
IN SEARCH OF AUTHENTICITY

CREATING RESORTS WITH A SENSE OF PLACE

Text by: DAMIR SINOVCIC

In search of authenticity and a sense of place, the traveling upper and middle classes have created a global market for hotels and resorts that reflect regional culture and vernacular design.

To this, hotel operators and architects have responded in many ways and with varying degrees of success. Those designers who manage to avoid the pitfalls of simply reproducing historical precedent and instead interpret vernacular design in a way that shows an understanding of both the past and the present have the potential to create destinations with the most alluring draw.



ALILA VILLAS ULUWATU | BALI, INDONESIA

The anthropological interest of the modern traveler has led to ethnic tourism, particularly in places such as Bali, Indonesia.

Designed by award-winning architectural firm WOHA, and set in a dramatic natural landscape, Alila Villas Uluwatu presents a modernist take on the traditional Balinese design aesthetic. This hotel and villa development was intended to not only blend in with the surrounding environment, but to also showcase elements of Bali's culture.

Situated on an elevated plateau along the southern coastline of Bali on the Bukit Peninsula, the resort forgoes the conventional monolithic building in favor of stand-alone villas that recall traditional Balinese pavilion-based

architecture. Both the exteriors and the interiors draw inspiration from the local vernacular and employ indigenous wood and stone.

According to WOHA, "A unique design language was developed for the project. Rather than the typical steep-pitched Balinese pavilions, which would have blocked the views on the gentle slopes, and which are not local to the area, the buildings are instead inspired by the local farmers' terraces of loose-piled limestone boulders. A terraced low-pitched roof was developed using Balinese volcanic pumice rock, which is a natural insulating material and can also support local ferns and succulents. These terraced roofs blend with the landscape, keeping the original wide open panoramas that make the site so unique."

PREVIOUS PAGES: Panoramic view from the Sunset Cabana, Alila Villas Uluwatu, Bali, Indonesia. ABOVE (clockwise from left): Reflecting pool at the Spa; One bedroom villa; Three bedroom villa. Alila Villas Uluwatu. RIGHT: Pool cabana in a one bedroom villa, Alila Villas Uluwatu. Photos courtesy of Alila Villas Uluwatu.

"... set in a dramatic natural landscape ... a modernist take on the traditional Balinese design aesthetic."



SINGITA LEBOMBO LODGE | MPUMALANGA, SOUTH AFRICA

Named after the Lebombo Euphorbia tree, the Singita Lebombo Lodge takes its architectural cues, not from the traditional African earth-and-thatch dwellings, but from the vernacular of a different kind. Designed by architects Andrew Makin and Janina Masojada of OMM Design Workshop, the lodge consists of fifteen suites that cling to a cliff-side and conceptually reference animal-made shelters.

These glass-and-steel structures are veiled in delicate screens of bound twigs that filter sunlight, much like the canopy of a tree. The architecture is kept minimal, fluid and transparent, allowing the visitor to be fully immersed in the natural surroundings. According to the architects, the design is intended to generate an awareness of inhabiting the realm between earth and sky.

TOP LEFT: Singita Lebombo Lodge, Mpumalanga, South Africa. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Luxury suite, Singita Lebombo Lodge. **TOP RIGHT:** Main lounge, Singita Lebombo Lodge. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Swimming pool, Singita Lebombo Lodge. Photos courtesy of Singita Game Reserves.



“The design is intended to generate an awareness of inhabiting the realm between earth and sky.”



GRACE SANTORINI HOTEL | SANTORINI, GREECE

The sinuous form of the Grace Santorini hotel clings to one of the best known strips of the European coastline. Designers Nikolas Travarasos of Divercity and Memos Filippidis and Marita Nikoloutsou of MplusM took on the task of designing a hotel that would fit within its surroundings, but was not a copy of the expected vernacular typology.

A passage from the architects' design statement reads, "How could one revive vernacular architecture in such an exceptional setting as Imerovigli, Santorini, with its view of the Caldera opposite the Skaros rock? Generally, rooms to rent at the Caldera simulate the vernacular by cloning indefinitely vaulted roofs. However, at Grace Santorini, no vaults are used: the layout of rooms follows in plan the broken geometries of the ground's contours, forming in effect a series of new stone ledges into the steep gradient of the Caldera."

The jagged forms converge in the middle to create a large open space — the center of activity — containing the swimming pool, a restaurant and a bar. The rooms, which scale the steep slope, incorporate features that relate directly to this specific locale. While some rooms open freely to the view, others require privacy from adjoining walkways and feature windows that are faced with volcanic rock. This type of screening, a reinterpretation of the area's vernacular stone walls, still allows light to enter the space.

Room interiors also feature thick walls that recall Santorini's historic towers and fortresses. The overall design of Grace Santorini establishes a dialogue between a new building, the area's built history and the island's ancient geology.

ABOVE: Swimming pool, Grace Santorini Hotel, Santorini, Greece. Photo by Serge Detalle, courtesy of Grace Hospitality SA. TOP LEFT: Bedroom, Grace Santorini Hotel. Photo by Serge Detalle, provided by Divercity Architects. BOTTOM LEFT: Hotel and caldera view, Grace Santorini Hotel. Photo by Serge Detalle, courtesy of Grace Hospitality SA.

"How could one revive vernacular architecture in such an exceptional setting . . ."

