

Through the Keyhole

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

BY JULES KAY





The vast, high-ceilinged living, dining and show kitchen space, is one of the villa's outstanding features, with a glass balustraded verandah that overlooks the stunning 25 metre infinity pool.



Paul Hicks and Lynn Grebstad are the minds behind Villa Suralai, a stunning private residence on the north coast of Koh Samui and a joint venture between Samui Concepts and MAP Architecture and Planning Limited, a Hong Kong based architectural practice. The six-bedroom residence, with ultra-modern architecture and interiors, sits on a hilltop and has breathtaking views of Koh Samui and Koh Phang Ngan.

Paul and Lynn are directors of Grebstad Hicks Communications, a leading PR agency in Asia that specialises in promoting luxury hotels and resorts with a client list that includes GHM Hotels, Trisara, SALA Resorts & Spas and

Six Senses. Suralai is their first villa project and appealed because after years of promoting hotels and resorts by other developers, it gave them the chance to experience creating and owning their own mini-resort. Some of the partners of MAP already are, or were, owners of other properties on Koh Samui, including Ban Mekala and Baan Kinaree, which gave them the confidence and knowledge to undertake such a project. "Koh Samui is easily accessible to our main homes in Hong Kong," said Paul. "It gives us an incredible home in which to entertain friends and business associates, and a living space the scale of which would only be available to the»

Through the Keyhole



Wooden-tiled pitched roofs help the villa look perfectly at home in the tropical mountainside location.

super-rich in a place like Hong Kong. We were already fans of Thailand and have been frequent visitors for many years."

The striking residence can be seen from the approach up the hillside, which gives it an aura of magnificence. An expansive natural stone waterfall flows behind the main building and upon entering, you are faced with a tough decision as to where to look first. Contemporary designs and furnishings are created and crafted using a range of natural materials and the finishing, with wooden-tiled pitched roofs, helps the villa look perfectly at home in the tropical mountainside location. "We are still adding the finishing touches," said Lynn, "if we can make it a successful investment, we would like to undertake a few more similar villa projects." Villa Suralai offers a mix of cutting edge technology, modern

design and natural materials. It's a remarkable property, exquisitely furnished with contemporary furniture, artwork and ornaments. The vast, high-ceilinged living, dining and show kitchen space, is one of the villa's outstanding features, with a glass balustraded verandah that overlooks the stunning 25 metre infinity pool. Inside the dining area, a polished dark wood dining table complete with modern white chairs lends a sophisticated air, while the flamboyant black-gloss and chrome finished open kitchen runs parallel to the view. The decor is subtle but effective, a blend of styles that complement each other and suit the setting. "We have spent many years working with and visiting some of the world's most stylish and luxurious hotels and resorts," continued Lynn. "In particular we were influenced by understated, contemporary



The dining area, a polished dark wood dining table complete with modern white chairs lends a sophisticated air, while the flamboyant black-gloss and chrome finished open kitchen runs parallel to the view.

In a stand-alone building, the master bedroom's ensuite bathroom features a distinctive grey circular terrazzo bathtub.

resorts which are clean and simple in their design and colour scheme, very modern and neutral yet comfortable. The idea was not to be too Thai or Asian in theme, but just to use accent pieces to give a sense of place."

Stepping stones lead from the garden up to the first of three master suites, which occupy a stand-alone building. The ground floor suite has a separate dressing area, twin beds and an en-suite bathroom with a shower and a distinctive grey circular terrazzo bathtub. Above this room, at poolside level, is another suite with a modern four poster bed, while on the third level of this master pavilion, yet another suite boasts a dressing area and an en-suite bathroom with shower and grey oval shaped terrazzo bathtub. In each of these suites, the bathtubs are positioned at the front of the

room, with windows maximising the stunning Samui views. "We chose Samui over Phuket because it is less developed," said Paul. "It was still relatively easy to find a good site for a standalone villa project and the island has a relaxed and laid back charm, which is attractive to visitors such as us who are coming in and out for short stays rather than living here permanently."

It took two years to complete this exceptional residence. Natural stone effects, contemporary fittings and works of art are brought to life by water features, neat lawns and creative landscaping. Careful planning and professionalism have allowed the owners to combine modern luxury and design with the complete privacy and exclusivity that comes with a tropical hillside location. ■