



kids special
40+ IDEAS TO DESIGN A KID'S ROOM PG 82

BATHROOM TREND:

BLACK IS THE NEW WHITE + WASHBASIN AND TAP PAIRING TIPS PG 70

life in the GREEN LANE

text JASON POMEROY
 photos COURTESY OF POMEROY STUDIO

An urban oasis



MANILA 8.35AM. TUESDAY

I'm flying back to Singapore after my usual intoxicating few days of searing heat, manic street activity and a maddening sense of utter helplessness at the hands of the very objects that should paradoxically be propelling you from one destination to another. The calm and tranquility of this weekend is all but behind me. A quick morning coffee with Jimmy Choo in his suite at the Ritz-Carlton was followed by a leisurely brunch with our dear friends Sam and Frank (the former a fellow Cambridge grad; the latter her antipodean husband) and Gary (a friend visiting from Toronto). A brisque walk with my baby Yasmin around the Gardens by the Bay - that Avataresque green oasis in the heart of Singapore's financial district - rounded off the weekend, which is now but a distant memory. Yet whilst Manila is a far cry from the cooler, orderly environment of the city-state, I nevertheless welcome the occasional bit of hustle and bustle, the burst of spontaneity and the Filipino's almost insatiable appetite for enjoying life.

Together with David, an English architect, and Luis, a Portuguese masterplanner, we made our way to our regular haunt in Makati city for dinner, after a day punctuated by seven different meetings on green projects, from the macro scale of cities to the micro scale of sales pavilions. Whilst jaded, we managed to catch our second wind purely through the infectious energy of our Filipino clients, helped along by copious quantities of local beer, Lechon (a local suckling pig delicacy), Iberian roast chicken (wonderfully tender morsels cooked with heaps of garlic and wild mushrooms), Paella

The Gramercy Residences SkyPark in Makati, is the tallest skygarden in the Philippines. *sketches: jason pomeroiy* Sketches and plans of the Gramercy Residences.

Negra (a local interpretation of Arros Negros - a catalunan rice dish infused with squid ink) and an assemblage of salads and rice. It was already late given the back-to-back meetings through the day.

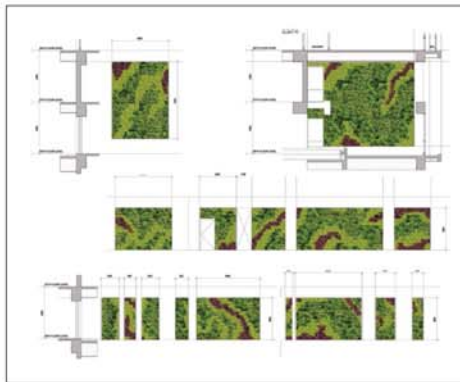
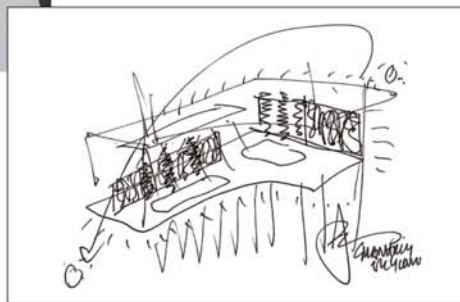
I stayed at the new Gramercy Residences - a hyper-amenitised serviced condominium developed by Century Properties, which stands at the heart of MOMA. It is an abbreviation of Modern Makati and a slick term coined by the developer's whose finger is on the pulse of brand positioning, as one may tell from even the abbreviations the close resemblance to its New York museum's namesake. I have a particular affinity for this building, as we designed its skycourt, located on the 36th and 37th floor of the 72-storey super tower, which so happens to be the tallest building in the country.

Seeking inspiration from the Gramercy Park in Manhattan, the 3,500sqm skyPark acts as a recreational social space in the sky for the building's residents and guests, and contains a host of facilities that are the first of its kind in the Philippines. In addition to lap pools, children play areas, meeting rooms, restaurant and bar, yoga decks and gymnasium, it also has fully integrated water and mist features and an abundance of vertical urban greenery to create a "hanging garden" in the sky. Part of the skyPark also incorporates the tallest green wall in the country.

The starting point was the ability to evoke the sense of the original Gramercy Park in Manhattan. Gramercy Park in Manhattan is a beautiful pocket park in the middle of the city, with mature trees and pleasant pathways in which >



Skycourts and skygardens offer alternative social spaces in which interaction, or peace and tranquility, can take place in the sky.



residents can relax, exercise or engage with others. We therefore wanted to recreate the social experience of the park setting, but replicate in the sky. Wind speeds and the maintenance of landscaping at such a height were naturally factors that needed consideration, and provided challenges for the design team - we needed to be realistic as to what could and could not grow given the climatic conditions. We were therefore able to abstract the curvilinear arrangement of Gramercy Park's greenery to define the curvilinear layouts of densely foliated green walls and the planters. Indigenous species were used to clad the walls to evoke the sense of a "hanging garden".

The project completes in timely fashion for us - I've been frantically putting the final edits of my book, entitled *Skycourts and Skygardens: Greening the Urban Habitat*, in order to send off to my publisher in London. It sees the culmination of 10 years of my research into the topic that was conceived whilst at Cambridge University. The Gramercy skyPark project provides a glimpse of the future of our urban habitat. Sometimes it is not always possible to have the space on the ground for botanic gardens that provide a balance to the urban jungle. Skycourts and skygardens help replenish the loss of open space through urban densification on the ground, by offering alternative social spaces in which interaction, or peace and tranquility, can take place in the sky. Afterall, space is a commodity worth preserving and reinforces the importance of a spatial sustainability to balance a social sustainability through the provision of spaces that people can enjoy - even when living in the heart of a vibrant city. ●

PROF JASON POMEROY is the founder and principal of Pomeroy Studio: designers and thought leaders of sustainable built environments. www.pomeroystudio.sg

