

# beyond

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DESIGN

## Taking Shape

We talked to designers behind some of the most distinctive new properties in the region—including an Indonesian oasis that blends into the beach, an urban hotel in Australia that isn't afraid to get flirty, and a zero-carbon eco-pod in Malaysia—to find out how they are shaping the future of hotels.

SCDA designed the SkyTerrace living concept in Singapore to incorporating elements of the surrounding park.

COURTESY OF SCDA



FROM TOP (AT SOORI BALI): Ombak beachfront restaurant; spa-style bathrooms with stone and warm terracotta; villas are surrounded by palm trees along the shoreline.



**FOUNDER: SOO K. CHAN**  
**SPECIALITY: HARMONY**

**Firm:** SCDA Architects  
([scdaarchitects.com](http://scdaarchitects.com))

**Design Philosophy:** Seamlessly transition between indoor- and outdoor-spaces.

“Many places in Bali have been loved almost to death, but Soori Bali is different,” says Soo K. Chan, owner of the property and founder of SCDA Architects. “It is a neighbor with a genuine connection to the villages and local culture.”

Conjuring connections is Chan’s modus operandi in his quest to link the surrounding world with the spaces he creates. Of course starting with the right location is a pivotal part of any blueprint and Chan says he was instantly smitten with the plot where **Soori Bali** ([sooribali.com](http://sooribali.com); doubles from US\$775) now sits, a groove of black volcanic beach under Mount Batukaru, surrounded by rice terraces: “When we first discovered the land, there was no road access, so my wife and I took a helicopter out to see it. It was magical—breathtakingly beautiful and so peaceful.”



But Chan expects more out of the scenery than just a pretty backdrop—even the trees have a to-do list. Harnessing nature’s own design prowess, he uses cross-ventilation to reduce energy consumption, and tasks the leafy landscape to provide shade. “It’s about making the best use of natural resources,” Chan says, “so that the resort blends in seamlessly.”

The resort opened six years ago, managed by boutique luxury group Alila, but as Chan gained experience in the hospitality industry he decided to take over. “As an architect and an avid traveler, it was my

dream to be a hotelier,” he says. Now Chan has even more autonomy over fulfilling his vision, designing everything from the restaurant and garden landscape, down to the staff uniforms and cutlery.

His knack for combining the harmony of nature with the precision of an engineer traces back to his childhood in UNESCO-listed George Town, Penang. “I wanted to be an architect from the time I was old enough to play with Lego pieces,” Chan says. His other lifelong dream of becoming a hotelier will be realized this spring when Soori Bali relaunches. Coming out from

COURTESY OF SOORI BALI (3); INSET: COURTESY OF SCDA

under the Alila umbrella, this series of upgrades and additions will position the property as an anchor of the new Soori luxury lifestyle brand. All 48 villas will be polished up and Chan is converting a wooden Balinese house into an Indonesian restaurant with views over the rice fields, but he says the most exciting transformation is the revamp of the Soori Spa, which will offer massage, reiki and acupuncture, along with therapy courtesy of U.S.-trained clinical psychologist Dr. Harold Roberts to improve the neurological shaping of the brain. “We create truly transformative experiences for the mind, and body and soul,” Chan says. It is fitting that a spa is the keystone for a guy whose ideology is all about finding a balance between what is outside and what is in.

### Coming Soon

Soo K. Chan is taking another bite out of the Big Apple with the **Soori High Line** (522 West 29th St., New York, NY; [soorihighlineny.com](http://soorihighlineny.com)), which will open this summer. Chan says the 31-room residential property is “the synthesis of 25 years of architectural practice. I strived to create the most bespoke residence in NYC by marrying crafted luxury with resort-style living.” **Soori Niseko** is also on the drawing board as the brand’s first ski resort. —MERRITT GURLEY



### FOUNDER: NIC GRAHAM SPECIALITY: HUMOR

**Firm:** Nic Graham + Associates  
**Design Philosophy:** Spin interior design to create comedic moments.

“Are you alone, handsome? Is that a gun your pocket?” the elevator may ask you at the **QT Melbourne**, thanks to the cheeky sense of humor of interior designer Nic Graham.

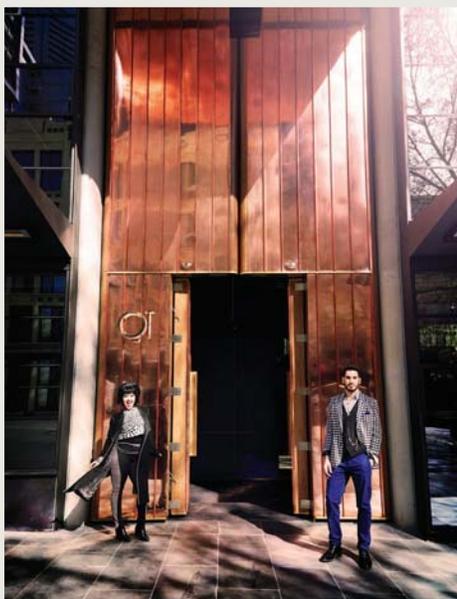
If you are at the new **QT Sydney**, the elevator won’t flirt with you, but it will use sensors to choose the perfect soundtrack for you. “If there’s one person in the lift, it may play something like *Are You Lonely Tonight*,” Graham explains, “but if there are six people it might ramp it up to a house party anthem.”

This playful blend of design and technology is Graham’s calling card. The founder of Nic Graham + Associates, or G+A for short—a small Sydney-based firm with a reputation for creating spaces ripe with humor and narration—tries to capture guests’ imagination with every centimeter of his interiors. “One of our jobs is to create memorable experiences that guests can take with them,” Graham says, “memories that touch them somewhere and create a return visit as opposed to a space that you are just transient through.”

This ethos made him a perfect partner for David Seargeant, founder of QT hotels, the enfant terrible of Australia’s budding art-meets-fashion-meets-anything goes school of hotel design. “At our very first meeting it was apparent Nic had a full grasp of our vision to create a multi-layered, design-driven spaces for our hotels,” Seargeant says of commissioning Graham to design the interiors of the first QT on the



FROM TOP: Houndstooth and Chesterfields at the QT Sydney Member’s Lounge; Striking a pose outside of QT Melbourne.



COURTESY OF QT HOTELS AND RESORTS (2). INSET: TERENCE CHIN

Gold Coast, which opened in 2012, and who has repeat-hired the designer half-a-dozen times since.

Graham started his career not as an interiors-man but as a furniture-maker. “Back at university, I liked the idea of architecture but I was scared off by the math,” he says. “So I studied furniture making instead. It allowed me to vent my creativity on a smaller scale.”

Graham still crafts furniture. He developed a custom range for each

QT hotel—high-back retro chairs, giant purple ottomans, solid wood coffee tables—not just as functional objects but as yet another layer of humor, adding to the narrative. But why must everything have a punch line? Because, “finding humor in furniture, artifacts and artworks results in a much more personal guest experience,” Graham says. “That’s something I taught myself after years of working in minimalist modern spaces.”

### Coming Soon

G+A is currently shaping the inside of the second **Hotel Indigo** project in Taipei. Built near the city’s river on the site of an old brickworks, the 180-room property is scheduled to open in 2018 and will embrace the history of its location with inferences to brick patterns and dragon-boat racing. Closer to home, the company is working on two new properties for W Hotels and Resorts in Australia: the **W Brisbane**, which will have a river theme coupled with modern interpretations of Aboriginal storytelling and art; and the **W Perth**, where dirty reds, ochres, sand, jarrah timbers and king stucco will engender a tie-in to the economics of mining-rich Western Australia.—IAN LLOYD NEUBAUER

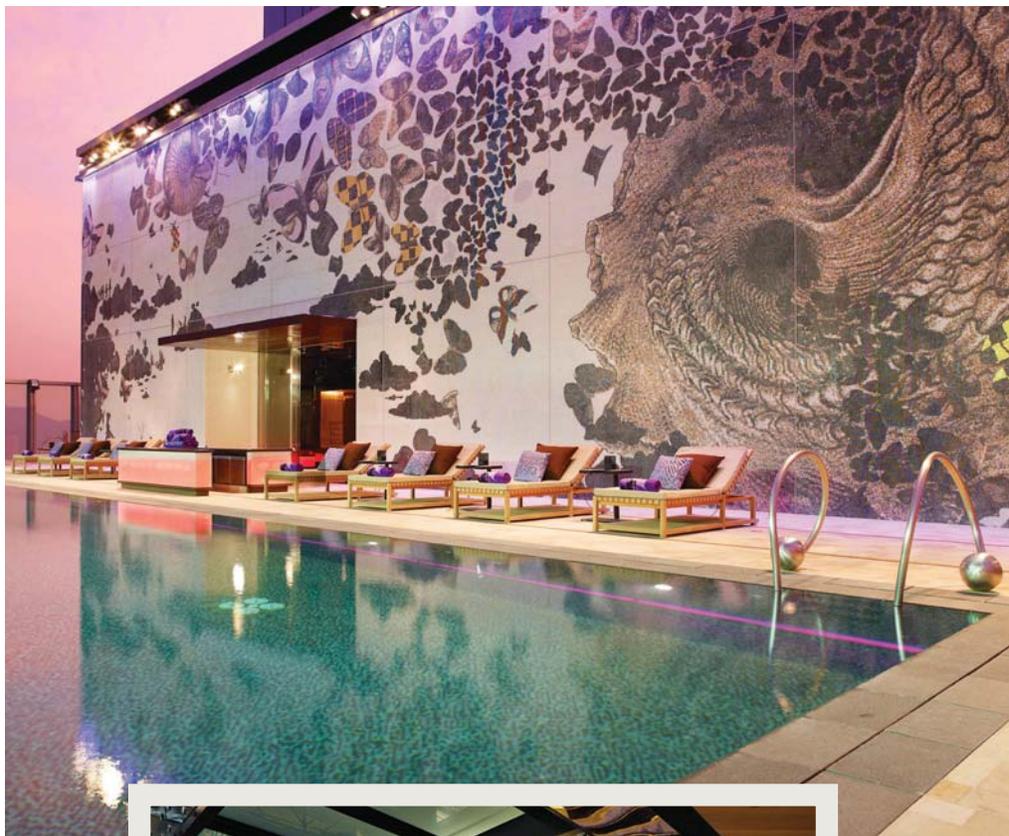


**FOUNDER: JASON POMEROY**  
**SPECIALITY: HERITAGE**

**Firm:** Pomeroy Studio  
([pomeroystudio.sg](http://pomeroystudio.sg))

**Design Philosophy:** Use ancient technique as inspiration for modern sustainable structures.

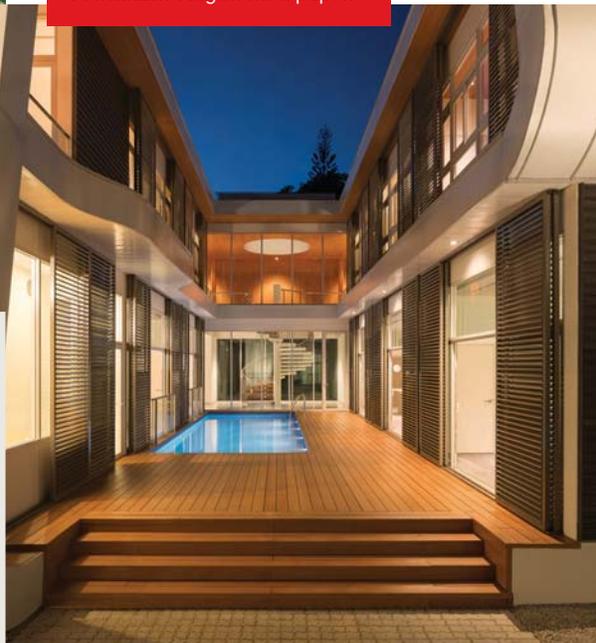
Architect Jason Pomeroy doesn’t shy away from a challenge. Eco-pods. Carbon-negative homes. A 522-room over-water, hibiscus flower-shaped hotel, which holds the Guinness World Record for most swimming pools in a resort. His portfolio may be diverse, but a simple philosophy shines through every project: if it ain’t broke, why fix it? While many modern designers are chasing the newest trends, Pomeroy has his sights trained on the past, using ancient architectural techniques to achieve surprising and cutting-edge feats of sustainability.



FROM TOP: G+A crafted the interiors and poolside design at W Hong Kong; the staircase at QT Melbourne, but take the elevator.



FROM TOP (BY POMEROY STUDIO): Flower-shaped Lexis Hibiscus resort, in Malaysia; B House, a carbon-negative home in Singapore; Pomeroy's sketch of Shenzhen, drawn on Montblanc Augmented paper.



What started as a childhood pastime—making wigwams out of twigs in the garden of his parent’s London home—has blossomed into Singapore-based Pomeroy Studio, one of the most innovative and sustainable design firms in Southeast Asia. Pomeroy’s love of throwback structures, like the wigwam, is still a guiding force.

The British architect is also a professor, author, and host of Channel NewsAsia’s *City Time Traveller* and *Smart Cities 2.0*. His work takes him across Asia studying both antique and modern buildings. “While aesthetics may change, the basic social and cultural needs of man have remained the same for hundreds—if not thousands—of years,” Pomeroy says. “Buildings that can meet these needs tend to stand the test of time.”

Take the **B House** in Singapore, a carbon-negative home that Pomeroy designed. At first look, its silver, rounded roof, large windows and sleek wood details speak only to modernity, however, it draws on many of the same principles that inform the city’s iconic black-and-whites: overhanging roof, expansive verandas and variable shutters. Pomeroy’s **Idea House**, on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur, is an ode to the traditional Malaysian kampong home, built with the

cultural, spatial and social needs of its inhabitants in mind. “It can expand and contract as families grow and change,” Pomeroy says of the modular framework.

Channeling the architects of old, Pomeroy thinks about buildings in terms of how they are used and puts people first. “It is vital to foster a sense of community so that the place becomes more people-centric,” Pomeroy says. From single homes like the B House, to the 522-room **Lexis Hibiscus** ([lexishibiscuspd.com](http://lexishibiscuspd.com); doubles from RM870) Pomeroy uses age-old tricks like high-ceilings for cooling and central courtyards to bring people together, but adapts the

features to meet the needs of today’s society, following what he calls “a Darwinian theory of (building) evolution.” Survival of the fittest is just another challenge Pomeroy is ready to tackle.

### Coming Soon

Situated on some of the most prime beach frontage in the Philippines, **Casobe**, a residence and hotel in Calatagan, Batangas will boast 342 nautically inspired rooms making for the perfect escape from bustling Manila. Befitting of a site of natural beauty, the structure will embrace Pomeroy’s green agenda with a low carbon footprint. And to further his foothold in the Philippine’s sustainable architecture scene, **Optimma**, a housing community in Pampanga that will be completed in 2018, will have 246 carbon-zero homes at a price point accessible to the average Filipino homeowner.

—VERONICA INVEEN

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ROBERT SUCHI/POMEROY STUDIO (2); POMEROY STUDIO