

renegade

game changers | thought leaders | rule breakers | style makers

COLLECTIVE

ISSUE 5

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ENTREPRENEURS**
FROM ALL OVER THE GLOBE

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BRAVE +
UNDISCOVERED**

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IS WATCHING**

SHE'S PERFORMED FOR
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+ TOURED WITH **BEYONCÉ**
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FASHION / DESIGN / FILM / FOOD / TECH / ART / SOCIAL CHANGE / TRAVEL

ART WITHOUT RESERVATION

DESPERATELY searching for a point of difference in an overcrowded market, a BOUTIQUE HOTEL in Singapore used their DESIGN SMARTS to really shake things up.

WORDS: MELINDA BARLOW



Searching for that all-important point of difference, one Singaporean hotel opened up the floors of its boutique hotel to four local designers to ‘go nuts’ — with remarkable results.

In an old shop house, whose life began as a school in the 1920s, sits Wanderlust Hotel, an unassuming property in Singapore’s Little India district. This gazetted conservation quarter sprawls around Serangoon Road, one of the earliest roads built on the island, and a step inside the hotel will reveal a whole new world inside its historic walls.

For the visitor to Singapore, time spent in Little India gives a glorious insight into local life and certainly a more colourful one than the somewhat ‘western’ experience of staying around the high-traffic areas of Orchard Road or Marina Bay.

But for the guests at Wanderlust Hotel, a new player in the Singaporean boutique hotel scene, time spent here is a feast of unexpected design ideas and wonderful creativity.

The hotel’s design is unconventional amidst the bustle of Little India and the sleek clean approach of many of

Singapore’s newest developments, but this is intentional. By its very nature, the hotel provides an out-of-the-box experience rather than just a place to stay. Renowned Singaporean hotelier Loh Lik Peng is the man responsible for this, after having similar success with two other properties: 1929 and the New Majestic Hotel.

With a passion for collaboration and new ideas, Loh’s ethos comes from an aversion to the norm and a desire to see what can come from embracing an uninhibited approach.

Rather than luring the nation’s most esteemed designers and stylists or flying them in from abroad, local award-winning talent was asked to design the hotel’s interiors. And rather than using interior architects specifically, four Singapore design firms were designated a hotel floor each and invited to “make it crazy and fun”.

With 29 rooms in total, plus the lobby and French restaurant ‘Cocotte’ to create, this was a project like no other for DP Architects and design firms Asylum, Phunk Studio, and fFurios.

“What’s interesting is that none of them are interior designers. These folks are from branding agencies, and are graphic designers who have never

designed a hotel space before,” says Wanderlust’s head of branding and communications Mae Noor.

“Because they are used to working on an entirely different canvas, the ideas they brought to the table were brilliantly crazy and out of this world and we loved that. We are always about pushing boundaries and trying to inject some fun into something that is usually so conventional!”

In the rapidly changing landscape of Singapore, new hotels seem to appear like magic overnight, so clearly Wanderlust has decided diversification is the key.

It’s part of the emerging trend of ‘boutique-style’ accommodation in the city, with no less than a dozen hostels and hotels labelling themselves as such in recent months. This design approach has certainly paid off for Wanderlust. “So far this formula has worked for us and has become sort of a DNA for everything that we do,” says Mae.

“There are now really different options for our guests, they like that they can choose based on a different colour or theme, that they can come back for another stay and try different rooms each time. We have also proven that this industry does not have to be boring!” ■

FIRST FLOOR: LOBBY AND COCOTTE RESTAURANT. ‘INDUSTRIAL GLAM’ BY ASYLUM.

With a colour palette that gives the streets of Little India a run for their money, the team from Asylum have certainly met the brief of “make it fun”. The warmly lit space is inviting and enticing, and hours could be spent chilling out in Cocotte or delighting over the many vintage items, including pieces from Loh’s own private collection of furniture, found objects and curiosities.



SECOND FLOOR: ‘ECCENTRICITY’ BY PHUNK STUDIO.

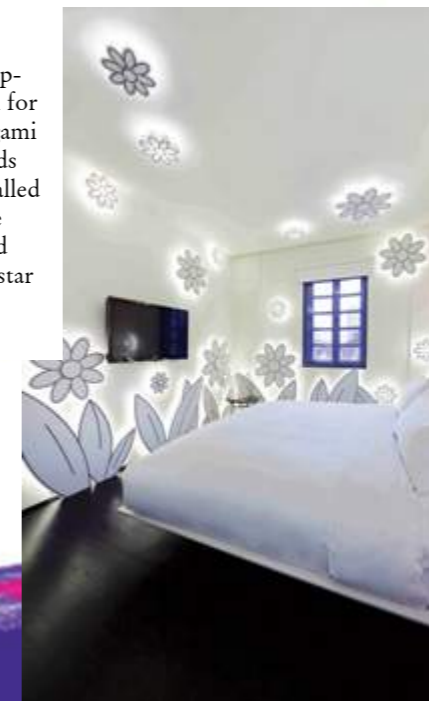
Pantone has become super cool of late, and the second floor at Wanderlust is no exception. Each of the 11 pod-like rooms are a single colour, with their own matching neon sign song title. One wonders how long a guest can stand Jimi Hendrix’s ‘Purple Haze’, or The Beatles’ ‘Yellow Submarine’ on high rotation inside their head, but it’s definitely a funky approach and the colour theme continues outdoors to the oh-so-groovin’ striped rooftop Jacuzzi. My pick would definitely be for the tranquil tone that is New Order’s ‘Blue Monday’.



IMAGE COURTESY OF WANDERLUST HOTEL

THIRD FLOOR: ‘IS IT JUST BLACK AND WHITE?’ BY DP ARCHITECTS.

The nine rooms on this floor are split across two themes — Origami and Pop-Art. White on white is the foundation for this floor, with the ceilings of the origami rooms designed to look like paper folds and personalised lighting choices installed to add your own splash of colour. The Pop-Art rooms offer chunky animated scenes, making the guest feel like the star in their very own comic book.



FOURTH FLOOR: ‘CREATURE COMFORTS’ BY fFURIOS.

The top of the hotel is where fantasies live. This is a world of spaceships and aliens, of forests and fairies, and the biggest multidimensional typewriter you’ll ever see. The nine loft rooms are not for the faint-hearted and if you’re looking for a quirky escape or a place to feel inspired, this would be it. Watch out for the monsters creeping along the halls.

Loh’s personal philosophy reflects his vibrant approach. “I can still recall the sense of adventure, fun and the thrill of exploring the world when I first travelled as a child, but as adults we get a little jaded. Sometimes, amazing things and original experiences get lost in the fog of our worldliness. With Wanderlust, it is my attempt at making that adult world into a fun playground once again.”

As Wanderlust makes up its own rules, it contributes to a new version of Singapore; a playground, and an island where imagination is not only welcome, but a blissful necessity.