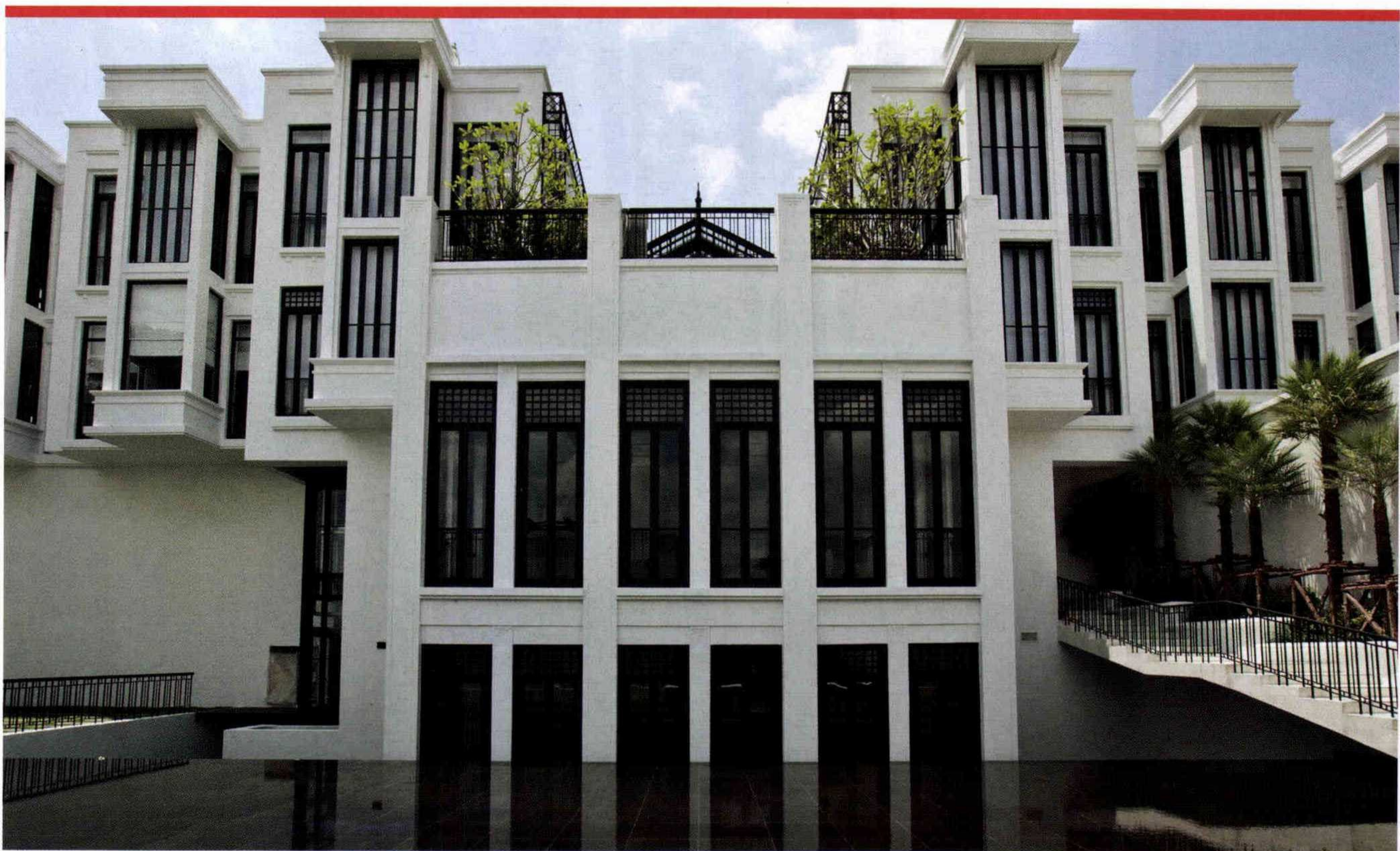


THE EXPERIENTIAL CONCEPT IS TO SUGGEST A VERY ELEGANT AND TASTEFUL FIN-DE-SIÈCLE BANGKOK HOME.



When King Chulalongkorn wanted to escape the clutter of Koh Ratanakosin at the dawn of the 20th century, he established Dusit District as a new centre of administrative and royal power. Several royal palaces, including Chitrlada Royal Villa, current home to the Thai royal family, were built, along with a number of important government edifices, including Parliament House, Government House and the National Library, as well as the Dusit Zoo.

The district was never known for its hotels, however. That state of affairs radically changed in June with the opening of The Siam, a high-concept urban resort that occupies three acres of the Chao Phraya River frontage near the Krung Thon Bridge.

The latest and arguably greatest property belonging to Siam Hotels

& Resorts, an independently owned and branded Thai hotel group, The Siam departs from its predecessors in Pattaya (Siam Bayshore and Siam Bayview) and Bangkok (Siam City Hotel) in many ways, beginning with its much smaller scale. While Siam Bayshore, the company's 1975-vintage Pattaya flagship, boasts 270 rooms, The Siam offers just 39 suites and villas.

The experiential concept is to suggest a very elegant and tasteful fin-de-siècle Bangkok home, one that has expanded over the decades to provide for every possible function. In fact the land upon which The Siam broke ground three years ago has been in the Sukosol family for decades, originally acquired by patriarch Kamol Sukosol in the 1970s to use as a docking and unloading point for electrical parts shipped from overseas. More recently the lot was leased to riverside

restaurants, first Baan Khun Luang and later Tara Tara Thai. When the lease ran out seven years ago, owner Krissada Sukosol Clapp decided it was time to use the property for something different.

Krissada, a successful singer and actor better known to his legion of Thai fans as Noi Pru (for the alt-rock band, Pru, he helmed in the early 2000s), is a passionate collector of antiques, and he jokes that one motivation for opening The Siam was to have somewhere to store and display his extensive collection. The 42-year-old Thai-American, who was named MTV Asia's Favourite Thai Artist in 2001 and who won Thailand's equivalent of an Oscar for Best Actor in 2006, has a more serious purpose for his collection as well.

"Asians are not so much into museums," notes Krissada. "But I like





affected the supply of materials and manpower. And then last year we had to contend with the floods. We had no flooding from the river, because that area is quite built up. But some water did come in from a neighbouring property, delaying construction and again affecting supplies.”

At first Krissada wanted to do something small and simple, along the lines of The Rachamankha, a similarly antique-decorated boutique hotel in Chiang Mai. Looking for an architect with an appreciation for his antique collection, he settled on long-time Thailand resident Bill Bensley, who is also “crazy about collecting antiques,” according to Krissada.

Bensley Design Studios chose Asian Art Deco as an overall guiding theme, making abundant use of black-painted steel, large glass panels and white walls to allow plenty of natural light in and to provide a simple black-and-white colour scheme as background for over a thousand antiques from Krissada’s personal collection. Although Bensley, who was named by *Time* magazine as one of the top five hospitality designers worldwide, typically focuses on either landscaping or design, in this case The Siam was a turnkey project in which his team was responsible for all phases of design, inside and out.

Although his studio has designed more than 150 hotels and resorts around the world, Bensley says, “I am most excited about The Siam, as I know it is going to turn heads in the oh-so-competitive hospitality market of tomorrow.”

The huge, open foyer to the resort features black and grey tiles bordering limestone-hued terrazzo, anchored by a rich herringbone-patterned brick courtyard,



to think they can appreciate their past through historic art and vintage furniture in hotels such as The Siam.”

In October 2011, Krissada and his wife Melanie, the hotel’s PR director, gave them a magazine a tour of The Siam while it was still very much under construction. Even then it was clear from the rising edifice that in spite of the relatively small number of guest suites and villas that it was to be a grand undertaking.

Nine months later, with The Siam still in the final phase of construction, the ambitious project is nothing short of stunning. Unfolding in three main sections from Khao Road to the river, the resort features Bangkok’s most spacious standard suites along with the city’s only private pool villas.

That construction has taken three years isn’t surprising. As Melanie notes, “In 2010 we had to deal with the red-shirt demonstrations, which



# A REGAL RIVER RESIDENCE

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A NEW DESIGN HOTEL MAKES THE DUSIT WATERFRONT  
A FASHIONABLE ADDRESS.