

**Indigo Pearl** deviates from the lush tropical or minimalist resorts that populate Phuket. Its designer, American landscape architect Bill Bensley of Bensley Design Studios, harked back to the island's origins as a tin mining centre to transform one of its oldest resorts, the outmoded Pearl Village, into Indigo Pearl.

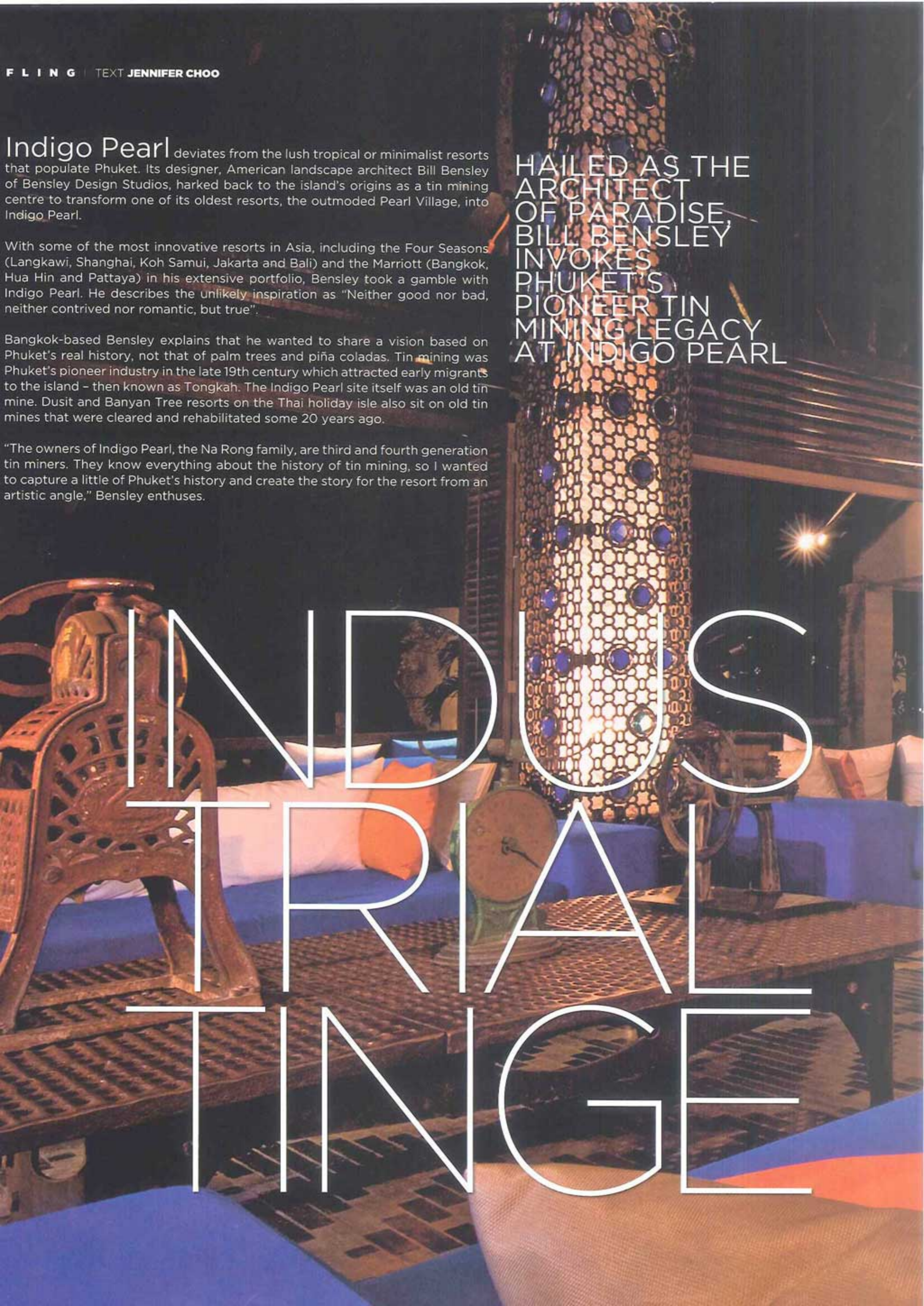
With some of the most innovative resorts in Asia, including the Four Seasons (Langkawi, Shanghai, Koh Samui, Jakarta and Bali) and the Marriott (Bangkok, Hua Hin and Pattaya) in his extensive portfolio, Bensley took a gamble with Indigo Pearl. He describes the unlikely inspiration as "Neither good nor bad, neither contrived nor romantic, but true".

Bangkok-based Bensley explains that he wanted to share a vision based on Phuket's real history, not that of palm trees and piña colodas. Tin mining was Phuket's pioneer industry in the late 19th century which attracted early migrants to the island - then known as Tongkah. The Indigo Pearl site itself was an old tin mine. Dusit and Banyan Tree resorts on the Thai holiday isle also sit on old tin mines that were cleared and rehabilitated some 20 years ago.

"The owners of Indigo Pearl, the Na Rong family, are third and fourth generation tin miners. They know everything about the history of tin mining, so I wanted to capture a little of Phuket's history and create the story for the resort from an artistic angle," Bensley enthuses.

HAILED AS THE ARCHITECT OF PARADISE, BILL BENSLEY INVOKES PHUKET'S PIONEER TIN MINING LEGACY AT INDIGO PEARL

# INDUS TRIALS TINGE

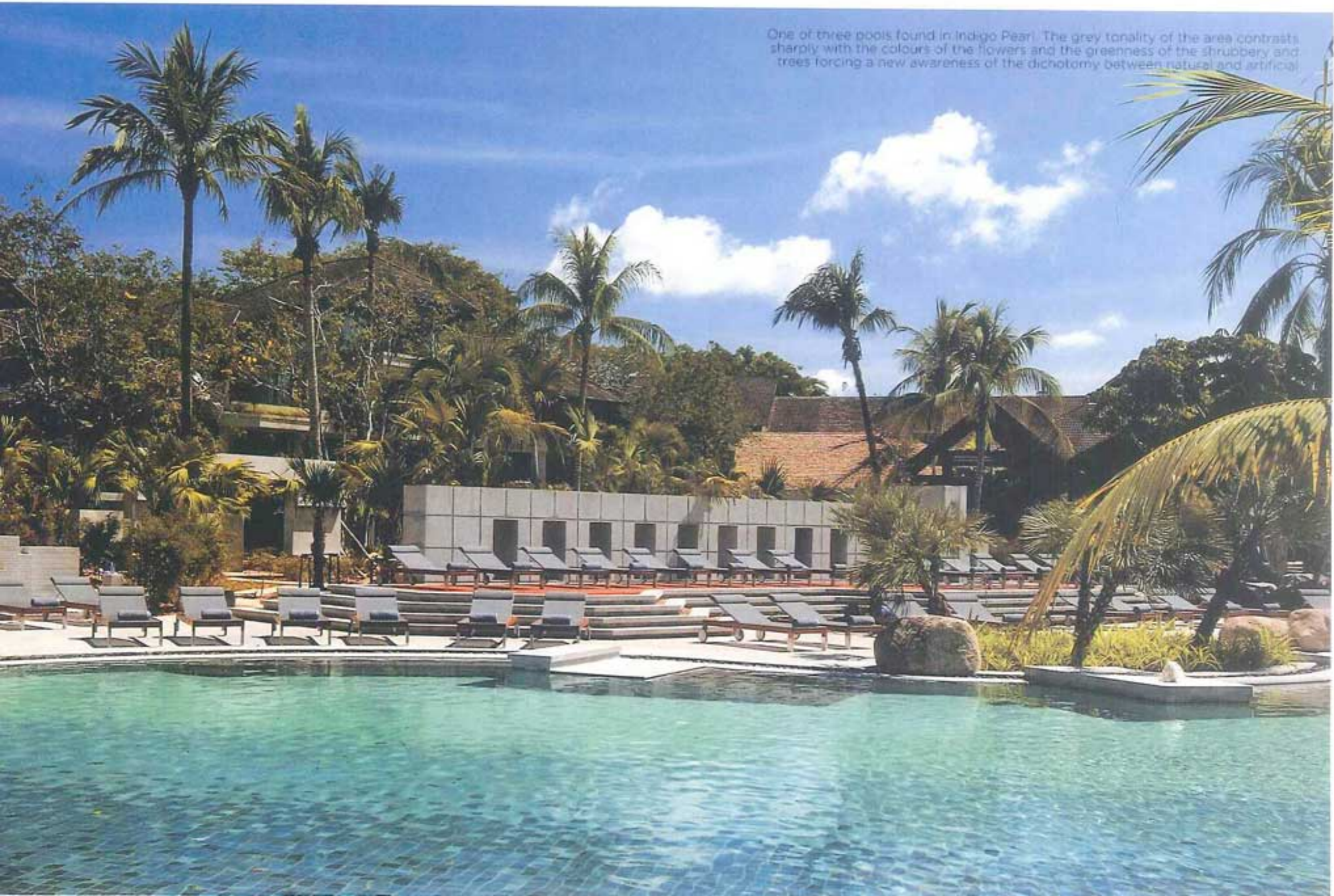




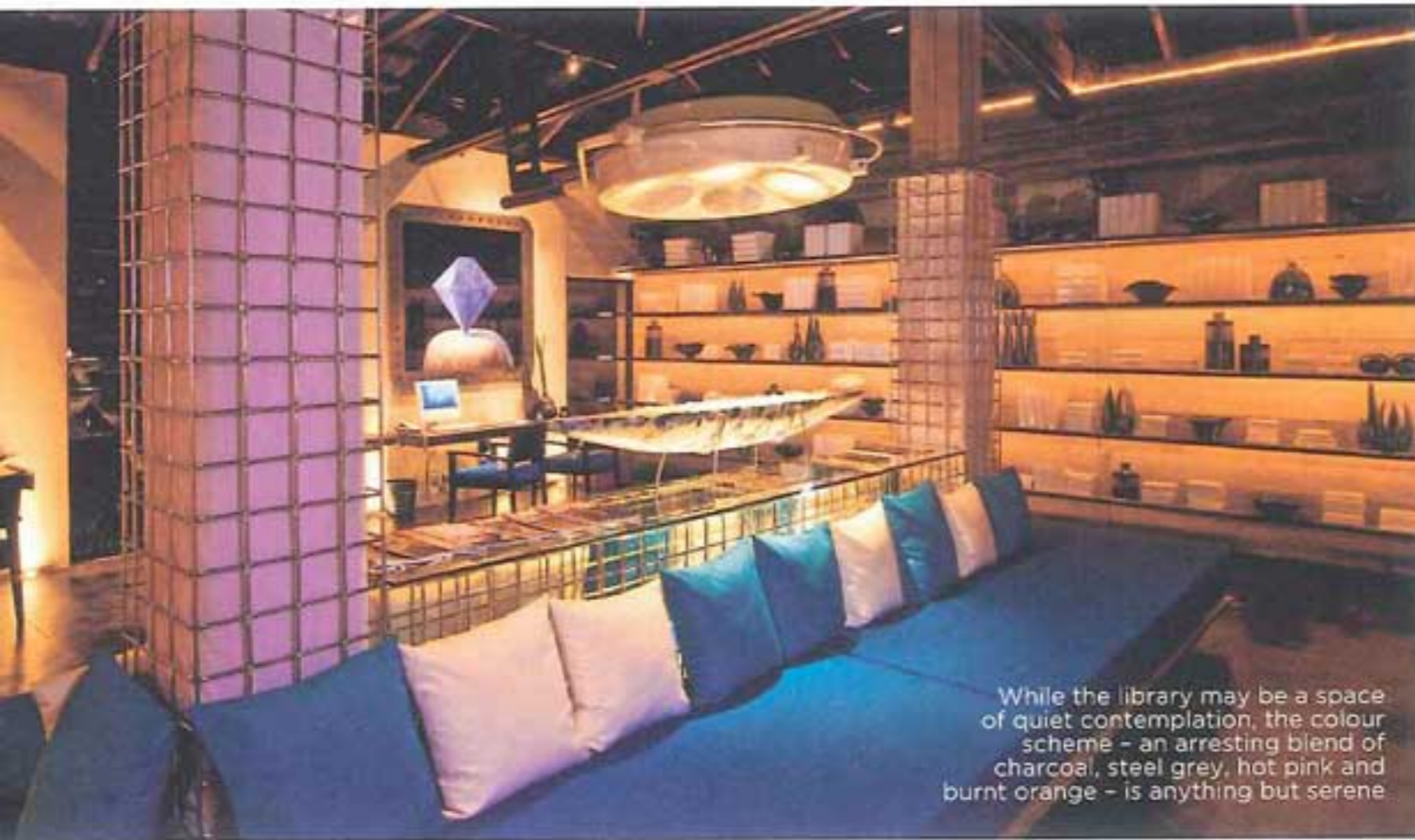
CONSTANT GARDENER TO ASIA'S  
FINEST LUXURY RESORTS, BENSLEY'S  
GREEN FINGERS AGAIN FIND LUSH  
EXPRESSION AT INDIGO PEARL

**ROUGH LUXE**

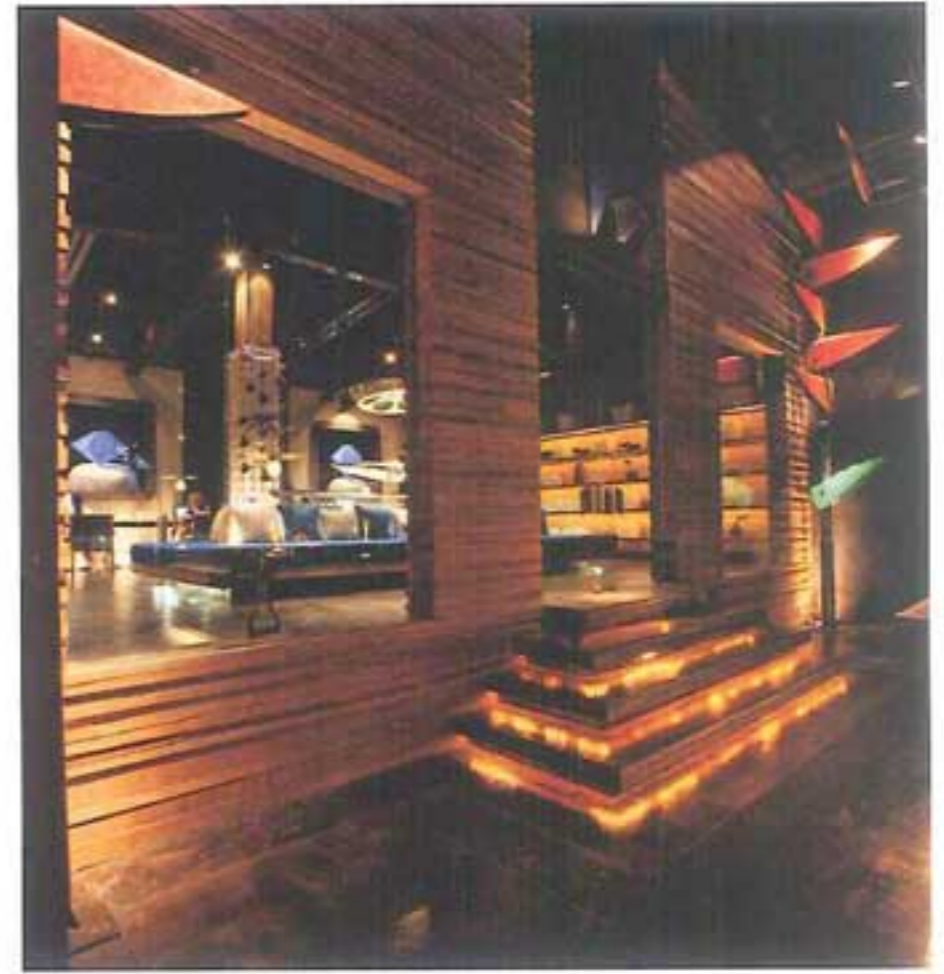
Nestled on the fringe of Nai Yang Beach on a quieter part of the island, Indigo Pearl sets itself apart from the average resort with its unusual combination of industrial textures and traditional Thai patterns with a modern spin. Bensley's homage to Phuket's tin mining past could have been kitschy but he deftly avoids this with an artistic approach filled with surprising, stylish details.



One of three pools found in Indigo Pearl. The grey tonality of the area contrasts sharply with the colours of the flowers and the greenness of the shrubbery and trees forcing a new awareness of the dichotomy between natural and artificial.



While the library may be a space of quiet contemplation, the colour scheme – an arresting blend of charcoal, steel grey, hot pink and burnt orange – is anything but serene.



Bensley does not shy away from unrefined materials to evoke a Thai tin processing factory of a century ago. In the loft-like lobby, sleekly polished cement floors and blackened stainless steel punctuated by rivets – a leitmotif found in the lobby, restaurants and bars as well as the background of its website – add a raw edge. But keenly aware that cement and steel can be cold, Bensley introduced raw Thai silk fabrics and floral arrangements.

The vast luxurious lobby has sky-high vaulted teak ceilings, indigo sofas strewn with cushions and ornate teak tables displaying sculptures fashioned from obscure machine parts for a tableau of extravagant panache.





IN THE RIVET GRILL, BENSLEY OPTED FOR SEATS WHICH ENCOMPASS THE GUESTS, RECALLING SLEEPER CARRIAGES IN TRAINS



The skilful juxtaposition of hard and soft materials and textures continues throughout the public spaces and engages the senses at every turn. It is most evident in the six dining and drinking outlets which run the gamut from Thai cuisine (Black Ginger) to a steakhouse (Rivet Grill). Each outlet is meticulously designed to be an experience - from architecture to the choice of cutlery. Black Ginger is the paragon of Thai vernacular architecture, set in a pavilion in the middle of a lotus pond. Bensley subverts it by using burnt black timber for a dramatic edge. Over at Rivet Grill, the narrow space with steel flooring and tall columns is furnished with funky, loose furniture for a look that's more of a dark, brooding rebel.



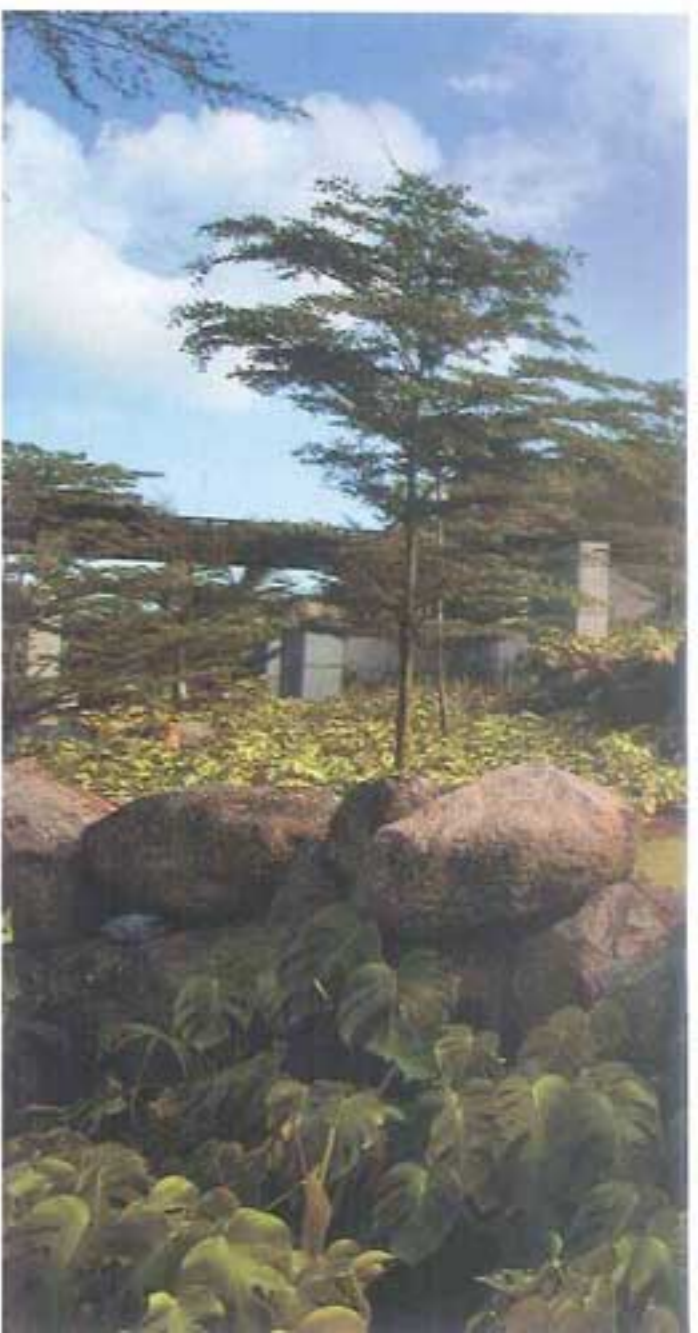
REBAR'S POST-  
APOCALYPTIC-MEETS-  
LUXURY DECOR

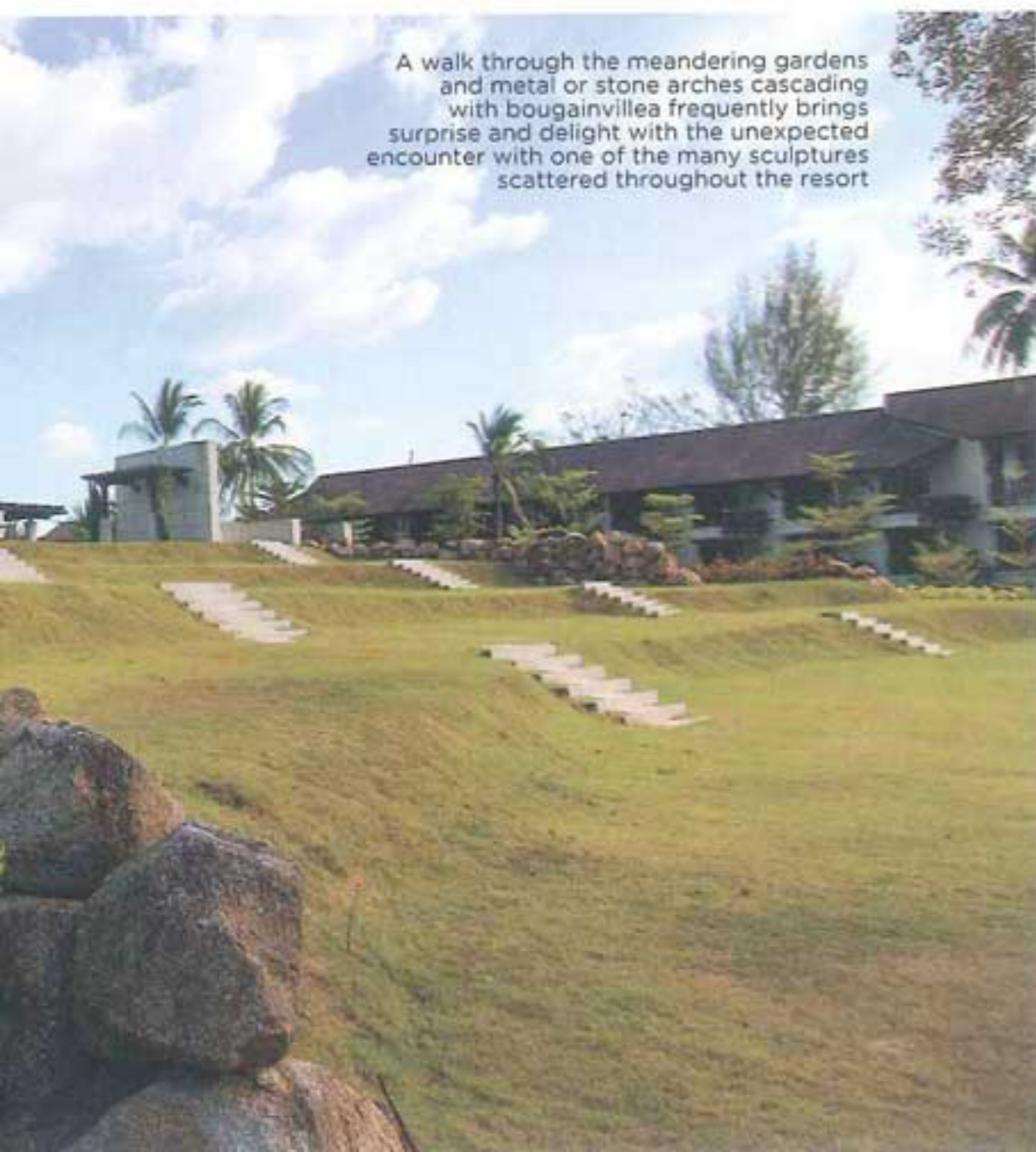
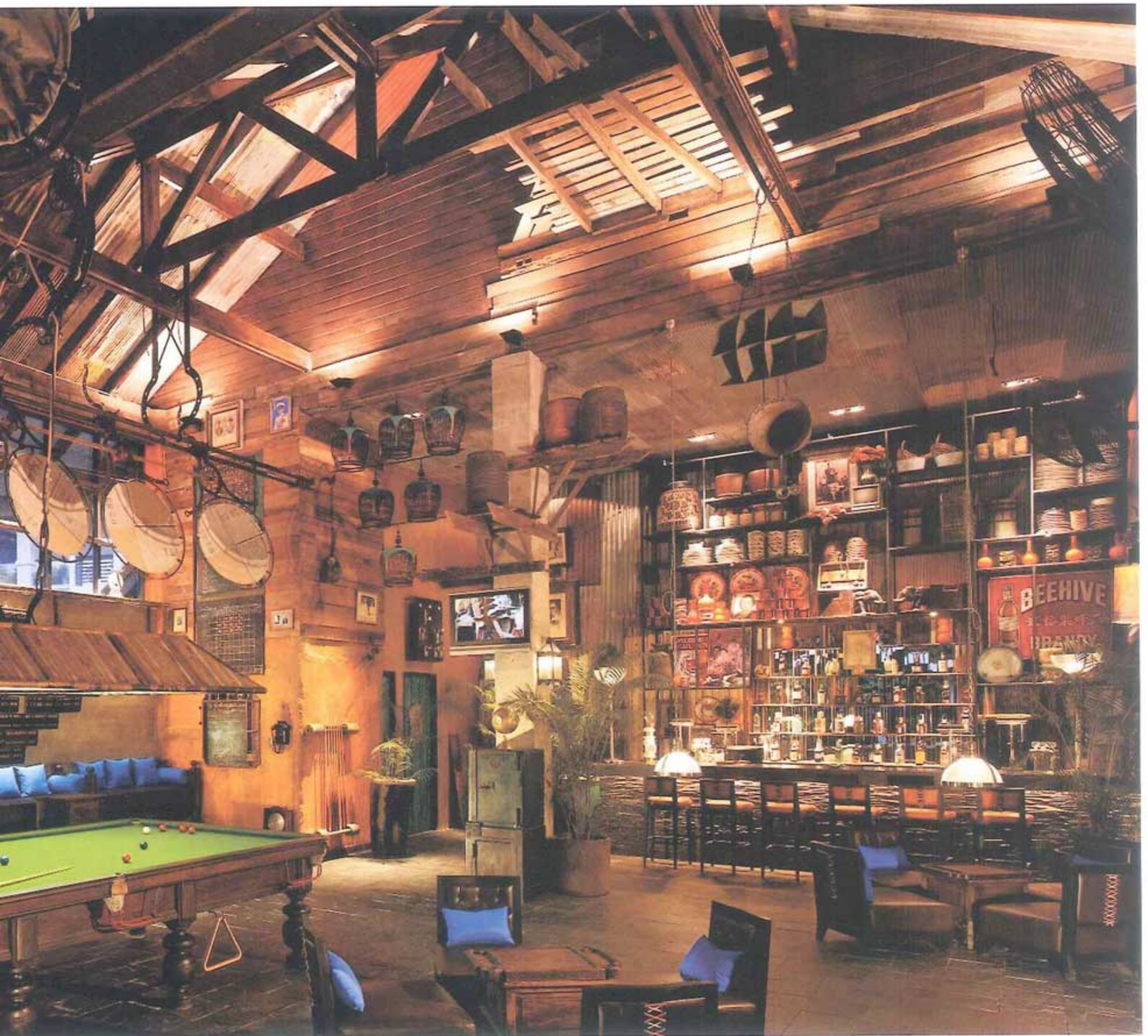
TONGKAH TIN SYNDICATE BAR REFLECTS NOT SO MUCH PHUKET'S TIN MINING HISTORY AS THE HERITAGE OF THE OWNER'S FAMILY - WALLS ARE COVERED WITH BRIC-A-BRAC, MEMORABILIA, AND SEPIA-TONED PHOTOGRAPHS

Bensley showcased the Na Rong family's collection of mining paraphernalia inside the Tongkah Tin Syndicate, Indigo Pearl's snooker hall. Guests can peruse the fascinating objects such as vintage scoring boards and a tin bathtub mounted up in the rafters.



The Tin Mine



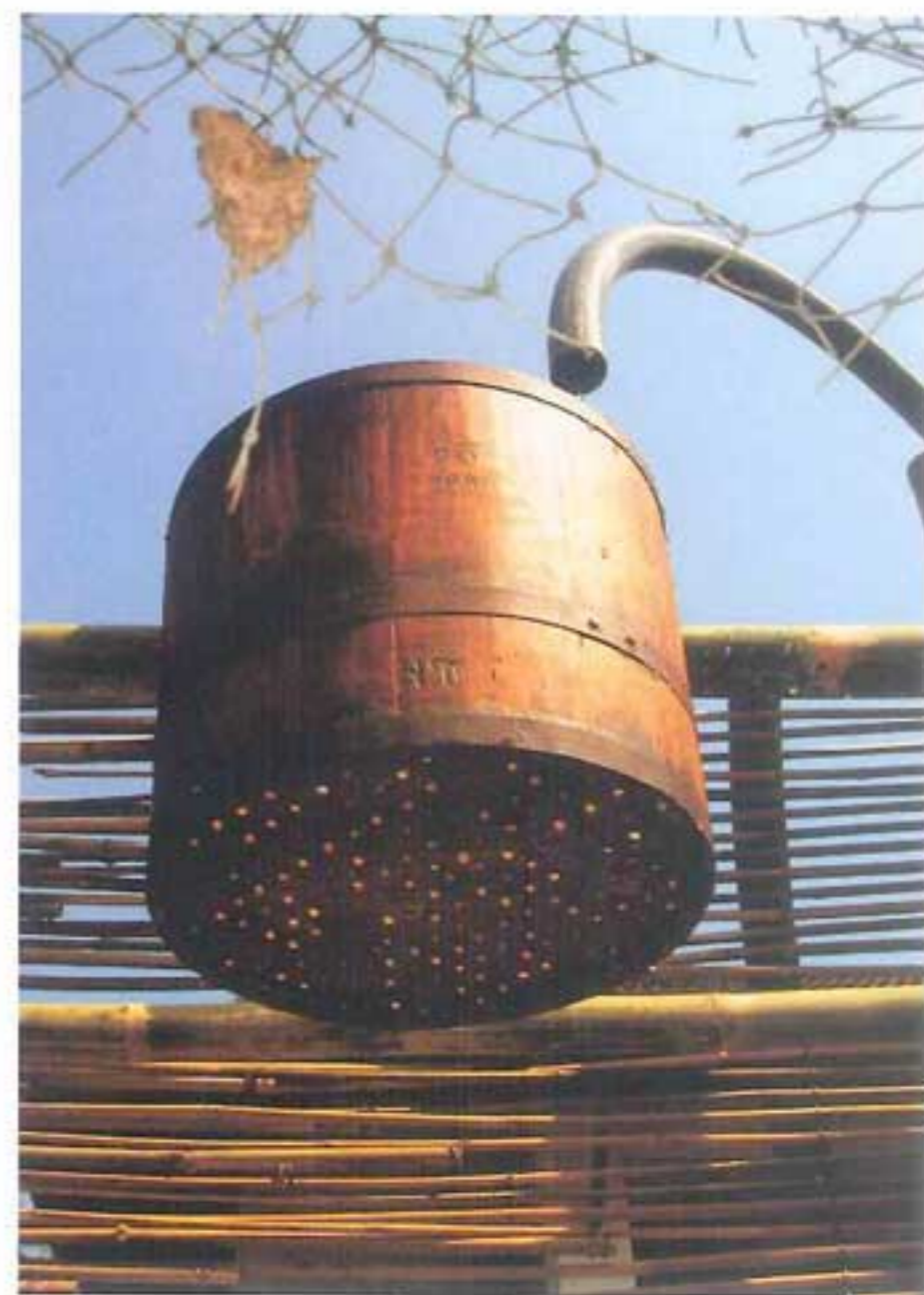
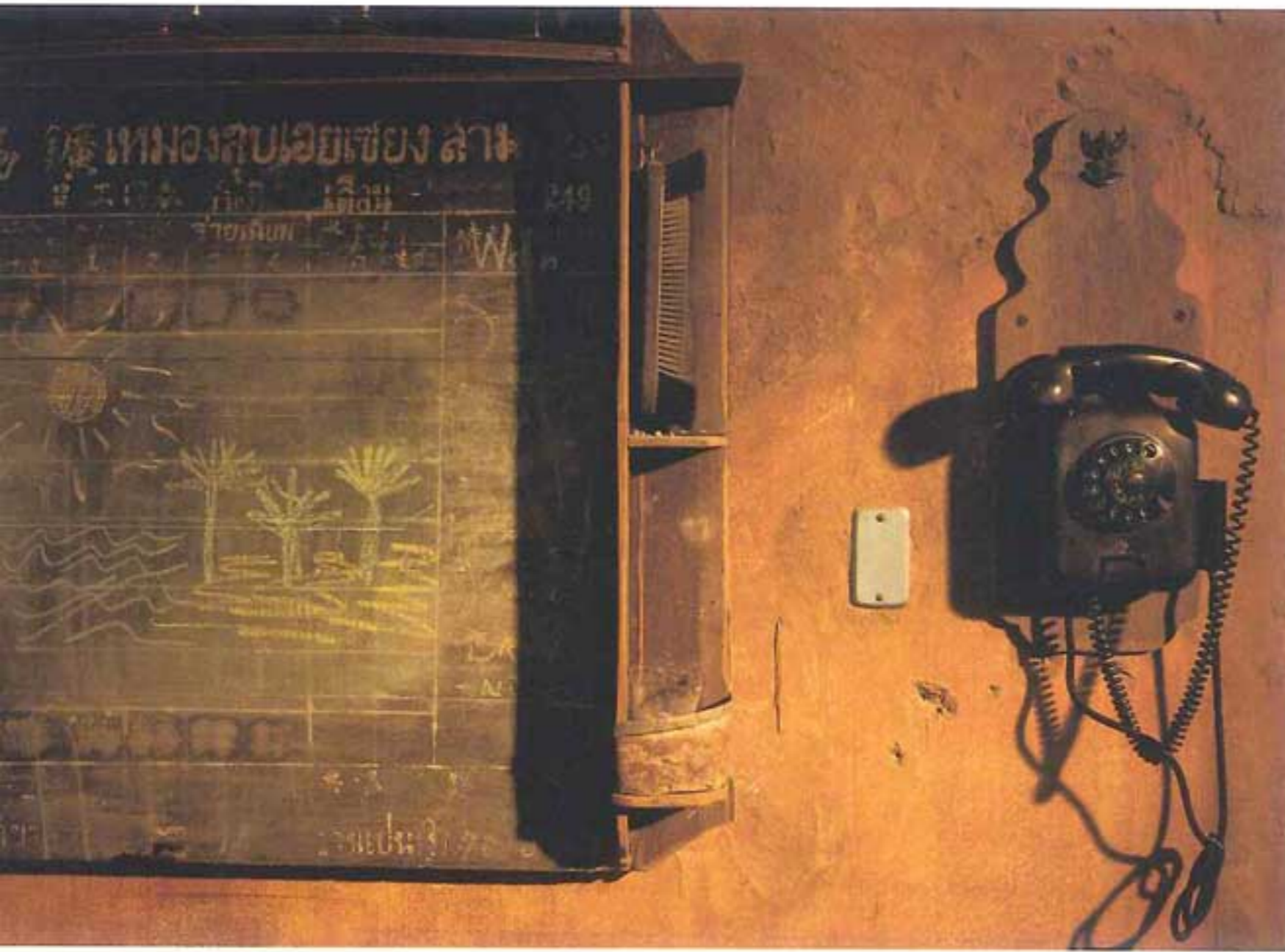


A walk through the meandering gardens and metal or stone arches cascading with bougainvillea frequently brings surprise and delight with the unexpected encounter with one of the many sculptures scattered throughout the resort



### GREEN FINGERS

An early innovator in creating 'outdoor rooms' defined by flora and sculpture instead of walls, Bensley transformed a mature garden into a post-modern landscape. Silvery blue palms jostle with light blue plumbago (blue jasmine) bushes while antique-style iron gates mark the entrances to smaller pocket gardens, each with individual character. Sculpture pieces by artists such as John Underwood and found metal objects also add definition to the lushness. Art aficionados will be delighted to know that they are for sale.



Idiosyncratic elements charm and amuse – rice buckets become rain showers, and abacuses make wall art.

#### REVERED PAST

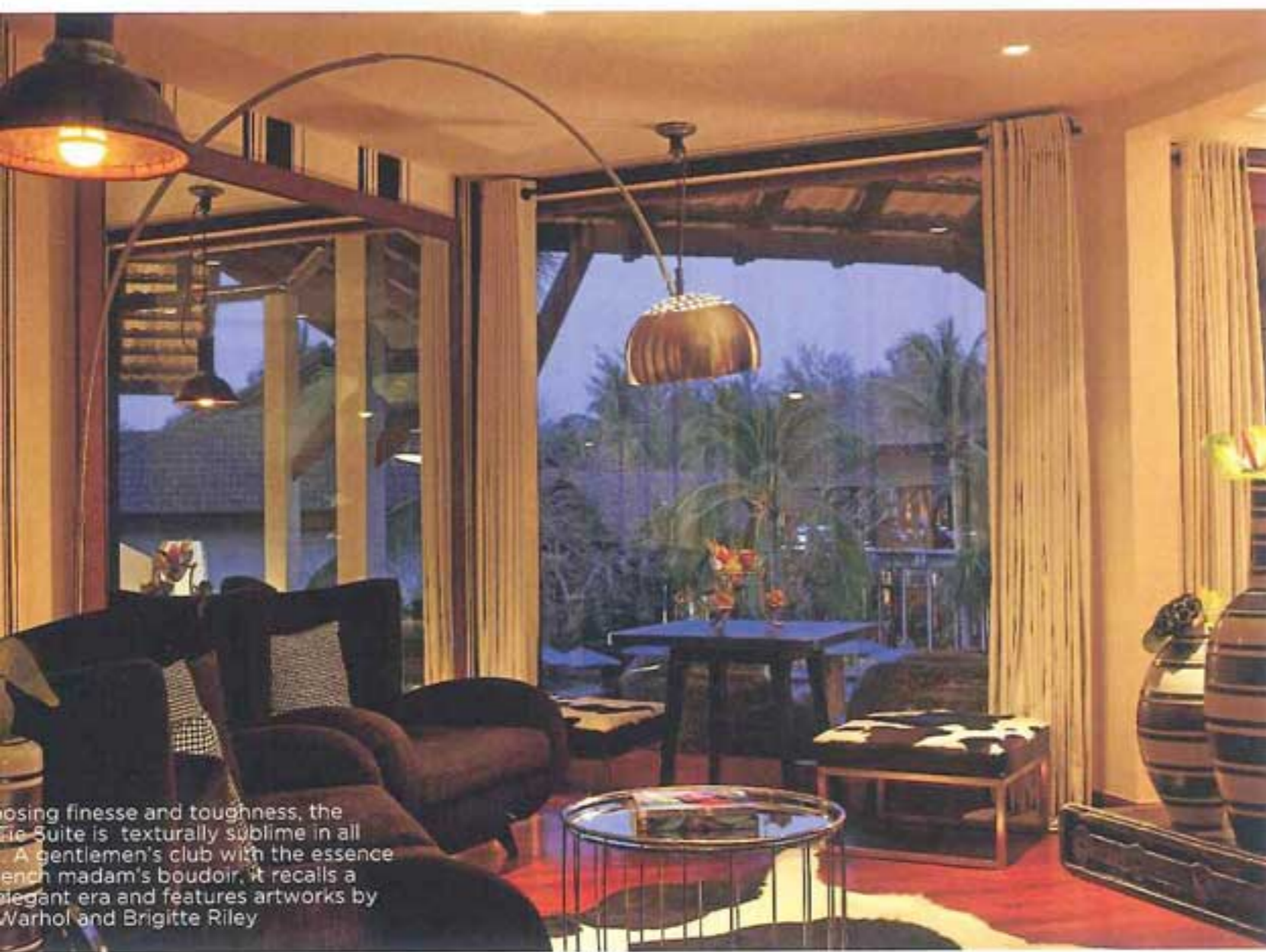
When guests retreat into the private guestrooms, villas and pavilions, they distance themselves even further from what Phuket's other hotels offer. At the Kelly Quarters, named for machinery once used to excavate tin mines, Bensley works with textural contrasts of the post-modern and locally crafted furnishings.

The Captain Miles Suite is one of two nautical themed suites, both embodying the classic blue and white theme of anything embodying water and sky. The Captain Miles Suite is named after Captain Edward Thomas Miles, the Australian who brought the first tin dredger to Phuket in 1909.





ROOMS COMBINE POST-MODERN OPULENCE AND FACTORY BASIC. GUESTS CAN EXPECT WITTY INDUSTRIAL TOUCHES LIKE A NUT-AND-BOLT TOILET PAPER HOLDER AND OLD-FASHIONED OUTDOOR METAL SHOWERS WITH BAMBOO WATER TANKS



Combining finesse and toughness, the Indigo Suite is texturally sublime in all its details. A gentlemen's club with the essence of a French madam's boudoir, it recalls a bygone elegant era and features artworks by Warhol and Brigitte Riley

Besides Phuket's distant past, materials reclaimed from the 2004 tsunami also serve as inspiration and feature throughout the hotel; reclaimed wood was re-invented as headboards. Everything has a touch of tin, from the doors to the washroom taps. Even the boxes for amenities feature rusty nuts and bolts embedded in Lucite.

Bensley's association with the Indigo Pearl continues as the designer and the Na Rong family have become close friends. Bensley continues to add new layers to the Indigo Pearl experience. Recently, he exhibited 10 one-of-a-kind bronze 'tin mining' sculptures in the resort lobby and subsequently auctioned them with proceeds donated to the orphans at the Phuket Sunshine Village. **f**

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The Moken Suite is named after the Moken tribe, wandering sea dwellers believed to have been the first inhabitants of the Andaman coastal regions of Thailand