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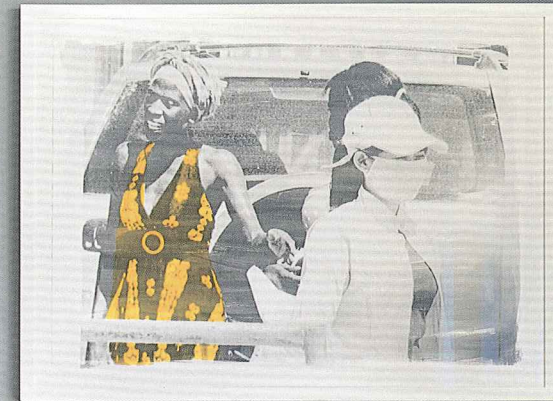
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AD Escape

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Stunning views take centre stage at Villa Similan in Phuket

Villa Similan (pictured, top) is one of 15 luxury villas at Layan Residences



HIGH AND MIGHTY

OPULENCE COMES IN MEASURED BUT IMPACTFUL DOSES AT VILLA SIMILAN, THE PHUKET HOME OF HOTELIER WILLIAM HEINECKE THAT'S OPEN TO ALL

Words HENRY WINDRIDGE

Perched high on a hill overlooking Layan Bay in Phuket, Thailand, sits the late Indonesian design guru Jaya Ibrahim's last architectural masterpiece. Villa Similan's owner, the hotelier William E. Heinecke, splits his days between its avant-garde island heights and chairing his business empire from an executive suite above the bustling streets of Bangkok. Lofty heights aside, the two worlds couldn't be more different.

Heinecke runs some of the world's most beautiful hotels – he founded the Minor Group, which has Anantara resorts in its portfolio – and sought out the famed resort designer to envision his own tropical home.

"One of the pleasures of being a hotel developer is that you get to work with unique creative forces," says Heinecke, "As I get older I think what you're looking at is as important as what you're living in." The son of a Sumatran diplomat and a Javanese princess, Ibrahim was adept at creating spaces that drew from the beauty of their settings and ensured that the views of lush jungle and ocean panoramas take centre stage at Villa Similan. Open-plan layouts, clean lines and huge windows help to bring the outdoors in.

The residence seen from above resembles a collection of modern villas – freestanding bedrooms and indoor areas flowing seamlessly with outdoor living space. In total, the 3,600 sq/m villa boasts eight bedrooms set across two levels.

Tiled in Indonesian Sukabumi stone, the villa's infinity pool stretches 22 metres and features a submerged glass panel casting light into one of the bedrooms. Resting over the pool is the shaded pavilion with sunken seating around the dining table and an enviable vista on to the small island of Koh Kata that sits in Layan Bay.

Ibrahim's signature decorative touches add focal points inside, too, from the intricately carved wooden claw-foot beds to lattice-decked ceilings to the antique Burmese teak door that marks the residence's entryway.

Adding to the opulence, Heinecke commissioned other renowned designers to create one-of-a-kind spaces in his coastal home, as he envisaged it as 'a house where all the rooms would be heavily used - they were built for a purpose



Right: The villa's 22-metre infinity pool is tiled in Indonesian Sukabumi stone. Below: Kathy Heinecke has added pieces from the couple's private collection throughout the property
Opposite: Jaya Ibrahim's signature decorative touches include lattice-decked ceilings



JAYA IBRAHIM CREATED SPACES THAT DREW FROM THE BEAUTY OF THEIR SETTINGS

rather than being showpieces'. Hans Brouwer, the Asia-based protégé of Sir Norman Foster, designed a state-of-the-art spa, as well as a gym, private cinema and games room. The latter is home to a carved antique Thai billiards table and one of Heinecke's most prized personal possessions: the actual golden gun from the 1974 James Bond film shot in nearby Phang Nga Bay.

Away from the 'man cave', Kathy Heinecke – a former art dealer – has added pieces from the couple's private collection, including indigenous art from Papua New Guinea and South America, and a Zen-expressionist painting by Thailand's most famous artist, Thawan Duchanee.

While this is very much a personally curated home, Villa Similan is also available for private hire, and is one of 15 similar properties that form Layan Residences by Anantara, the first branded residential development by Heinecke's luxury hotel and resort brand. Heinecke notes that 'today's ultra-high net worth want privacy and creature comforts around them. It's all about quality time, which is the ultimate luxury'.

Of course, Phuket is not lacking in luxury villas. Amanpuri's villas, the island's first high-end resort residences, launched 30 years ago and sit a short ride down the beach – or across the bay, if you happen to have a private yacht like the 24-metre Sunseeker that Heinecke keeps moored just offshore. As such, Heinecke challenged his team to supercede the levels of luxury already on offer in this mature holiday destination. Personal butlers, chefs and in-villa spa treatments come as standard, ensuring each property is a cossetting private sanctuary. As the Anantara Layan Phuket resort is handily located next door though, villa residents can also use the many facilities it offers, which for Heinecke means 'easy entertaining, and throwing lots of dinners and parties – the resort team are like our own in-house event organisers'. Although, those seeking tropical seclusion may prefer to keep the villas all to themselves. □ anantara.com

