

MUH BAH

HARMONY

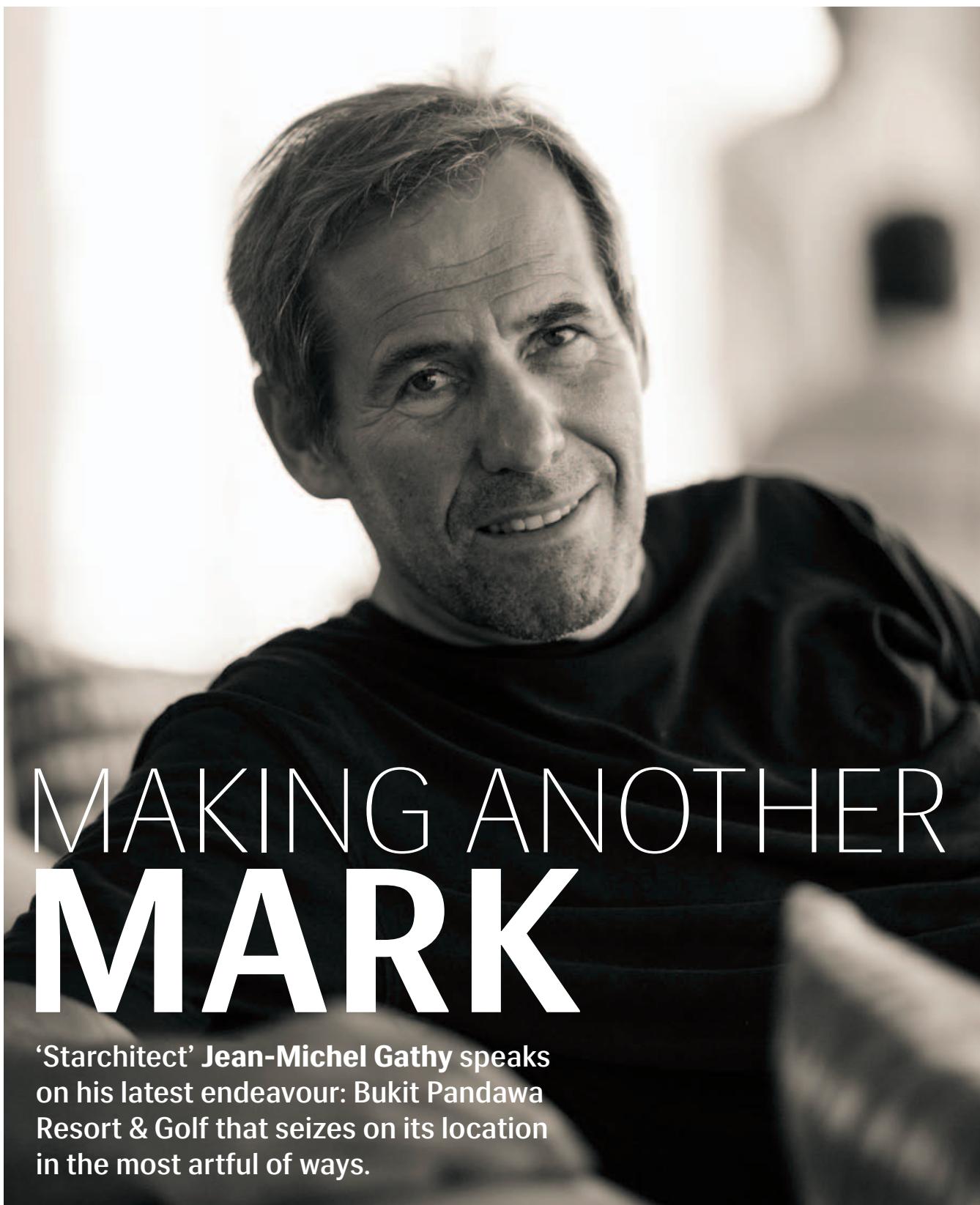
ROYAL BRUNEI AIRLINES | JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2018

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LIFESTYLE IN PERSON



MAKING ANOTHER MARK

‘Starchitect’ Jean-Michel Gathy speaks on his latest endeavour: Bukit Pandawa Resort & Golf that seizes on its location in the most artful of ways.



How did the opportunity to masterplan Bukit Pandawa Resort & Golf come about?

A few years ago, a gentleman by the name of Tjian An (President/Director of Bukit Pandawa Resort & Golf's ownership group, PT Bali Ragawisata) came to me and said: "We have 150 gorgeous hectares on the south coast of Bali and we would like for you to come and see it." So I did, and I adored it. We're talking two kilometres of seafront, with land sloping perfectly down toward a 70-metre high cliff overlooking a beach and the ocean.

I thought the topography was hospitable for development as every square foot was usable, which is extremely unusual. Also, I could see there would be no major inconvenience, with the rolling hills set between the coastal road and the ocean. No interruptions, and only glorious views.

What are the key components?

There will ultimately be four hotels, including the first Mandarin Oriental hotel in Bali, which our company, Denniston, designed. There will also be a Waldorf Astoria, a Swissôtel and another world-class hotel we cannot divulge the name of yet. They will all be 'linked' by a championship-calibre golf course that is already open. And on the highest part of the property, you'll have 91 of the most amazing villas – The Residences at Mandarin Oriental Bali.

Why is having something that links the hotels together important?

With any sprawling property like this, you must have what I call "a vector". And the vector here is the 18-hole, executive golf course, which you'll be able to see from the front or back of the hotels. The ownership group hired an American golf course designer, Bob Moore (of JMP Golf in California), who did a magnificent job in fine tuning our routing concept into an extraordinary, all-par-3 golf design that you are able to play within two hours instead of the four or five hours a standard golf course requires. I think for many people, that's a very nice amenity.

What will make the Mandarin Oriental, Bali, and The Residences at Mandarin Oriental, Bali, unique?

The Residences at Mandarin Oriental, Bali, will occupy a dream-like spot on the property, behind the Mandarin Oriental, Bali. Because of the topography, The Residences will have the most magnificent, unobstructed sea views during the day. Then, when night falls and the ocean goes dark, you'll experience the full effect of a lighting system that is simply remarkable. The developers hired a world-class lighting consultant, Flaming Beacon from Australia, to implement a lighting scheme that will serve both the hotel closer to the cliff and create an extraordinary foreground decor for The Residences. You will not have a high-rise building impeding the view for The Residences. You will have interplay between the 88, one-level room pavilions and nine hectares of tropical landscape.

What other features will Bukit Pandawa possess?

There will also be a free-standing small village near the Swissôtel Bali, which is designed to be more interactive and lively and young and fun. The Waldorf Astoria will be located proudly along the cliff's edge and relatively close to the Swissôtel. The village will have absolutely no influence on any of the hotels, though. We'll have higher density in one corner, but still low density compared to most projects in the world, and lower density as you move away from the village and especially at the other end of the property where a 43-room boutique hotel is to be located.

How have you incorporated Balinese style into this project?

This is the thing. There are so many hotels in Bali, and so many have the same sorts of design elements such as the thatched roof, because obviously it is so Balinese. But when you do too much of something ... well, let me just explain it like this: I like chocolate. But when I have my coffee, I have just one piece of chocolate, not 10 pieces. If you make me eat the box, I would vomit. It's just too much!

So what, then, is the right amount of 'Bali'?

We have reached a time in Bali where we have to start distilling Balinese architecture a little better. So what we've done is kept and respected all the values of Balinese culture – the ceremony of the bath, the respect for the head of the village, the sequences of entry in the courtyard, the type of double doors, etc. But we've used them in a contemporary fashion. 