

Modernist Homage

Ever since Hollywood heroes Indiana Jones and Lara Croft thrust the temples of Angkor into the popular imagination, the neighbouring town of Siem Reap has seen an influx of tourists, some a little too adventurous. They arrive in droves for the twilight temple tours and stay up until the wee hours of the morning drinking the tax-free alcohol on Street 08, known among backpackers as Pub Street. The small town, which is actually a group of loosely connected villages along the Siem Reap River, heaves under the weight of all this attention.

It's precisely this village feeling that a number of repatriated Cambodians and newly settled expatriates are reviving in the small but dynamic community of what has always been the country's creative capital. A host of boutiques, cafes and galleries have mushroomed along the river and the town's fringes, providing a new wave of slower and more conscious travellers with a means to engage with and learn about the local culture.

Enter Hok Kang, a US-trained architect who spent a year working with Kengo Kuma in Japan before returning home to Siem Reap and establishing his own firm. Five years ago, while walking along the river, Kang spotted an undeveloped piece of land for sale or rent, which he thought would make the perfect location for a new outpost of Brown, the coffee shop chain he runs with his cousins. The space proved to be far too large for just a cafe and the landlord refused to subdivide, so Kang, who in

hindsight blames youthful naivety, decided to develop a hotel on the site instead — and so Treeline Urban Resort was born.

Kang and his team at HKA & Partners have designed the hotel with an organic modernist approach, and with an overarching emphasis on sustainability. Materials — mostly concrete, terrazzo and local hardwoods — are what Kang calls 'unpretentious'. The furniture, soft furnishings and objets d'art have been made or sourced locally from eco-friendly suppliers, and you won't find single-use plastic anywhere in the hotel.

On entering the hotel's tranquil foyer, the eye is drawn to a sculptural artwork by renowned Cambodian artist Sopheap Pich. Mesmerising installations by artist Sothea Tang adorn the spa and each of the 48 guest rooms, but the hotel's commitment to creativity goes beyond mere decoration. Treeline regularly collaborates with local curator Meta Moeng, and the hotel's open-air gallery plays host to a number of events throughout the year. Along with these events, the gallery's permanent collection also helps to expose visitors and locals to contemporary Cambodian art.

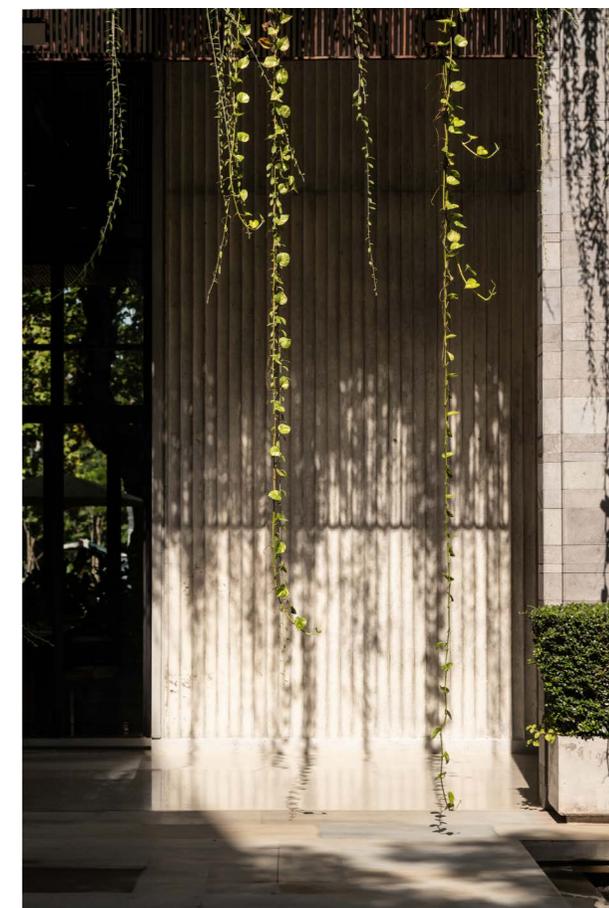
The entire resort is in fact an homage to ancient Khmer craft and culture, and makes for a unique base from which to explore cultural sites and experiences further off the beaten track — and the hotel staff are more than willing to share their recommendations based on your interests.

Text
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Top
Architect Hok Kang took a modernist approach to designing Treeline Urban Resort, a new hotel on the Siem Reap River that has an overarching emphasis on sustainability. While the hotel offers a way for more conscious travellers to engage with the city's culture and history, it also offers relaxation via a rooftop infinity pool

Bottom
Within the resort, culture comes in the form of an on-site gallery and permanent art collection. Setting the tone is an ivy-draped entryway, which gives way to a sculptural installation by renowned local artist Sopheap Pich in the lobby





Facing page
 A material palette of terrazzo, concrete and local hardwoods predominates, giving what Kang calls an 'unpretentious' feel



This page
 Organic installations by artist Sothea Tang adorn each of the guest rooms. Furniture, soft furnishings and design objects are all locally made or sourced, and the hotel avoids single-use plastic

