



Ministry of Design



suites are furnished with modern luxuries.



the buildings. — Ministry of Design

racted and contemporary, designed the contents of the containing the "in-room"

uch of the collateral is styled spond to the heritage of LTK. her example is the lattice-k in the reception area which inspired by the intricate tile erns that are typical of shop- se typology. The idea was to tinue" the tiling pattern three ensionally but in a more ract and subtle way.

hat kind of experience do want visitors to take away 1 LTK and how is that eved?

We believe that underpinning each project with a singular idea, and helping consumers to understand the singular concept's translation into experience, would enable them to appreciate the overall experience better. We call this "question, disturb, redefine".

While our earlier award-winning heritage projects like The New Majestic in Singapore attempted to capture heritage in an unfiltered way, and the Macalister Mansion was designed around a quasi-historic narrative, the Loke Thyee Kee Residences attempt to contemporise elements of heritage through materials and their aesthetics.



Crane sculpture with a uniquely-shaped piece of teak wood for the body, a head and wings of sterling silver, legs of steel and eyes of tiger-eye quartz. — Handout



The three Chinese gods Fu, Lu, Shou designed around a ping pong-sized ball of Galuchat leather, with embellished faces and ornaments from sterling silver; the gilded parts are done in 24k gold leaves. — Handout



Ostrich egg and sterling silver dragon container based on the 'dragon chasing the pearl of wisdom' mythology. The dragon's eyes are made with red coral. — Photos: S.S.KANESAN/The Star



Teak wood, dual crocodile head sculpture decorated with sterling silver, on a granite stand.

## House of art

By WONG LI ZA  
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UPON entering, a dark brown bowl made with cinnamon wood and embellished with silver frog figurines around it is the first thing that greets visitors. Two baby elephants made of fibre glass and steel serve as adorable stools on the floor while on the walls, paintings from different artists are hung.

The venue is House of Lotus Arts de Vivre, the Thai-based luxury jewellery, homeware and accessories brand that recently set up home in Kuala Lumpur with a private retail boutique.

The new outlet houses the brand's full repertoire of products, which includes jewellery, home furnishings, paintings and carpets.

Established over 30 years ago, Lotus Arts de Vivre began as a mere hobby for Helen von Bueren in Bangkok when her two sons went to study abroad.

Today, the family-owned company's products are found in Lotus Arts de Vivre boutiques in luxury hotels and jewellery stores in 15 countries, led by von Bueren's husband, Rolf, and their sons, Nicki and Sri.

Known for its one-of-a-kind creations, Lotus Arts' designs feature Asian themes, animal-inspired items, and, always, some ornate pieces.

One piece we notice is a double-headed crocodile sculpture designed from free form teak wood, with the spine crafted in sterling silver.

Apart from standard materials like wood, lacquer and silver, the company also uses more unusual materials like coconut shells, nuts and ostrich egg shells in its designs.

With these materials, they seek out traditional craft techniques — India for gem-cutting, Indonesia for wood carving, Thailand for silverwork, Japan for makie (gold) lacquer and China for cinnabar lacquer — and produce both one-off and limited pieces.

"We are inspired by materials and techniques generally," says Nicki at a



According to Nicki, Lotus Arts de Vivre collaborates with craftsmen throughout Asia.

recent meeting in Kuala Lumpur. "What we like to work with are materials and techniques that we pick up throughout the world."

"We then take it back to our workshop in Bangkok and redesign and reuse those materials to make something more modern and appealing."

"I think that's what's unique about us. Let's say we find an interesting piece of stone or wood, then we work around it, creating a unique piece, and that's how we differ from other brands. Every piece has a story and uniqueness to it."

"A lot of our work is a collaboration with other craftsmen and uses materials that are in abundance in Asia," he adds.

Nicki then explains that the cinnamon bowl is laboriously handmade with spice sticks from Indonesia.

"The bowl is great for flowers at a reception area, for example."

He proceeds to show me some plates made with mother-of-pearl adorned with silver animals and insects. There's a carved, wooden bowl that is perfect for keys too. On the coffee table is a cinnabar

lacquer flat bowl from China, which Lotus Arts redesigned with cloud patterns on the inside of the bowl, topped with floral motifs. Many of their pieces make great corporate and personal gifts.

"People are looking for interesting and special gifts these days. Our wood art pieces do well too," says Nicki.

On to the mezzanine level, a dining table is set out with dinnerware that includes glasses with colourful Chinese enamel cloisonne bases, and wood and silver candelabras.

On shelves facing the table are an ostrich egg shell surrounded and clasped by a sterling silver dragon, inspired by the "dragon chasing the pearl of wisdom" mythology.

The company has long-standing relationships with artists and material suppliers.

"For instance, we've been working for 15 years with an artist from north Japan in fine lacquer for jewellery pieces.

"We just give him the forms, and let him have free hand to design them. Then we embellish and finish the product in Bangkok."

In homeware and furniture, the company uses a lot of lacquer (cinnabar and synthetic) and wood (teak, root wood, burwood) and silver.

Half of the products are one-off pieces, and although designs are repeated, they are mostly not identical.

"For us, 100 is a big number (of pieces)," Nicki says.

The elephant stools are also available in the bulldog, rhinoceros, hippopotamus and dachshund collections too.

"They are cute, fun, decorative and they make you smile," he says with a smile.

The key designers in the business are Rolf and Sri, who travel, go to museums, walk high streets and visit art fairs to find inspiration and keep Lotus Arts designs fresh and unique.

**The House of Lotus is located at No. 261, Jalan Maarof, Bangsar, Kuala Lumpur. Prices start from RM1,000.**