

INDIGO PEARL

Phuket

BENSLEY MASTERMIND BEHIND TREETOP 'NEST' SPA DESIGN AT PHUKET'S INDIGO PEARL

"The odder the better" – Bill Bensley

As a specialist in styling exotic Asian luxury resorts, Bangkok-based architect and landscape designer Bill Bensley is not for the feint-hearted.

"I like things quirky, a bit strange and the odder the better," he says and his off-beat mantra has been eloquently demonstrated over the years at some of Asia's most praised hotels including the acclaimed Indigo Pearl in Phuket.

Widely applauded as a design masterpiece having scooped 'Asia's Leading Design Hotel' at the World Travel Awards 2010 and praise from Conde Nast Traveler and HAPA amongst others; Bensley has taken Indigo Pearl's 'raw-industrial meets sensual-chic' styling to another level with the unveiling a new cutting-edge spa – **Coqoon Spa** – just opened.

Modeled on his boyhood vision of a 'Garden of Eden', Coqoon Spa boasts six individual treatment rooms and a lavish spa suite complete with private pool, Vichy rain shower, steam room and sauna. Its *pièce de résistance* is 'The Nest' – the spa's signature treatment suite suspended midair in the branches of what is thought to be Phuket's oldest *banyan* tree.

Accessed by a 'flying bridge', it allows guests to get up close and personal to nature and the internationally renowned designer is the first to admit: "we have designed many spas, but none like this one."

"I consider myself a designer of environments. There are no boundaries. As a landscape architect I've been taught to protect the earth and environment, and as an architect I want to do the same," he continues.

'The Nest' is undoubtedly unique. Hand-woven and hovering 10-metres up in the branches, he says it satisfied his dream of "doing something Bensley, quirky and different from any other place in Thailand".

It also aligns with his philosophy summed up by the Indonesian phrase *lebih gila, lebih biak*, which means 'the more odd, the better'.

"I love art, the art of making things by hand, the idea of weaving by hand a big nest or cocoon in a tree is something that appealed to my weird sense of aesthetics," he says. "My brief was to design something Bensley, something no one had experienced in Thailand before and The Nest does exactly that. A personal favourite are the Brancussi

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influenced chandeliers and lights in the Nest itself – we used cast bronze in a modern way to create fantastical dwarf trees and big birds”.

As a landscape architect, he is also extremely eco-sensitive. “Much of my work is based on eco-nature,” he explains. “I believe that respecting Mother Nature and the natural sites we are given is my calling in life as a landscape architect.

“Years from now the *banyan* tree will grow around our cocoon and embrace it in its own way. The interplay of this gorgeous tree is paramount. The chic aspect is secondary. I love resorts where you can still find a few surprises, new details on your fourth or fifth day.”

Bensley readily acknowledges that his latest design statement is a testament to his mantra. He also sees it as a “natural progression of the artistic language set up with the rest of the resort”; and the product of a special relationship with its owners, the Na-Ranong family who have steadfastly backed his unusual design instincts to the hilt.

“We’ve become great friends since I started working on the resort,” he adds. “We enjoy many long, fun dinners and go places together. So the opportunity to have some more fun with my friends was, of course, very attractive.”

Project Data

Project Name:	Coqoon Spa at Indigo Pearl
Location:	Indigo Pearl
Architecture Firm:	Bensley Design
Design Team:	Bill Bensley and Khun Ord
Contractor:	John Underwood
Project Duration:	1-year from start to finish. Completion date – February 2011
Site Area:	Approximately 3,200 Sq. M(2 Rai)
Floor Area:	Floor area (indoors and outdoors) for each unit as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reception : 75 Sq.M• Office : 45 Sq.M• The Nest : 70 Sq.M• Deluxe : 80 Sq.M x 6 = 480 Sq.M• Salon : 160 Sq.M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coqoon Suite 330 Sq.M
Number of Rooms:	6 deluxe treatment rooms 1x Nest 1x Spa Suite
Design Brief:	To do something Bensley, something quirky and different from any other spa in Thailand
Signature Feature:	A Hand-woven spa nest hovering 10-metres above ground level in the branches of an old Banyan Tree
Key Materials:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Perimeter and internal walls : reinforced concrete texture• Ceiling : mainly from timber with supporting beams made of recycled railway sleepers• Floors: polished cement acid stained in tree roots patterns, The Nest and Suite has parquet floors• Outdoor decking : all seasoned hardwood• The Nest: outer clad is synthetic rattan• The reception structure is timber• The privacy screens above perimeter walls are recycled corrugated zinc sheets
Key Colours:	Silery-blue palms and hues of plumbago

- Ends-

For further information or high resolution images please contact:

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