Nongkrong Lounge with lime plaster walls made using low-carbon minerals, upcycled aggregates, recycled glass and plant fibres.

Arousing the Senses

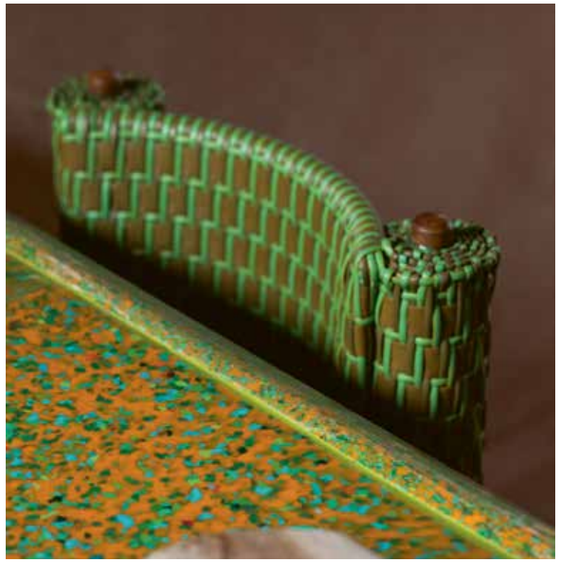
Tucked away in the hills of Ubud, this flair-filled hotel is a beautiful collaboration between Sydney-based YSG Studio and Balinese designers, craftspeople and artists.

LOCATION **UBUD / BALI / INDONESIA**

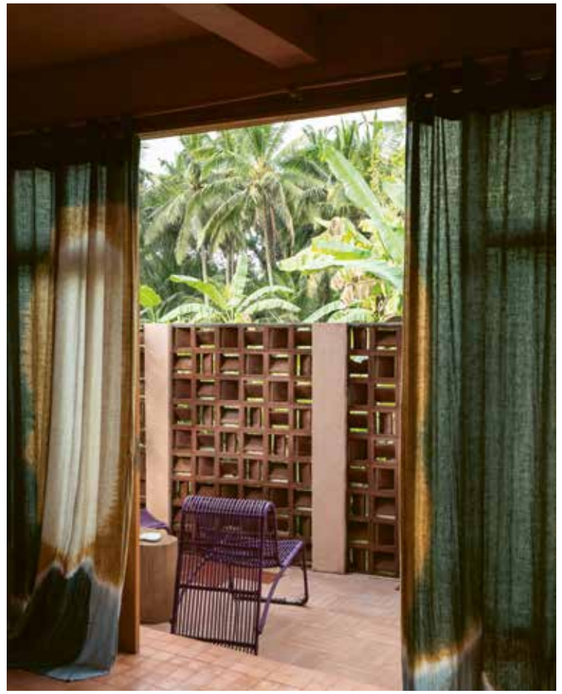
TEXT **TAMSIN O'NEILL** / PHOTOGRAPHY **TOMMASO RIVA**













top Custom hand-dyed curtains made from natural plant extracts (Indigo, Mango, Coconut and Ketapang Leaf), commissioned by YSG, made by Pagi Motley.

bottom The desk was designed by YSG and made by local bamboo experts Asali Bamboo.

opposite top left A traditional and unassuming entrance on the edge of the rice fields.

right Bamboo Suite with views of the rainforest, from Moon Gang's rooftop.

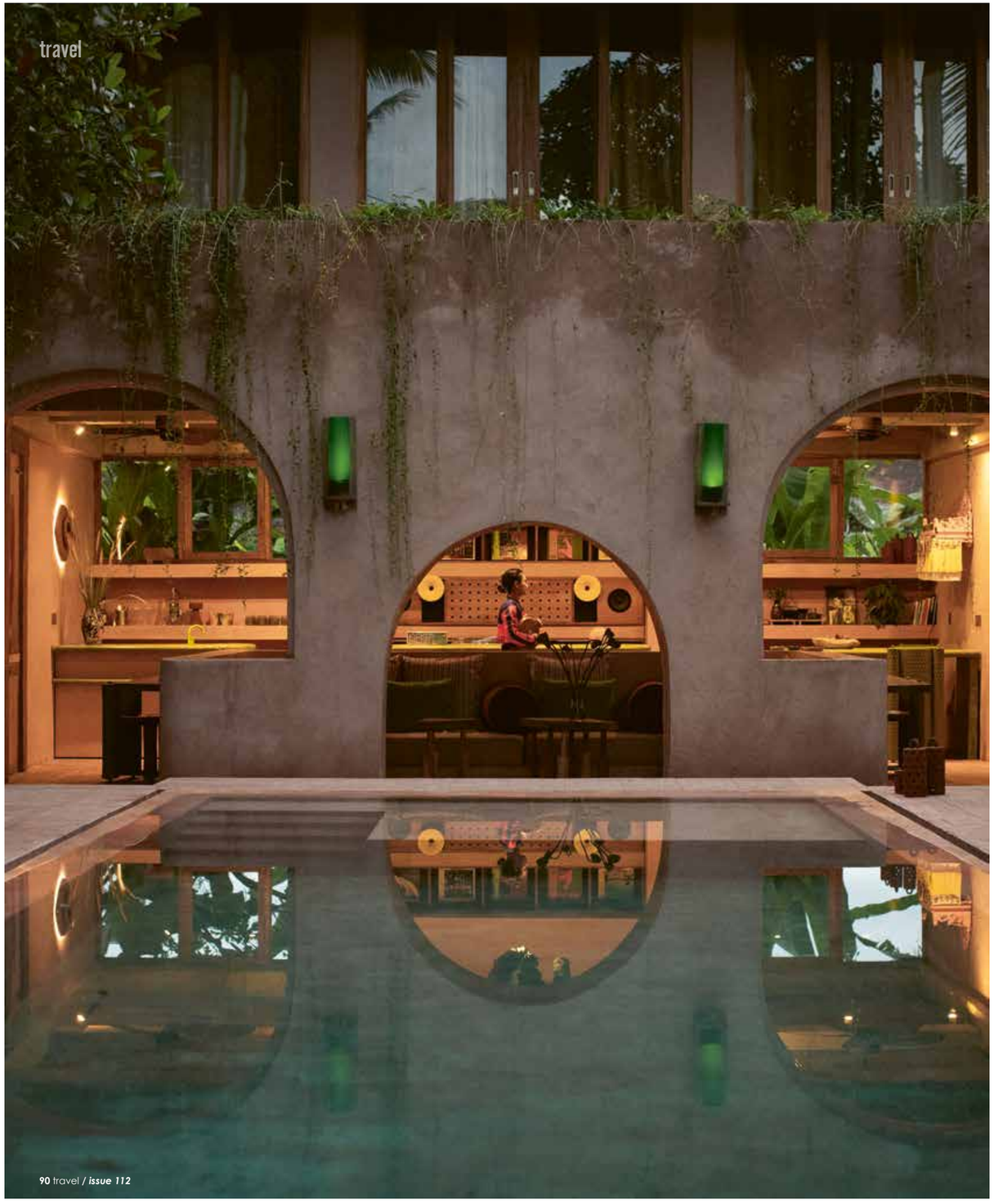
bottom left Chairs hand-crafted using recycled plastic.

right A rooftop suite designed by YSG using bamboo and with an oversized skylight.

• It was with some hesitation that I chose to write about a hotel in Bali. A hotel on an island heaving with hotels. I was moved by the images; they reminded me of guest houses (losmen) of the past - cool and colourful, without the usual generic tropical aesthetic. Delving deeper, I discovered that the hotel in question was built upon the ruins of an abandoned concrete bunker and designed around the cultural and creative practices of the Balinese.

Moon Gang is a collaboration between Sydney-based YSG Studio and local craftspeople. Nestled beside the jungle above the village of Ubud, the only way to access the hotel is on foot or on the back of a scooter through the rice fields. The building sits on a footprint of 500 square metres and required structural repairs. Without demolishing walls YSG enhanced focal points and fluid connections to heighten immersion. A u-shaped lounge is set back from the central arch, shading it. A large organic porthole was carved into one side wall, allowing light breezes to waft within. It frames a tree and patch of greenery outside. Walls were thickened to help with passive cooling and then render was applied.

"The render is a composite of locally-sourced minerals – lime and clay – that are mixed with natural fibres and pulverised recycled glass, which adds a gentle shimmer that catches your eye at certain times of the day," explains YSG director Yasmine Ghoniem. "This base is super breathable, reducing the likelihood of mould and dampness amongst this tropical setting. I'd describe the colour as warm cinnamon. I wanted the structure to feel very settled, as though it had been there for years, covered in jungle and recently discovered, so the natural shade works perfectly." >







top Terracotta tiles sourced from Java and pendants made from banana paper in the Golden Shadow suite.

bottom Counters with bullnose edges crafted from repurposed bottle tops.

opposite Cool, natural airflow was a priority in the design of Moon Gang.

The interiors are a beautiful coming together of YSG's quirky design sensibility and the work of local creatives: less luxurious muted tones, more colour and creativity. "We tapped into the contemporary creative community to collaborate with Indonesia's most innovative makers and artisans who experimented with natural and recycled materials to craft our designs," Yasmine says. "We also steered away from customary brown and cream tones, instead incorporating zesty lime shades from recycled plastics."

It is reminiscent of roadside stalls with brightly coloured plastic furniture alongside traditional craftsmanship, but here it has a deeply sustainable approach. Brightly coloured, chunky benches and hand-woven chairs made from recycled plastics in the lounge area contrast with the exquisitely hand-dyed curtains using natural plant extracts by Pagi Motley in the suites. Pendants crafted from dyed banana leaf paper hang elegantly throughout. Joinery and furniture custom designed by YSG is made from reclaimed timber and bamboo. Artwork was sourced through Indonesian art fairs and local galleries.

Moon Gang's owner and operator, Kirsten Millbank, ventured over from Australia countless times to immerse herself in the local culture. Her wish was to build a holistic space grounded in Balinese Tri Hita Karana philosophy: harmony with spirit, harmony with others, harmony with nature. >







left Poolside lounges custom designed by YSG were woven from recycled plastic.

bottom A beautifully detailed bamboo door leading to the spa. Designed by YSG, made by Asali Bamboo.

right The black-and-white checkered tile relief encircling the pool's edge serves as a subtle cultural reference.

"We spoke at great length during Moon Gang's design stages about incorporating Balinese rituals and traditions in unique ways, in a sense demonstrating the evolving beauty of Indonesia's modern culture," Yasmine says, reflecting on the process. "For example, a black-and-white-checkered tile relief surrounds the pool's edge (a nod to the Saput Poleng philosophy of maintaining balance, whereby checkered cloths wrap temples and holy statues). Newly blessed timber shrines hang on walls. A local energy healer blessed the site during phases of construction, and again when it opened. He makes his own incense, which is blessed before it arrives on site to place amongst the hotel's shrines daily."

It was important to Kirsten that Moon Gang embraced Indonesia's ancient and modern health, music and spiritual rituals, adding its own spin with lots of experiential activities. The setting had to accommodate full mind and body immersion through engaging tangible textures and intriguing materials, plus colours and patterns that aroused a sense of enquiry.

"Recognising the uniqueness of the designs and their tactile qualities hopefully encourages guests to stop and connect to moments. That's the point here, to slow down and lose track of time," says Yasmine. ●

moongangbali.com / ysg.studio

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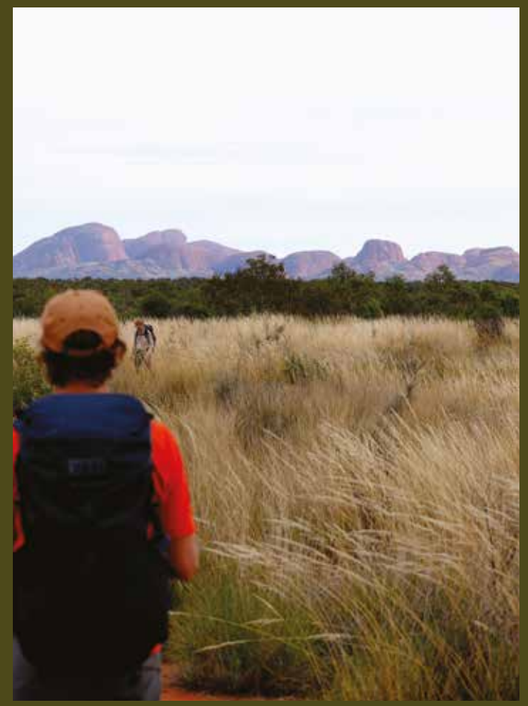

Vol. Six — No. Three

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