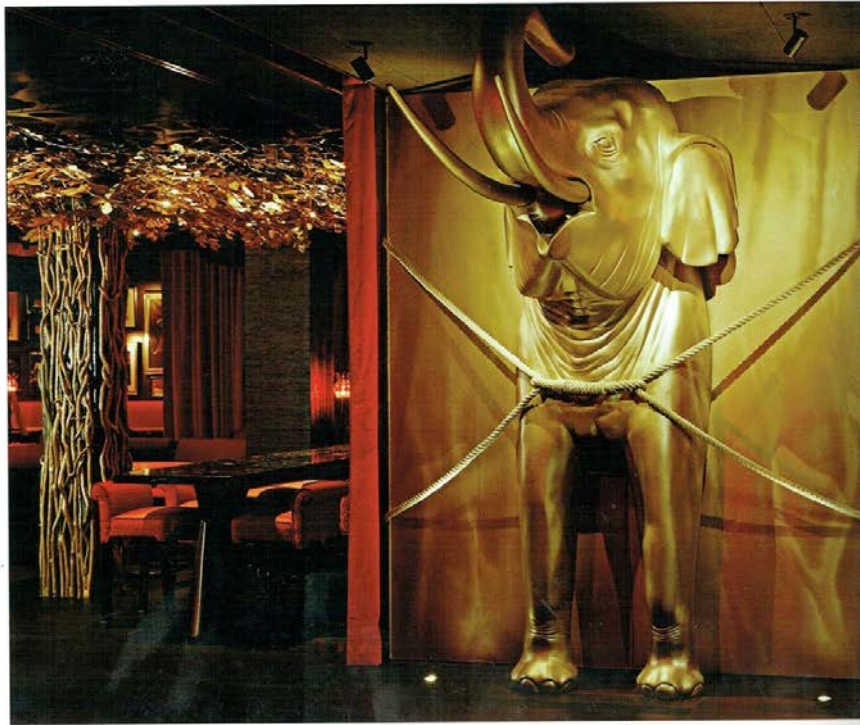


WORLD OF WONDER

Located in the heritage district of Syed Abwi lies a quirky art hotel the product of a collaboration between French designer Jacques Garcia and hotelier Satinder Garcha



In his memoir *A Moveable Feast*, author Ernest Hemingway wrote about life in Paris in the 1920s, giving full-colour accounts of the café society he was among. Paris in the 1920s was a time of effervescence, the decade a watershed for literature, art, design and fashion. Art Deco had already flourished in Paris in the Roaring Twenties before the art movement arrived on North American shores.



It was, no doubt, a confluence of place, period and people that can never be truly replicated. But a semblance of it could, perhaps, be experienced at Hotel Vagabond. Located in the proximity of Singapore's cultural and historic districts, Little India and Kampong Glam, Hotel Vagabond aims to create a unique hotel experience. It offers an art-infused setting reminiscent of the glorious 1920s in Paris, while giving easy access to old and new Singapore. Aptly, the hotel is housed in a heritage Art Deco building, albeit one that was built in 1950.

LEFT TO RIGHT

Contemporary artworks merge seamlessly with the architecture in this heritage building; Satinder Garcha is among Singapore Tatler's Top 300 List of influential people; The hotel comprises six shophouses, which Garcha purchased at the price of \$23 million

ART OF THE EXPERIENCE

For his first hotel project by Garcha Hotels, owner Satinder Garcha roped in Jacques Garcia. The French designer brought his design philosophy of "all things in excess" in the exuberant spaces within the hotel. Prominent art objects saturate the shared spaces. A solid brass reception desk in the shape of a rhino greets guests. The desk had taken eight months to create, moving across 15 villages in Rajasthan, India. Golden brass banyan trees tower over the space. Life-sized elephants made by artist Franck Le Ray appear to hold up the main elevator.

But art according to the zeitgeist also finds its place here. There is a video art installation by artist Marco Brambilla, and photographs by Julia Calfee of New York's Chelsea Hotel take up spots on the walls. Photographs taken by Garcha on his world travels and international polo competitions also adorn the walls in guest rooms and many other spaces.

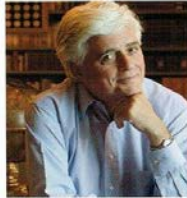


Among the luxury hotel's 42 rooms, there are the Writer's Room, Musician's Room, Parlor Room and the Vagabond Suite, in addition to the classic rooms. Hardwood floors, as well as luxurious finishes and furniture, dress up each space. Also to note is the availability of two Artist Ateliers. Garcha says, "Up to two artists at a time can spend anywhere from a day to three months in our two Ateliers. We provide them a platform for interaction with our guests in the Salon, an interactive environment that is purpose-built for this. We're interested in all kinds of art, such as the written word, photography, filmmaking and performance."

Artists chosen for the Artist in Residence programme are likely to find the Artist Ateliers more than comfortable. Spacious, open and flexible with a fully fitted kitchenette, they are "meant for long term stays and to inspire thinking and creativity".



"HOTEL VAGABOND IS ABOUT A PLACE WHERE LUXURY AND OLD-WORLD SERVICE ARE A GIVEN."



TOP TO BOTTOM

Whimsical artworks add colour and personality to the spaces; A simple layout in the rooms help the art to stand out; Designer Jacques Garcia: Bold use of colour in the rooms

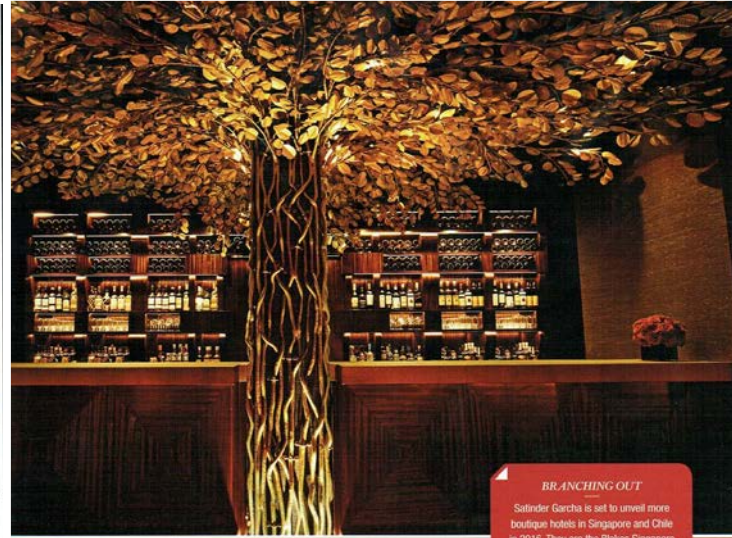


SOCIAL DISCOURSE

Draped in thick red velvet curtains, the setting at the 5,000 sq ft Vagabond Salon is luxurious and intimate. The Vagabond Bar serves up artisan spirits and wines, and, of course, inventive cocktails. Not one for alcohol? There are exotic and rare teas and coffees. At the heart of Vagabond Salon is 5th Quarter, the latest project by Loh Lik Peng's Unlisted Collection and award-winning Executive Chef Andrew Nocente. Key to the menu is a selection of cured meats, along with seafood, game meat, vegetables and desserts.

It is a space where guests gather to experience theatre, art, food and drink. It could be an independent film one day or a jazz performance on another. It's here that resident artists also take time out from their solitary pursuits to converse with guests. This social aspect, hopefully an exchange of opinions and ideas once the conversations get past pleasantries, is meant to be central to the Hotel Vagabond experience.

Garcha says, "Hotel Vagabond is all about creating a place where luxury and old-world service are a given. But alongside that, and what makes us special is our commitment that guests who stay with us or who come for a meal or a drink or an event are immersed in a very art-infused, sensory environment that is always fun. So our artists must share that sensibility." ❁



BRANCHING OUT
Salinder Garcha is set to unveil more boutique hotels in Singapore and Chile in 2016. They are the Blakes Singapore (formerly The Duxton), The Murray Hotel and The Garcho Santiago, situated on a historic site with walls that date back 200 years.

