

DOMAIN

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Design FORCE

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If architecture is a reflection of its time and place, then Singapore has arrived as an international city with world-class architecture to fit its highest cultural aspirations. In the last decade or so, the country has seen a remarkable upsurge of cutting-edge architecture in all areas — from inspirational public spaces to eco-sensitive condominiums and sublime tropical homes. But here’s a little-known fact: Most are the work of young, local talents.

International recognition in the form of top design awards and projects has been swift, and these accomplished architects are now the go-to guys for hip resorts in the Maldives as well as some of the most beautiful homes around. No longer mere coordinators for foreign star architects, local design studios are now seeing their names in boldface, fronting luxe condominium branding campaigns. In the following pages, we profile six exciting architects who you might just want to build your dream home.

PHOTO TAN WEI TE. ART DIRECTION NORSHAM HUSAINI. IMAGES COURTESY OF ECO-ID & W HOTEL.



Landscaper, writer, interior designer, sportsman, cook, botanist — all these tags describe Sim Boon Yang. Architect he may be, but he insists it’s all those other interests and aspects that made him successful, by influencing his work and lending unexpected playfulness to his designs.

Sim credits his architectural partner Calvin Sim as one of his first artistic influences. His subsequent experiences living overseas during his university years were catalysts firing his sense of independence and creative impulses.

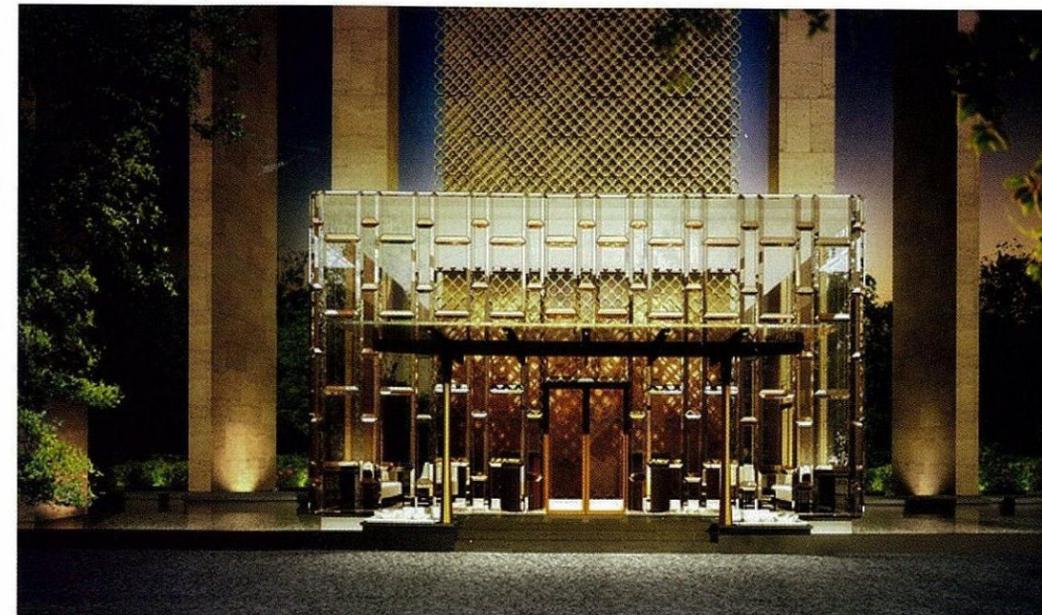
The nomadic slant of his formative years seems to persist in the affinity Sim’s portfolio has with projects beyond Singapore. Most of Eco-id’s catalogue of projects now consists of international work (primarily hotels), and Sim has come a long way from his early days of working on small private residences. With a slew of high-profile projects under his belt, Sim is now the one to call when it comes to adding that extra dash of style to stand out in the saturated hospitality market.

Not one to repeat himself, Sim likes to start afresh with each project. However, his early interest in marine biology may have sparked his choice of barnacles as a design metaphor for the Kandooma Maldives dive resort. The crustacean’s segmented shape has been slickly translated into half-round, reed-thatched buildings with ribbed interiors and circular skylights. But to give the ethnic-marine motif a chic, high-tech dash, Sim “webbed” his barnacles together in an organic way with fringes of white tensile membranes that create shady outdoor sitting areas.

Sim Boon Yang
 ECO-ID



For the upcoming Ritz-Carlton Residences in Orchard (right), Sim took inspiration from a jewel box. The five-star status of the prestige brand is underlined by exquisite custom detailing such as laser-cut travertine marble and a “crusting” of sparkling bevelled glass in the lobby.



PURSUIT



Claim to fame Sim was propelled into the international spotlight with the unveiling of one of the first hip hotels in Asia, The Metropolitan Bangkok in 2003. Since then, Eco-id's resume of stylish hotel projects has continued to expand. It now includes the award-winning W Retreat and Spa in the Maldives, The Sarojin Thailand and Naumi Hotel on Seah Street.

Signature style A common thread that runs through all Sim's projects is his love of nature and organic forms. Sensual curves are favoured in his designs, as are irregular planes and asymmetrical shapes. Circular sun decks, pavilions and bedrooms create graceful lines at the six-star W Retreat and Spa – Maldives. His upcoming Bluwater Estate residential project in Kuala Lumpur has giant leaf-shaped shelters projecting off the top of the clubhouse, each of them held up by branchlike supports.

Design philosophy Sim begins each project with a quick and evocative verbal sketch of what he envisages the project to embody. As a result, strong individual characters are always

discernible in his work. Naumi Hotel, for example, was visualised as a vibrant modern woman.

Inspirations The random lines he carves into a slope while snowboarding can inform this architect's placement of villas on a hill. In search of ways to add edginess and grit to a project, Sim draws on memories of wandering down a back lane in London to find an underground jazz club.

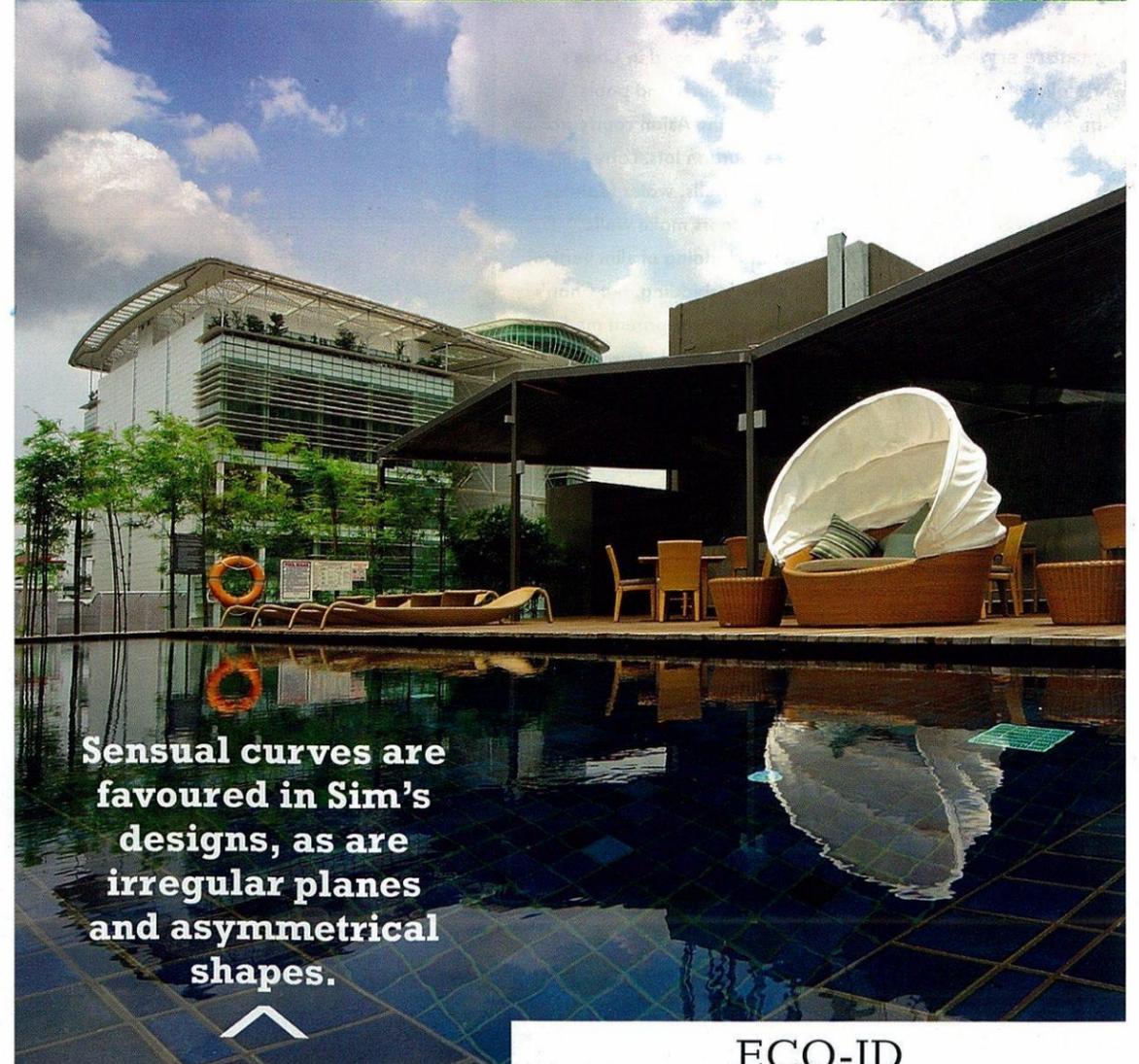
Dream project Given all the tropical resorts he designs, it's no wonder Sim looks to higher latitudes for a change. "The mountains have a rawness and spirituality that will inspire architecture," he says of his desire to build a ski lodge.

Next in line The Bluwater Estate is a sustainable eco-luxury living project in its first phase of selling. Built around a disused mining lake, it consists of bungalows, semi-detached homes and condominiums to be developed over the next eight years. Also in the works is the Conrad Koh Samui, and a desert safari residence for the Abu Dhabi royal family. 



(Above) The organic shapes and curves of W Retreat and Spa – Maldives signify the resort's affinity with nature at large.

(Opposite page, above) The eco-living motif in Bluwater Estate comes through in features such as the leaf-shaped projections that shield the clubhouse. (Right) The exclusive rooftop pool terrace at the chic Naumi Hotel on Seah Street symbolises the hotel's sophisticated, urbane image.



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ECO-ID