

Tropical homes

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Lifestyle Design & Architecture Villa Rentals



Kul Kul School, Bali
Bamboo soars to new design heights

Mosaïque, Vietnam
Alan Duong brings original flare to traditional pieces

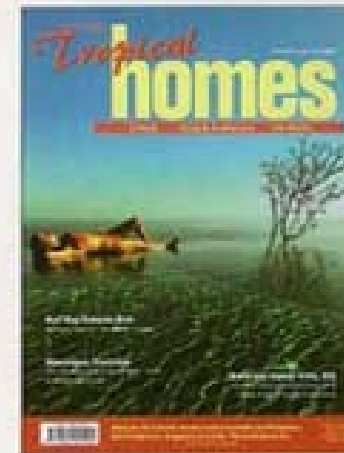
Emerald Valley Villa, OZ
Carbon-neutral Emerald Valley Villa makes living off the grid luxurious



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Ultimate infinity: a villa pool in Karma Kandara, high on the cliffs of the Bukit, Bali, blends with the Indian Ocean far below.

Photo by John Everingham

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Design Profile

Mr. Alan Duong belongs to a new class of savvy, sophisticated designers taking traditional Vietnamese artistry to new levels with her embellished home wares in fun and funky designs.

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The Kul Kul School is redefining the way we look at scholastic structures. Created primarily from bamboo, its curvilinear lines and organic shapes represent a new kind of thinking, one where design, environment, education and community merge. Johnny Langerheim explains.



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Long used for its utility, stone can be found in everything from ancient ruins to modern day décor. Don't underestimate this element's versatility: see our photo essay inside for amazing structures and decorative examples.

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Food and drink aficionado Michael Moore sheds some light on the tropical wine scene in the Asia-Pacific with a look at who's doing what when it comes to crushing grapes - or pineapples, or mangos.

Tropical homes

Travel • Design & Architecture • Life & Health

Our Region in review

What to read, where to go

Spread out before you lies the most exotic, most beautiful sector of Mother Earth. There is more culture, history, tradition, design and ethnic diversity within this region than in any other part of the world. Add to this the incredible geographic diversity, warm seas and a tropical climate, and it's easy to understand why people from around the globe now migrate here, building exotic tropical retreats, resorts and retirement homes.

Asia-Pacific TROPICAL HOMES opens the doors to some of the most extraordinary villas and homes, and offers glimpses of the most desirable lifestyles.



19-22 May
Renewable Energy Asia introduces spectators to new green technology and how to implement it into their homes without breaking the bank.

25 - 28 June
If you're looking to spruce up your villa, stop in at the Furniture & Interior Exhibition where furniture providers and flooring specialists will be on hand to help.

30 April - 03 May
Expect interior designers, buyers, architects and industry professionals to be in attendance at Interiors Malaysia where the air is abuzz with creative energy.

19-21 May
Dust off that resume and join all the movers and shakers at this year's Cityscape Asia, a major networking event for anyone involved in the real estate industry from architects to investors.

30 April - 4 May
The Top of the Gulf Regatta welcomes sun, sails and sailors for five days of competition.

5-8 June
China Furniture & Woodworks trade fair features solid wood furniture, woodworking machinery and much more.

Some of Vietnam's hottest designers reside in Hanoi. Turn to page 24 to meet Alan Duong whose company, Mosaïque, is blazing the trail in Vietnamese inspired home ware.

A testament to eco-friendly design and consciousness, The Nai Rul School outside of Ubud merges community, the environment and learning all within organic walls. Page 30.

21-24 May
If you're looking for structural ideas or just adding an alarm system, the Philippine Building and Construction Expo may be worth a peek.

Raise a glass and say "cheers" to Asia-Pacific wineries. See our story on page 45.

Bamboo is finally getting its time in the limelight. No longer considered merely the "poor man's wood", technology for this versatile plant is beginning to peak. Contributor Jeffrey Langenheim explains inside.

May welcomes less humidity and ideal temps as tropical winter kicks off. Watch for Aussies flocking from cooler southern states.

30 April - 02 May
The Melbourne Convention & Exhibition Centre will hold this year's National Architecture Conference, Form and Function 2009.

APTH applauds developers who realize the importance of building sustainable, environmentally friendly projects in this fragile part of the world. The carbon-neutral Emerald Valley Villa is a prime example of what builders should aim to accomplish with each new home or development. Page 42.

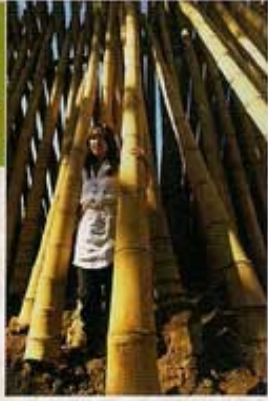
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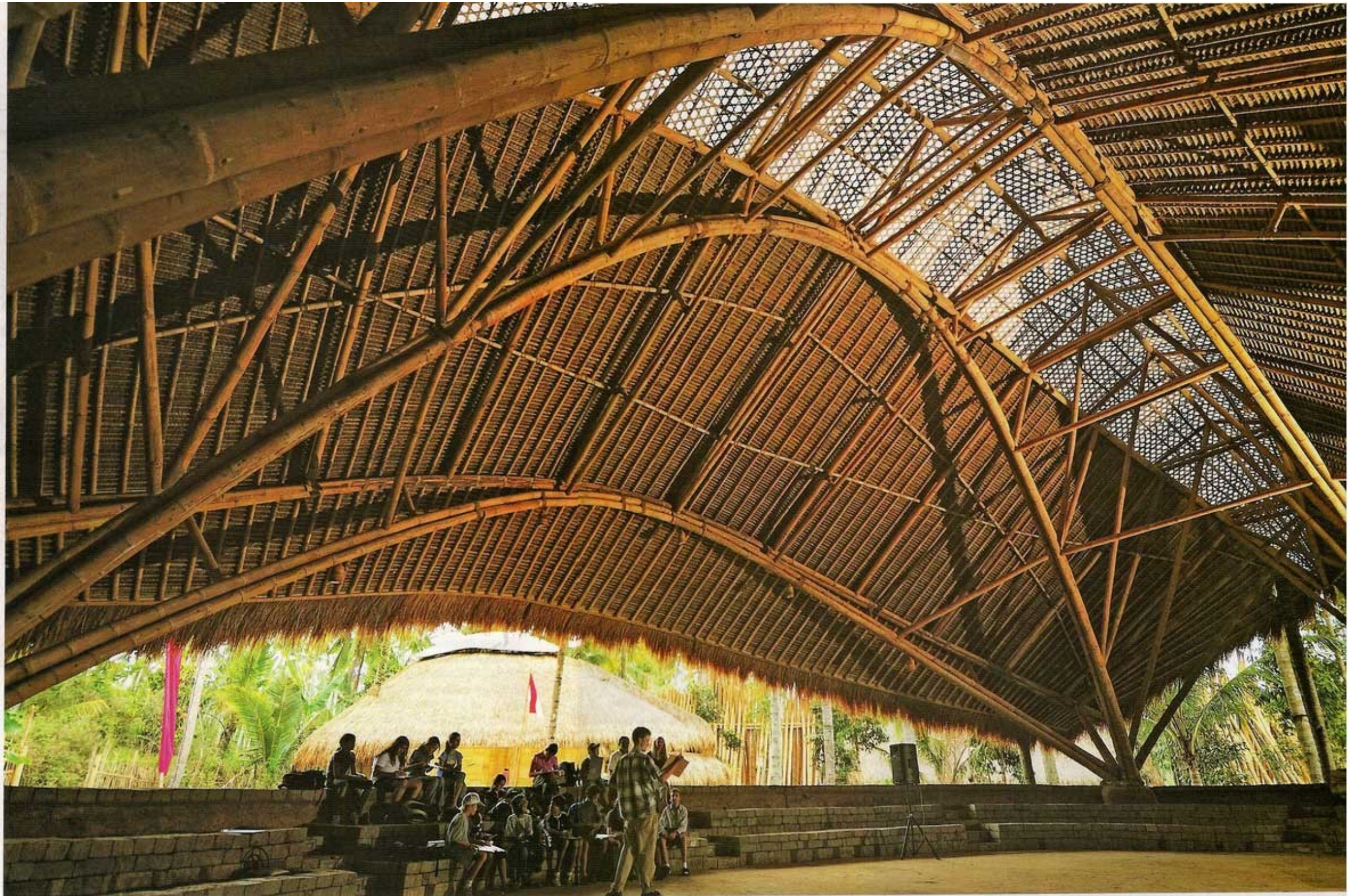
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B a l i



In this idyllic valley, 15 minutes drive from Bali's cultural centre, a vision of utopia is unfolding, one that integrates design, environment, education and community.



Building with

Story by Johnny Langenheim
Photography by John Everingham

Bamboo

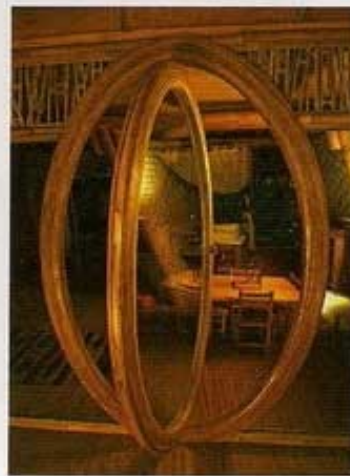
**Going green at the
Kul Kul School**

Picture a hulking red-brick edifice anchored in a sea of grey cement. Inside, peeling pale green paint – the colour choice of institutions from libraries to loony bins – adorns echoing corridors with squeaky floors giving onto little square rooms with tables set in serried rows. Ring any bells?

Now imagine a hidden valley clad in jungle and stepped rice paddies. Mud paths connect curvilinear bamboo structures whose sinuous contours peep through the verdure and zip lines dissect vivid sections of tropical forest. The river at the bottom of the valley is traversed by a bamboo bridge covered by a grass roof and a little way downstream sits a vortex generator – no, it doesn't jump to light speed, but it does use water current to generate light. An organic chocolate factory is under construction (cocoa trees grow abundantly here) as is a vast and airy edifice that will, when completed a few months hence, be among the biggest bamboo structures in the world.

Both of the above are pedagogical institutions – “schools”, to you and me. Schools have rarely been noted for their architectural audacity, or even good taste for that matter. Learning may have moved

The school has been ergonomically designed to promote creativity and learning; at the same time, it's one of the region's most impressive examples of ecologically sustainable design.



The biggest single span of bamboo in the school is this vast roof covering an indoor sports arena, here also being used for a lesson (main photo, pages 30-31). The giant proportions of the bamboo poles used in these structures became obvious when the school's public relations officer stepped in among some that have been treated and await use (top left, page 30).

Classrooms, at the heart of operations here, have been designed airy and pleasant, yet functional, with the students' attention here all focused to the teacher (main photo, pages 32-33). The bamboo desks and chairs show innovative use of this amazingly versatile plant (bottom left, page 33), while a pivoting door in the staff accommodation displays more of the creativity employed here (immediate left, page 33).

forward since the days of *amo amas amat* recitations and ruler raps on knuckles, yet mainstream educational spaces have remained stoically Victorian in their outlook. At first glance, the Green School at the Kul Kul campus in Bali, which opened in September 2008, might appear to be archaic in its own fashion, what with its rustic setting and emphasis on organic materials. After all, bamboo has long been branded the poor man's wood – think rickety shacks, beach cabanas and that 1970s fad for over-varnished furniture with flowery upholstery. But in this idyllic valley, 15 minutes drive from Ubud, Bali's cultural nucleus, a vision of utopia is unfolding, one that integrates design, environment, education and community.

“School environments tend to be homogenous, sterile, uninspired,” suggests former Green School director Brad Choyt. “Now what would an ideal school look like, if we were able to make all our assumptions disappear?” From the current vantage point, sitting in a bamboo pavilion high above the river with the Kul Kul campus spread out around us, it's not difficult to see exactly what Brad is getting at. But it's more than just the beauty of the environment and the Swiss Family Robinson character of the buildings that he's talking about. As he says, the school's six classrooms are curved for practical as well as aesthetic reasons: “Ovals support education – the shape of our classrooms reflect a peer-to-peer approach to learning, and they are filled with natural light, which

The Heart of School — its proportions based on the “golden mean”, a mathematical number associated with aesthetic beauty since ancient times, and comprising three spirals with a helix in the centre — may well turn out to be the largest bamboo building in the world.



This sweeping arch is the covered way of a bridge that crosses the river running through the centre of the school (far right). A classroom of another kind — one that can be air-conditioned if needed — is used by young children (top photo, this page). The foundations of buildings display unique construction techniques: a concrete slab is buried with only an iron rod left protruding. That passed through a stone and into the bamboo pillar in a manner that leaves both concrete and iron unseen in the finished product (above).

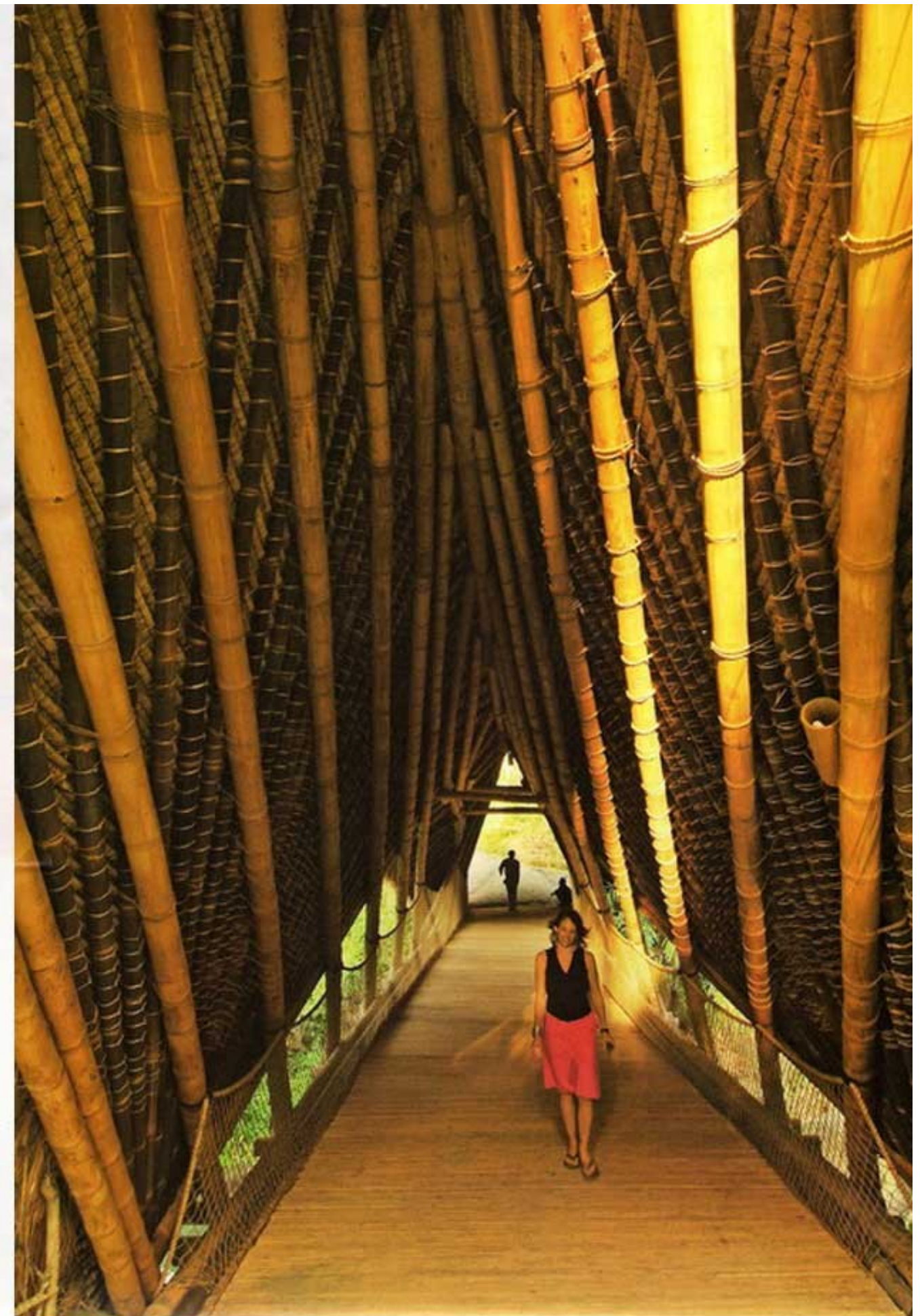
studies have shown can improve student performance by 30-40 percent.”

While the school has been ergonomically designed to promote creativity and learning (“not just IQ,” as Brad points out, “but EQ, SQ and KQ, too — emotional, spiritual and kinetic intelligence”) it’s also surely one of the most impressive examples of ecologically sustainable design in the region. Almost all of the building materials are organic — bamboo, elephant grass and mud for the most part, with only minimal amounts of cement used to secure foundational bamboo struts. Buildings are cooled by micro-hydro and solar power. There are compost toilets, and the canteen stoves are powered by methane from cow manure. The whole school supports an all-encompassing permaculture system — almost everything that grows on campus, whether animal or vegetable, can be eaten. The vortex generator is only the second of its kind in the world, generating hydroelectric power by diverting the flow of the river into a 9m hole, thus creating a whirlpool which in turn powers a turbine that can generate enough electricity to light the whole school. The school is effectively an ecosystem within an ecosystem, and one of its principal components is bamboo.

Bamboo doesn’t deserve its lowly standing. In fact, it’s one of the vegetable world’s overachievers: it grows faster than any other plant on earth, is 50 times stronger than oak yet extremely light and flexible (making it resistant to earthquakes), and it’s incredibly abundant, especially throughout Asia. In fact, bamboo is just beginning to shrug off its vulgar reputation, helped along by the renewed attention we human beings are now paying to our environment. Thus a new generation of designers is looking at bamboo in a different light — not least among them Aldo Landwehr, Creative

Director of PT. Bambu, the Bali-based company that not only built the green school but also cultivated and treated all the bamboo that was used in its construction. “I think we need to bring the design levels up to the standards of today,” says Landwehr, whose background in sculpture is visible in the voluptuous contours of his bamboo buildings. “There aren’t that many people doing great bamboo design yet — everyone still thinks eco, but it should be cool-looking too — think, New York loft cool.”

Landwehr switched on to bamboo after he came to Bali to work for jewellery maker John Hardy, who, with his wife Cynthia, is responsible for both PT. Bambu and the Green School at the Kul Kul Campus. The Hardys have long championed environmental causes, and are standard bearers for



The school is effectively an ecosystem within an ecosystem, and one of its principal components is bamboo.



Teacher accommodations are also built almost entirely from bamboo (top & far right). The unusual roof and building shape is a bathroom (above).

the bamboo movement in architecture and design. The nearby John Hardy production facility, a showcase of sustainability, is, once again, centred on the versatile perennial grass. By the time the Hardys sold the business in 2007, a new and ingeniously integrated vision was already taking shape. PT Bambu was to become a key provider of bamboo architecture and design in Asia, and the school - besides being a revolutionary educational and community facility - would provide the first showcase of what the company could do.

And it's clearly working. PT Bambu has just landed its first major post-Green School project - a major resort development across two islands in the Seychelles. Aldo is very excited about the prospects. "It will take our bamboo architecture to a more commercial level. This is a high-end eco-resort that draws not only on our expertise with bamboo, but also on eco-infrastructure such as waste-water gardens, drainage, renewable energy sources and more."

As a designer and art director for John Hardy's company, Aldo developed spectacular showcases for tradeshows, conjured jewellery pieces and worked on the Hardy's private Bali residence. Inevitably, in the process, he established a strong acquaintance with the largest member of the grass family. He's now completed the transition from jewellery to architecture and design, though his background in fine art and sculpture is clearly manifest in the coiling,

sinuous character of many of his designs. But it was the decision to build the Green School and to adhere to a strict eco-friendly regimen that really cemented (pun intended) his immersion in all things bamboo. "We really crossed a conceptual boundary with the school. It was a whole new perspective on how to build green, and we really took it seriously. It's easy when you hit a brick wall to just head to the store and pick up some petroleum-based product; but we didn't - we were constantly trying to develop new processes."

Just as often, they also developed elaborations on age-old techniques. For example, instead of using glues, apart from nominal amounts of epoxy and eco glue, Aldo and his team adapted traditional joinery techniques, developing flexible pins that contract and expand with the bamboo itself so as to remain

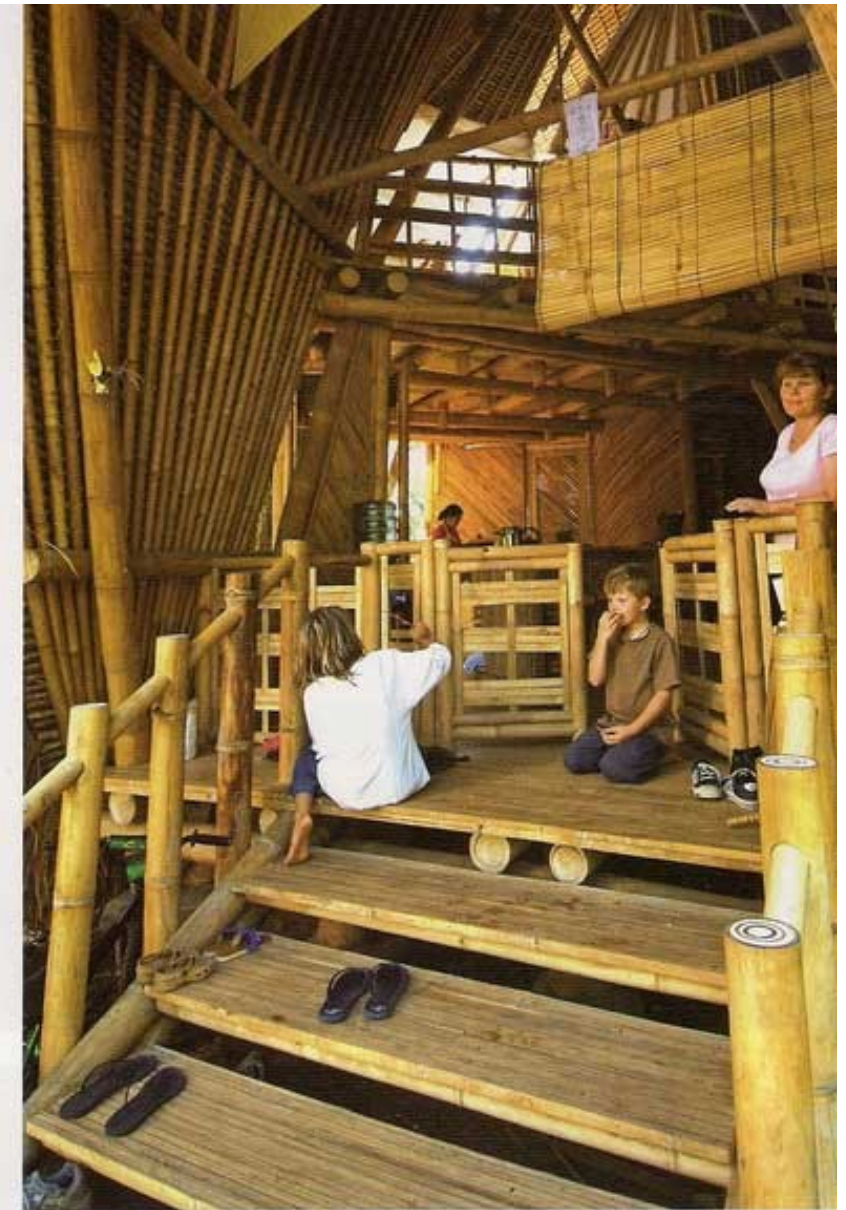
secure. The designs are also backed up by sound engineering. Colombia-based architect Jorg Stamm worked alongside Aldo, offering engineering know-how for the bridge design, the first structure built on the Green School site. Now they work with a profes-

sor of engineering at the University of Jogjakarta, on the neighbouring island of Java. "He tests all of our structures, figures out load-testing data and so forth. Still, as much math as you throw at it, it's always possible to miss one equation, and we place just as much importance on traditional master builders who work primarily on intuition."

According to Aldo, PT Bambu's perspective on the material itself is a radically different one from the traditional view of bamboo in construction and furniture, where the plant is invariably used in its natural, culm-shaped form. "For furniture and flooring," Aldo says, "we often break things down into slits layered to create repetitions of line and form - so we're really working with portions of the material." This allows them to create furniture and flooring that breaks away from the hackneyed Tiki style so indelibly imprinted in most people's minds. They also split the bamboo longitudinally to "give a sense of transparency", as Aldo puts it. "If you stand in a thick bamboo forest, it doesn't feel like a wall - it's got this ephemerality to it; each column has this sealed pocket of pure air inside it. It's interesting to try and present this breathing, living quality in the built environment."

Without a doubt the most spectacular structure on the site is the Heart of School - a massive 64m-wide, 18m-tall facility that may well turn out to be the largest bamboo building in the world. The proportions are based on the "golden mean", a mathematical number associated with aesthetic beauty since ancient times, and it comprises three spirals with a helix in the centre. "It really ties everything together as a campus," says Aldo. "We haven't finalized the functionality yet, but there'll be a library, administration offices, student centre, possibly even a radio station. It's really three separate entities intertwined to create one giant building." The main structure of the Heart of School is slated for completion by December 2008.

Of course bamboo also has its challenges. It has to be protected from rain, sun and insects, in particular the so-called powder-post beetle. And there are issues of privacy, soundproofing and long-term maintenance. "How do you ventilate a bamboo building but keep it insulated and private? We've experimented with various eco-fabrics, but we're not really satisfied with any yet. The one we have been using is getting mouldy with the rain." As seems to be the wont of PT Bambu, this problem has only induced the team to amp up their creativity. They're now developing a completely impermeable eco-membrane, which the company intends to patent and sell around the world. "Imagine how useful this stuff would be - instead of PVC and tarpaulin which break down into harmful nano-particles - for aid agencies in disaster relief situations."



And how is PT Bambu mapping out its future? Like the school that is its first progeny, it plans to expand. "We want to be the leading environmentally minded bamboo company in the world," says Aldo. It's all a work in progress, a creative process that reaps rewards by dint of a willingness to experiment and to stick diligently to pre-defined ecological imperatives. Meanwhile, the Green School looks set to unfold as a sort of high-minded social experiment that will eventually include dormitories, high school, facilities boutique villas, an Outward Bound ropes course in the treetops, and countless other whimsical revelations.

Welcome to the new school - with due deference to the old.

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