

BACKGROUND

DISCOVER THE DARING AND DISTINCTIVE DESIGN
OF INTERCONTINENTAL DANANG – BY
“STARCHITECT” BILL BENSLEY



The Beginning

In the late 2000s, a creative architect and interior designer from California by the name of Bill Bensley was challenged to create a one-of-a-kind resort on a pristine peninsula just outside Danang, central Vietnam. He did not disappoint. Sculpted into 39 hectares of lush jungle spanning four idyllic levels – Heaven, Sky, Earth and Sea – all connected by a funicular railway and cascading down to a private sandy bay, InterContinental Danang Sun Peninsula Resort was the project that propelled Bensley to international stardom.

His iconic architecture and dazzling design simultaneously transports guests back in time to

an enchanting bygone age, and forward into a bright and exciting future. By blending Vietnamese culture and contemporary flare, often in collaboration with local artisans, Bensley delivered a masterpiece that continues to surprise and delight travellers today.

A Journey Through Vietnamese Architecture



A Harvard graduate who has lived and worked in Southeast Asia for the last 30 years, Bensley was captivated by Vietnam's rich cultural heritage. He toured the country extensively before settling on the creative concept, which is inspired by historical structures and natural landscapes. Ancient temples have influenced the external architecture and interior elements such as lotus flowers and yin-yang motifs, while elegant imperial palaces have defined the resort's gates, gardens, columns and sculptures. The colonial Indochine style guided the design of La Maison 1888, while traditional village dwellings provided the basis for Barefoot, and semi-cylindrical Quonset huts from the American War inspired the design of the spa treatment pavilions.

Designer Accommodations



Throughout InterContinental Danang, Bensley defies convention and uses contrasting colours and striking imagery to impact the senses. Flowing curves are juxtaposed with rigid geometry, and a bold black and white palette is enlivened with vibrant splashes of lemon yellow, lime green and tangerine orange. Hanging lanterns and images of dragons, elephants, lions and lotus flowers are inspired by motifs from Vietnamese heritage, and each room, suite or villa is adorned with indigenous Vietnamese shapes, such as the silhouetted forms of classical Hoi An lanterns. These ancient elements are propelled into the present with quirky fixtures and quixotic furnishings like cast iron ostriches and surfboard-shaped tables drawn from Bensley's own Californian roots – a wonderfully eccentric tapestry that never fails to spark conversation. And whether in public spaces or guest accommodations, oversized windows and doors invite seamless outdoor living – perfectly in synch with the location.

Monkeying Around



The Son Tra Peninsula is also known as Monkey Mountain, an apt nickname considering the thousands of macaques and rare red-shanked douc langurs who make it their home. Bensley was inspired by both, thus monkey images, sculptures and graphics are abundant throughout the Resort. For example, a “peeing monkey” fountain (!) greets you at the entrance to **Citron restaurant**, while monkey sconces illuminate the **Club InterContinental Lounge**. The Resort’s **Cinema** invites you in with banana-yellow leather theatre seating and banana-shaped lights. And probably the most over-the-top, the **M Club**, a special event venue, was conceived as a party sanctuary for a well-heeled monkey named Charles, complete with papier-mâché busts of his fellow primates, celebrity monkey portraits and a parade of stuffed monkeys.

Incorporating Nature



Monkeys are not only used as design elements, but rather as part of the natural and sustainable inspirations that Bill incorporated in all his thinking. Some spaces were created without air conditioning, using natural ventilation in an effort to conserve energy. As an architect who considers protecting the environment as the highest priority of any project, Bensley designed “around” the topography and endeavoured to cut as few trees as possible. Much effort was placed into populating the gardens with indigenous species, and a series of “monkey bridges” was strung in the treetops to ensure that wildlife can navigate in and out of the resort with minimal human contact.

Let’s Visit the Bathroom

There’s nothing normal about a restroom break at InterContinental Danang; each of the public facilities is unique, often featuring ceramics from the Bat Trang Ceramic Village in northern Vietnam, which Bill discovered during his design research. Bricks, tiles, bowls, vases, statues – you name it, you’ll find it in a bathroom somewhere.

Meeting in Style



Hotel meeting spaces are often unadorned and bland. It's completely the opposite with our **Summit Conference Centre**. Originally built to host the 2017 APEC Summit of world leaders, each meeting venue is dramatically and boldly designer. From a grand ballroom that resembles a Vietnamese temple to a pre-function space that feels more like a pop-art gallery, Bensley has ensured that events staged here will be memorable and entertaining. The crowning jewel of the building is the serene, light-filled Reception Hall, popular for weddings and receptions with an ethereal, cathedral-like atmosphere.

Iconic Photo Spots From Sea to Sky



Naturally, guests can discover plenty of iconic photo spots that are sure to ignite any social media feed. Inverted non-la hats (the iconic Vietnamese conical hat) became **Citron restaurant's** most coveted tables, suspended over a reflecting pool 80 meters above sea level. The resort's **Club InterContinental Lounge** is an indoor rainforest, with palm trees and leaves and monkeys sitting atop the light sconces. From this exclusive elevated retreat, guests can catch The **Nam Tram** – the resort's own basket-shaped funicular railway – whisks them on an exhilarating 90-second ride through the forest from the top of the resort down to the beach, shaded by a roof shaped like a non-la. Having arrived at the beach, guests can settle down for a cool drink at **L_O_N_G Bar**, which is defined by its seemingly endless 50-metre-long counter, a vibrant black, white and lemon yellow colour scheme, punkah ceiling fans and suspended chairs inspired by fisherman's baskets. There's truly a great pic around every corner!

"The first time I came to this site we discovered an incredible peninsula of forest with charming Vietnamese round boats on the sea – and nothing else. We delved into the country's architectural vernacular, visiting dozens of temples and palaces. We then took our favourite elements and designed around them, creating an ode to Vietnam with a modern twist."



Bill Bensley, Creative Director at BENSLEY

The Artistic Outsider Finds Inner Peace

In 2022, Bensley chose InterContinental Danang to be the location of Vietnam's first BENSLEY Outsider Gallery, a collection of his original, avant-garde artworks that can be viewed and purchased by hotel guests. The gallery's name reflects the fact that Bill is not a classically trained artist and considers himself an outsider in the art world. His vibrant Fauvist painting style bursts with bright and beautiful colours, and each of his works encapsulates his sense of playfulness and gift for storytelling. This is also a charitable initiative; the proceeds from any art sales are donated to Bensley's cherished wildlife charities, including those dedicated to combating poaching in Southeast Asia.

To discover Bill Bensley's masterpiece – a five-star sanctuary seamlessly woven into the secluded Son Tra Peninsula on Vietnam's stunning central coast – please visit www.danang.intercontinental.com.

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