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# GILL WILSON INTERIORS

A CONTEMPORARY ONE OFF, WITH A TWIST.

BY THOMAS JONES

WITH NOMADIC AND FIVE STAR  
EXPERIENCE AND AN ACUTE ARTISTIC  
FLAIR, GILL WILSON CREATES NOTHING  
LESS THAN BEAUTIFUL INTERIORS.

"Designers in Bali are different from their big overseas competitors in that we tend to be very boutique," says Gill Wilson, the owner of Gill Wilson Interiors. "Everything we do is a one-off. If people are paying a design fee they want it to be original. A client may come in and say they want something they have seen but we won't make it unless it can be changed somewhat. We will say that we have already used this on another villa and it was exclusively for that client," she adds showing her passion for the original.

An art school graduate, Gill is deeply passionate about art and has always had a special love of interiors. She and her husband have spent the past 21 years moving around Asia from country to country and from city to city in his capacity as a hotel general manager, and she has been collecting antiques and beautiful objets d'art

throughout her travels the whole way around.

Gill's first foray into interior design came while she and her husband were living in India at the Hyatt Regency in New Dehli in the 1990s. "We had to move out of the Presidential Suite and into an apartment that was built for the general manager. The furniture was shocking. I hated it so much, and at the time there were huge furniture barns nearby with something like four acres of stuff piled high with antique furniture; old pillars, chests, tables and other things, so I started buying pieces and taking them right back to the bare wood, repolishing them and then I started selling from home," she says, exposing her entrepreneurial spirit. Friends would wow at her stuff and kept on at her to produce something special for them. Before long she was doing a thriving trade and her interior



**Master bedroom:** Soothing woods combined with antiques, Persian carpets, and a modern headboard create a luxurious master bedroom.

**Designer, Gill Wilson**



**Left: House overview;**  
Combining vibrant colours  
and designs in a modern  
Balinese setting.

**Above: Top bedroom;**  
A different approach to  
a teenagers bedroom  
drawing on inspirations  
from old Europe.

**Below: Bottom bedroom;**  
An oriental approach using  
and illuminate headboard  
and with comfort and  
warmth in mind.

world was opening up. The transient nature of international hotel management though, meant that she was never in one place long enough to make starting a business worthwhile.

The move to forming her own company eventually came when her husband became the GM at Bali's Ritz Carlton. They made the decision to cease their corporate-gypsy lifestyle and settle down, and having finally put down roots she was free to create Gill Wilson Interiors; a company she describes as, "Contemporary with a twist, creating one-off masterpieces. It combines the modern with the antique, which is pretty much my style."

In the beginning, the company acted as a middleman providing soft furnishings and

accessories for villas, sourcing all their materials from local suppliers in Bali. In the early days her boys could be seen doing deliveries on a motorbike with all manner of materials; from sun umbrellas to curtains, carrying them precariously to job sites. But in the 2½ years since its inception, Gill has taken it from only four staff to a full complement of 11, including designers, fitters, a manager, an accountant, five additional computers and, much to the joy of the delivery crew, a little blue truck.

The calibre of her clients has kept pace with the company's growth and includes Bali's Oberoi, Bvlgari and Hyatt hotels, and she has recently completed work on the Elephant Safari Park in Bali, outfitting their restaurant, spa and 27 luxury villas in Taro just north of Ubud.

A self-confessed 'time nazi', Gill made her name by getting things done on time. There is no outsourcing and they never use subcontractors. "If anything goes wrong, the onus is on me, so I have to keep on top of every situation." What makes Gill Wilson Interiors stand out? "Under promise and over deliver," says Gill. "We never take on more than we can do." By not outsourcing she maintains control over anything that could go wrong; and conversely can take the credit for everything that goes right!

Since copying is rife in Bali they have no showroom. "Basically the only way to copy is if they go into your home and see it. What we try to do is create artworks. For example, our bed heads are all art pieces. I might see a sculpture or a building and then I will incorporate it into the design. We also do things like special features

on wardrobes to make them stand out, like terracotta or marble finishing, something that transforms it into a central feature," explains Gill.

Gill and her company partner/manager Dewi Wiyanti, work on many of the designs together. They charge a design fee and show the clients samples of their work and create 3D renderings of what the finished product will look like, providing the client with a visual of what to expect. Gill reckons on taking six weeks from initial consultation to walk in. "Getting the work done on time gives you a good reputation," she stresses again.

There are a few things however that she won't do unless the client really wants it; commissioning artworks, carpets and electrical work are forbidden ground since everyone has such individual tastes, and with artwork it can



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Above: Guest room; An opulent bedroom where the headboard features paintings by well know Bali based painter Wah.

Right: Living Room; A living room featuring a designer wall made from an old ship's timbers and hand-beaten acid-washed iron.



run to many thousands of dollars—a lot of money to waste if the client decides they don't like it. She does, however, have a lot of art on her books to show clients what is available and she showcases local artists wherever she can.

"With our own house I was able to do exactly what I wanted to do, how I wanted to do it and with the materials I wanted," she says of her large, newly-built Sanur home. "We built something functional and airy and did all the things we wanted, like building a gym, large walk-in robes where you can actually see everything, etc." As the house was being built she was able to visualize where pieces of work would fit and what she would have to make new. An opportunity to display and surround herself with all the beautiful things she has collected in her travels; Japanese Edo prints, antique furniture, Chinese porcelain, and all her cherished artworks and paintings. Fortunately she had sold most of her old furniture with the former house so she was

able to start afresh with the soft furnishings. "It is a great place to bring clients when they ask 'what is your style?' I can say, *this!*"

"A lot of other designers are popping up in Bali but I think the difference is that everything is done by us," she claims. Gill is a large part of the design process which is also why she does it. Partially for the money for sure, but mainly for the joy of creating something unique and beautiful each time she takes on a project. Gill's success is totally of her own making. Her service is personalized and customized and entirely made to order. No showrooms, just examples *in situ* of the style and class that she calls her own. It appears Gill Wilson is going to need a bigger truck. **RSV**

**Gill Wilson Interiors:**

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