

THE BUZZ



BANYAN TREE HOTELS & RESORTS BRANCHES INTO HYBRID MARKET

Singapore's Banyan Tree Hotels & Resorts has unveiled plans to open its first Cassia brand property in October, within the group's Laguna Phuket integrated resort in Thailand. The hotel/apartment concept will be decked out with vibrant street art and house 221 one- and two-bedroom serviced hotel residences.

Each unit will feature separate living room areas and fully equipped kitchens. Many will include loft spaces, providing views of the ocean, a nearby lagoon or a park. Plans for the property also include two pools; a Chill spa; a kids' play room; a Street Bar featuring works by Thai street artists; and a Market 23 Café.

Banyan plans to add a second tower at the site by 2017, which will expand the hotel to 326 units, as well as add a fitness center and meeting space.

Cassia is not the only brand tapping into the burgeoning hotel/apartment trend. The ROOST Apartment Hotel, which was featured in the July/August 2015 edition of *Boutique Design*, recently launched as another commercial hospitality concept with apartment-like accommodations.

TIHANY'S NEWEST TAKE ON SHIPBOARD INTERIORS

When the all-suite Seabourn Encore launches late next year, passengers will be able to stay in the latest luxury cabins by designer Adam Tihany. Those spaces—ranging from 300 to 1,300 sq. ft.—will reference the luxury cruise line's yachting heritage with mahogany wood accents, carpet with blue and white details, and white-stitched upholstered headboards.



Tihany, whose firm has also created shipboard interiors for such lines as Royal Caribbean and Holland America, is layering a residential vibe into the Encore's suites, via private verandas, separate living areas, walk-in closets and marble-clad bathrooms. The ship's penthouse suites will feature a patterned glass wall to divide the living room and the bedroom. In all, the new ship will be able to accommodate about 600 guests, and will include an additional deck and more public areas than its predecessors.



DESIGN GROUP CARL ROSS UNVEILS RADICAL REBRANDING

After undertaking an extensive self-diagnosis, Design Group Carl Ross has rebranded itself as Clear on Black. The interior architectural design firm's new name and visual identity reflects both a renewed clarity of what it does best and underlines its long-standing commitment to transparency, says principal Carl Ross.

"To us, design is first and foremost problem solving and finding the essential character of a property or project," Ross explains. "Our diagnostic process, which has developed and evolved over many years, brings to the surface the essence, the issues and the opportunities. Like black is the color against which all other colors are measured, we discovered our own black, our own standard of what we do best."

Coming up with a new identity for the firm that bears his name was a rigorous process, Ross says. "We reached out to clients, past and present, for feedback," he explains. "We had roundtables with our entire team. We engaged business consultants. We took a dose of our own medicine, conducting the same diagnostics we perform for our clients, and took a dispassionate look at what we do best, where we can't compete well, and how we could improve."

Ross describes the rebranding process as "brutal, lengthy and finally fun, once we got past some of the unknowns. We can honestly say we understand the anxiety and trepidation our clients feel when they embark on a major change. The truth is, we had evolved but weren't recognizing or communicating it. It was time."

Based in El Segundo, Calif., Clear on Black's client list includes upscale and luxury hotels for such established brands as Fairmont, Hilton, Hyatt, Loews, Marriott, MGM and Renaissance, as well as developers and owners of non-branded properties and one-off hotels.