

Originally from Amsterdam, the couple divides time between Bali and Holland. Hans mainly designs commercial work, but usually takes one residential project per year. He sees being an architect as part designer, part psychologist. "Clients don't often tell you straight out what they want; you have to investigate and figure out their needs," he explains. Certainly, trying to ascertain what he and Rien wanted in their own home had its challenges ... yet the end result is totally harmonious.



VILLA SAMUAN

The Art of Compromise

Architect Hans Witt
Location Seminyak
Date Of Completion 2009

Villa Samuan in downtown Seminyak takes its name from Pura Samuan Tiga, a temple in Bedulu not far from Ubud. Translating as the "Temple of the Meeting of the Three", it is dedicated to the Hindu trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. The owners appropriated the word Samuan for their villa, as the home is a meeting point between East and West, guests and owners, Balinese and European.

Designed by Dutch architect Hans Witt with much of the interiors formulated and realized by his costume designer partner Rien Bekkers, the home is also a meeting point between their two styles. Hans describes himself as the more modern of the two, while Rien's tastes tend towards the classical. "There were other differences too," Hans explains, "I wanted a

big garden, Rien wanted an inner court. In the end we got both ... the house is, shall we say, an exercise in compromise!"

Diplomatically put, and beautifully executed ... as is the house. From the minute you enter the serene compound, you immediately feel a sense of calm and order. This probably has something to do with the geometry of plot and plan—a highly symmetrical placement of buildings on 16 are of long, thin land—but it is also derived from the harmony of garden, court and buildings and the muted color palette used throughout.

A severe, modish entrance leads into a court planted with boxy bamboo. This separates the quest quarters on the left from the main house on the right. They are mirror images of each other. As you turn right into the main pavilion which houses a bedroom, open-plan living room and small kitchen, you walk through to a large swimming pool and garden with another pavilion at the far end. Here, there are further bedrooms, offices, a massage/spa room and a large open lounging section fronting the pool.

Hans describes their home as "quite personal, but with a Bali feel". Being in Bali, he wanted some vernacular touches, but decided to keep the house strictly linear as a counterpoint to the Asian elements. The duo sees the home as a balance between Western and Balinese: "As the Balinese are extremely creative, we added lots of Bali touches," but they also desired European functionality and a streamlined look.

All the buildings are situated on an outdoor *ulin* wood deck that runs the full length of the plot—the backbone of the site as it were. *Ulin* was chosen for its hardwearing qualities and because with time it turns a little grey in color, thereby contrasting with the interior's dark coconut wood walls and the stained *benkerai* louvers used elsewhere. Similarly, the pool is dark and seems to sink into the decking. The wood shingle roofs sport wonderful detailing at the tips: this serves the practical function of pulling hot air up from below and adds sinuosity to an otherwise streamlined form.



Opposite The pool, which has grey painted dark tiles "so that it disappears into the deck", is flanked by two loungers with footrests that are based on a design originally executed by Jaya Ibrahim. Rien has adapted Jaya's design, flaring out the backrest and separating the footrest from the sofa for adaptability.

Above Dark stained pillars and cascading thunbergia lead to the entrance of the living room.

The rigor and fierce discipline of the linear architecture is derived from Hans; the interior flourishes—beautiful fabrics, textural wall finishes, handcrafted furniture—are the work of Rien. The two clearly complement each other famously, both in their home's design and in their lives.



Open on two sides, the main pavilion (this page and opposite) overlooks the pool on one side and the bamboo stand that separates it from the guest house on the other. With composite coconut walls stained dark brown, the living/dining room is a mix of sophistication and homeliness.



Opposite Artworks are a mix of the duo's Dutch heritage and an Asian sense of place: in the comfy, tastefully furnished, living room recessed lighting illuminates a gorgeous reproduction of the first chapter of the first book of the Ramayana in Sanskrit. On left is a poster of a Marlene Dumas exhibition: it depicts an image of Naomi Campbell by this South African, Dutch-based artist. Below, on a console, are some ceramics salvaged from a shipwreck with shells and coral still embedded in their sides.

Right The dining table is made from separate square tables, so can be extended or shortened at will. Hanging black lamps disappear into the void.





Left The spa bathroom features a beautifully carved wooden tub and suitably rustic-looking accessories. The painting is of Buddha looking into infinity.

Opposite Villa Samuan is a showcase of the couple's tastes and styles. Top row, we see a detail from the *Ramayana* painting; the baskets below are hand-embroidered with beads and come from the island of Sumba. Middle row, left to right: A cast of an actor's face, handpainted by Rien and covered with pieces of silver leaf. Two wooden head sculptures from Tora Toraja, Sulawesi. A statue of Dewi Sri, the goddess of rice, placed in the garden in homage to the fact that the house is built on a former rice field. A cast of an actor's face, handpainted by Rien and covered with pieces of silver leaf. Bottom row: An antique wooden Chinese incense burner.

Villa Samuan's temple namesake is situated in the village of Bedulu, five km from Ubud. Built in the reign of King Chandrasangka Warmadewa in the 10th century, it was the royal temple of the ancient Warmadewa dynasty. A venue for meetings of the gods, deities and saints, it is filled with ancient artefacts. This home too, is a repository of fine art.



Right The far pavilion houses the home spa and the two offices of the owners. Each reflects the professions and personalities of the couple: the one pictured here belongs to Rien; the other houses a large drawing table and isn't the tidiest in the world! In Rien's office, atop a Dutch cupboard is a collection of baskets used in the rice fields, while the chairs are Chinese. In front of the window are examples of Rien's work and interests—a bead necklace from Papua; a miniature 18th-century costume designed by Rien from bark cloth; a cast of an actor's face with a crown of laurels, designed by Rien and made to his specifications in Bali.



The tranquil master bedroom with en suite bathroom (left and above) features various pieces that reflect the couple's diverse tastes: a Tuareg carpet, a Zulu hat on the headboard amongst other gifts, a hand-embroidered pillow fabricated by Rien to an African design, as well as inbuilt Chinese lacquered cabinets, antique Chinese side tables and a custom-crafted four poster bed. On the console is a collection of lacquered alms' boxes used by monks in Burma.