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DEEPLY CONNECTED

to context and emotions

by Roberta Chionne

Founded in 1965 in California, HBA (Hirsch Bedner Associates) is the world's leading hospitality design firm, operating across 29 offices worldwide with more than 1,500 professionals. In Indonesia, it is represented by a team of over 100 designers who have delivered more than 70 completed projects in a decade. In this interview, we discuss their work with the principal of HBA Jakarta and HBA Bali, architect **Christin Castillo**.

Could you give us a brief overview of HBA?

HBA is a global creative collective shaping some of the world's most recognised hospitality and lifestyle destinations. At the core of our philosophy is a simple yet powerful belief: design has the capacity to positively impact lives. Our guiding principle, "Design that gives form to emotion", reflects our approach to creating spaces that evoke feeling, strengthen human connection and deepen one's relationship with place and culture. Every project combines a deep understanding of context, lifestyle, behaviour and experience, while also delivering long-term value. This philosophy is closely connected to our "OneHBA" approach, which is built on three core foundations: integrated design, collective excellence and exceptional delivery. We believe that cross-disciplinary collaboration and global creative exchange allow us to create environments that are both globally sophisticated and deeply rooted in local identity.

How do you operate in Indonesia?

This year marks an important milestone, as HBA celebrates ten years in Indonesia. Over the past decade, HBA Jakarta and HBA Bali have evolved into complementary creative studios: Jakarta focuses on urban luxury, residential and metropolitan developments, while Bali has become a recognised hub for resort, wellness and artisan-led hospitality experiences. Our clients range from international hospitality operators to local property groups seeking to create destinations with a strong identity and long-term relevance. One recent project that reflects our design approach is 2025 AHEAD Asia finalist Regent Bali Canggu, where contemporary hospitality is interpreted through Indonesian craftsmanship and layered cultural narratives. Another example is Noema Resort Pererenan in Bali (2025), which embraces a more immersive and emotionally driven resort experience rooted in local textures, nature and community sensibilities.

Which main projects are you currently working on?

HBA Jakarta is currently involved in a diverse range of hospitality, luxury residential, mixed-use and lifestyle projects across Indonesia and the wider region. Many of these projects are still under development, but they reflect the growing sophistication of Indonesia's hospitality and urban luxury landscape. Among them is a hotel located in the heart



Photo by Sayler Heffernan

Arch. Christin Castillo



Noema Resort Pererenan (Bali)

Photo by Dimas Nugroho

Photo by Kelapa Creative Studio



Regent Bali Canggu

of Jakarta's business district, Mega Kuningan, which is inspired by the capital's vibrant energy, movement and metropolitan rhythm. We are also working on a golf clubhouse project in Bali, where taking golf lessons to understand the culture and experience surrounding the sport became an important part of the design process itself. Another exciting project is a lifestyle hotel in Bogor inspired by outdoor adventure, natural landscapes, and a slower sense of retreat and escape.

What kind of challenges do designers face in Indonesia?

Indonesia is an incredibly exciting market, but also an extremely layered and complex one from a design perspective. Every region has its own culture, climate, craftsmanship, traditions and way of living, so there is never a single design approach that can be applied universally. Designing in Jakarta is fundamentally different from designing in Bali or other emerging destinations. For us, it all begins with respect for the place itself. We spend a great deal of time understanding the site's cultural DNA, history, community, environment and natural context before any design direction is developed. We collaborate with local artisans, source regional materials and tailor design responses to each location. The tropical climate also plays a major role in shaping architecture, requiring careful consideration of airflow, humidity, natural light, material durability and

the relationship between indoor and outdoor spaces. At the same time, practical challenges such as construction logistics, infrastructure and sourcing in remote destinations often require creative problem-solving and close collaboration with local partners and specialists.

How is hospitality architecture changing?

One of the biggest shifts is the movement away from uniform, generic luxury towards experience-driven, locally grounded and emotionally resonant environments that reflect their specific surroundings. We are also seeing a much greater emphasis on wellness and sustainability as fundamental components of hospitality. Wellness today extends far beyond spas or fitness facilities to encompass lighting, spatial flow, air quality and overall emotional comfort, creating environments that support

rest, balance, mindfulness and a deeper connection with nature and community. Technology and AI are also playing a much more integrated role in shaping guest experiences and operational efficiency. We also see growing demand for flexible and adaptable spaces that can evolve throughout the day and respond to changing guest needs across work, rest, wellness and social interaction. This is especially visible in Jakarta's rapidly evolving luxury residential and branded living sectors, which continue to create sophisticated urban experiences, while Bali remains a creative hub for resort, wellness and artisan-led hospitality design.

What factors do you consider when choosing materials?

We consider multiple factors simultaneously, including functionality, durability, sustainability, maintenance, craftsmanship, emotional quality and cultural relevance. A

Photo by Dimas Nurin



Noema Resort Pererenan (Bali)

Photo by Nilai Asia - Lindung Soemahardi



Babah Ramu Dine & Bar - Episode Hotel Gading Serpong (Jakarta)



defining aspect of our work is authenticity through local craftsmanship. Wherever possible, we integrate locally sourced materials and artisanal elements because they create authenticity, respond naturally to the local climate and strengthen the connection between the project and its surroundings. At the same time, we continue to embrace innovation and increasingly integrate tools such as BIM, Generative AI and custom digital workflows to enhance collaboration, improve efficiency and explore new creative possibilities. Indonesia offers vast resources for creating truly bespoke designs that celebrate regional artistry through textiles and printed traditions. These materials range from rattan and native woods such as ulin and sungkai to tegel kunci ceramic tiles, locally woven fabrics, outdoor furniture manufacturing and intricate weave elements integrated into furniture and décor. Beyond their aesthetic richness, locally-sourced mate-

rials offer practical advantages such as shorter supply chains, greater flexibility for customisation and a reduced environmental footprint. Equally important, each region carries its own indigenous vocabulary of craft and ornamentation, allowing projects to be grounded in a strong sense of place while still meeting international standards.

What role do ceramic tiles play in your projects?

In tropical environments like Indonesia, ceramic materials are highly valued for their resilience, ease of maintenance and ability to transition seamlessly between indoor and outdoor environments. From a design perspective, they offer tremendous creative flexibility for reinterpreting traditional craftsmanship in a contemporary way, while contributing to texture, tactility and spatial continuity. Ceramic tiles play a pivotal role as both functional and storytelling elements in our projects. A prime example of this is Episode Hotel Gading Serpong (2022), where the Babah Ramu Dine & Bar features distinctive floor patterns inspired by vibrant Peranakan motifs. Similarly, at Noema Resort in Bali, ceramic tiles are used more selectively yet with equal impact. Accent walls in bold red and green glazed tiles are placed within guestroom showers, creating striking focal points. These moments of colour not only elevate the spatial experience but also tie back to the overall lifestyle-driven aesthetic of

the boutique hotel, proving that even a single material, when thoughtfully applied, can shape the identity of a space.

What does Made in Italy stand for in Indonesia?

In Indonesia, “Made in Italy” continues to represent craftsmanship, quality, sophistication and a strong design heritage. Italian design is widely respected for its ability to combine technical excellence with emotional and artistic expression. Within architecture and hospitality interiors particularly, Italian materials and products are often associated with timeless elegance and exceptional attention to detail. There is also a synergy between Italian craftsmanship and Indonesian craftsmanship, as both cultures place a strong value on artistry, materiality and human touch. The Italian Trade Agency has played a significant role in actively promoting Italian brands and design culture within Indonesia, reinforcing a strong market perception where Italian products are associated with quality, precision and refined design.

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Noema Resort Pererenan (Bali)