

design anthology

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Community Spirit

Text
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We were inspired by a richer, more romanticised time — a bit of film noir and the sixties and seventies decades,' says Jou-Yie Chou, partner at New York-based Studio Tack, about his team's design of The Chow Kit, Kuala Lumpur's latest design-led hotel. 'We wanted to introduce a timelessness that's rooted in history, whether it be directly by Chow Kit the person, the neighbourhood, Kuala Lumpur or Malaysia as a whole.'

Located on a corner site in Chow Kit, the hotel embodies an old-world glamour inspired by the country's first tycoon and the neighbourhood and hotel's namesake, tin magnate Loke Chow Kit. The Malaysian Anglophile made his money in tin mining and began opening trade shops, then gambling and opium dens, in the area. Widely regarded as one of the country's first tycoons, he's a central figure in the historic neighbourhood.

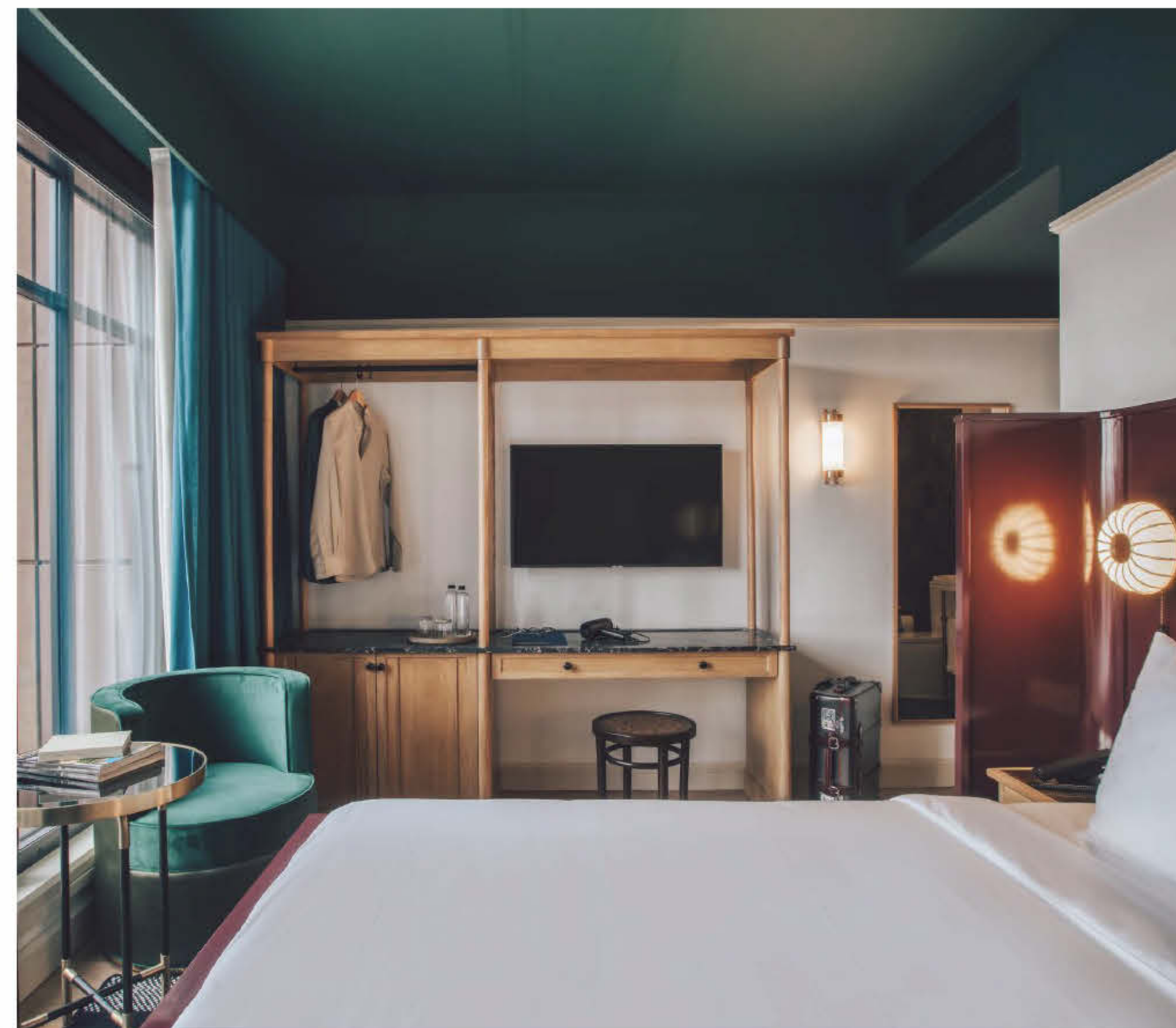
Designing the first property for the Ormond Group's Ormond Hotels brand — which also happens to be Studio Tack's first project in Asia — involved an admirable breadth of research, like spending hours traversing the surrounding streets and nearby Chow Kit wet market (the city's largest), talking to the local shopkeepers and craftspeople who occupy ground-floor shops from which they ply their trades.

'Chow Kit has always been diverse, eclectic and slightly progressive. We wanted our lobby to feel inviting to all of these ideals and to be

a meeting place for everyone — guest, friend or neighbour,' Chou explains. 'We looked to instil a richness in texture and colour, and use durable, classic materials and furniture made from stone, brick, lacquered wood and brass.' Inspired by the area's famously rich and colourful history, and the late-night revelry that took place in its dens and saloons, the result is an eclectic but intuitive combination of archival photography and curated artworks, lush foliage, and Malaysian antiques paired with more contemporary design pieces.

The hotel is housed in what was once a hospital and conjoined shop, and shares the building with the Ormond Group's second new brand, MoMo's — a lifestyle hotel conceived for Gen Z travellers and with a community-driven programme of events and pop-ups. Designed by Sydney-based Akin Atelier and with a definite Deco bent, MoMo's KL is intended to be a counterpoint to The Chow Kit. This contrast makes for a unique stay: think bed, breakfast and early-evening drinks at the richly outfitted Chow Kit, and then late-night margaritas and Momo-oke (MoMo's version of karaoke) just next door.

Often overlooked in favour of the glass and steel-lined Bukit Bintang, Chow Kit is home to a diverse community of fifth- and sixth-generation Malaysians, many with Indonesian roots, making it one of the city's most authentic neighbourhoods. The Chow Kit is a fitting addition to this neighbourhood community.



Facing page and this page
Designed by New York-based Studio Tack, The Chow Kit is a new boutique hotel in Kuala Lumpur's Chow Kit neighbourhood. Inspired by its namesake mining tycoon and his legacy in the neighbourhood that also takes its name from him, the hotel's design demonstrates the richness, diversity and glamour of a flamboyant past
Images courtesy of Ormond Group

