

hospitality design

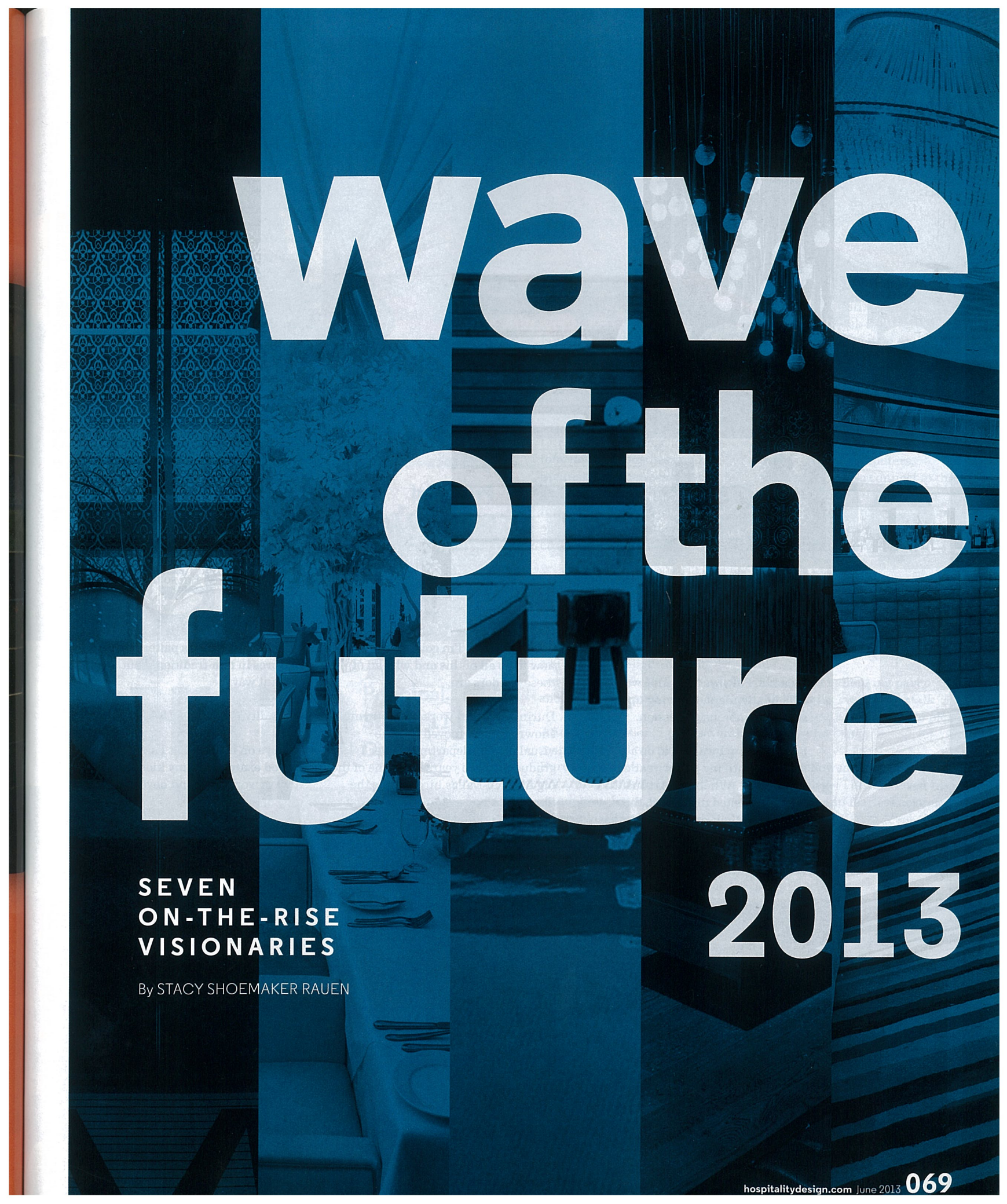
june 2013 hospitalitydesign.com

hd awards 2013

Presenter of

HDAmericas
a hospitality design event





wave of the future

SEVEN
ON-THE-RISE
VISIONARIES

By STACY SHOEMAKER RAUEN

2013



colin seah

Founder and Director of Design
Ministry of Design
Singapore

1. The fantastical white-filled dining room at Macalister Mansion in Penang, Malaysia.

2+3. A black and white palette pervades the rooftop bar and guestroom at the Club Hotel in Singapore.

4. A suspended underlit bed seems to float in a guestroom in the New Majestic Hotel in Singapore.





I lived in a church complex in Singapore when I was a child.

As a kid, I recall drawing these cross-sections of huge army space ships. The ship came equipped with bunks, exercise rooms with a pool, dining halls—it was a very basic hotel in space.

I had absolutely no clue I wanted to go into design until the moment I decided to go to architecture school. My father was shocked to bits.

I was in the army for two and a half years—compulsory for every Singaporean male—and I was part of the military police section, where I almost got thrown into military prison for letting a prisoner under my charge escape. After that, I worked as a waiter in an Italian restaurant (met lots of people,

talked more to the guests than served), a fashion photographer's assistant (loved it, not just for the models, but for the scenes we got to create), a production assistant at a production house that filmed television commercials (crazy hours), and did lots of theater set design on the side—which, along with photography, was a career path I thought I could take but didn't.

I went to the University of Arizona for my architectural degree. The landscape was beautiful there; I learned the power of natural landscape—coming from Singapore, this was a complete change for me.

I worked for a series of architectural firms during school and upon graduation, in LA, Berlin, Rotterdam, and Singapore, for the likes of Rem Koolhaas and Daniel Libeskind.

My longest job before establishing Ministry of Design—which came after I was offered the chance to design the New Majestic Hotel, Singapore's first Design Hotel member—was as an academic and tutor in the department of architecture at the National University of Singapore. I was on a track towards a PhD, but all this time, I guess I really missed design. I knew I was a designer at heart.

The most rewarding part of the job is definitely working well with fellow creatives. When the going is good, it's like a music jam session.

The most challenging part of the job is to remain constantly creative. Sometimes you get burnt out and need to take time off from design and just veg out. I loved the rhythm in school, where there would be a long stretch of intense work, followed by a summer or Christmas break—it's not that easy to get as a working adult.

My guilty pleasure is driving too fast. I love cars and adore the new 2012 Porsche 911 for its timeless form and taut but sinuous musculature.

My first love is the thermal baths in Vals by Peter Zumthor—still the most memorable space to date.

I want my tombstone to read, 'To live is Christ, to die is gain.'

Recently Completed Projects:

- New Majestic Hotel, Singapore
- Macalister Mansion, Penang, Malaysia
- Royal China Restaurant, Singapore
- Hu'u Bar & Restaurant, Bangkok
- The Club, Singapore

