

Man who turns ideas into successful developments

Last month's magazines, newspapers and TV channels in Pattaya and Bangkok carried numerous items and stories proclaiming the projects of Mario Kleff and, in his own words, the *magical* Wandegroup Company Limited of Pattaya.

It seems this German designer has truly got a feel for doing the right thing at the right time. Prestigious developers in the real estate sector such as Heights Holdings or Premier Homes plus many international investors from USA, UK, Denmark, Sweden, Israel, Dubai and Russia are choosing Wandegroup as the chief office to create architectural solutions to be either launched in Thailand or in their homelands.

Seeing the impressive local record from 2004 - 2008 of Mario and his designer team explains how Wandegroup grew to a premium architect office with star allure.

In the early '90s Mario Kleff grew from an art student to become a reknowned artist presenting his work on the Book of Kells in several galleries and museums including the well known Gutenberg Museum.

The Book of Kells is a historical masterpiece of the early middle ages.

From 1996-2001, Mario's career took a new turn as a media art director and he worked for major clients on international marketing campaigns.

Then he became a creative director and was responsible for many successful project launches such as the BMW-3 series, the Audi TT and Siemens Computer Systems. Mario was in charge of the entire design concepts which gained great



respect on an international level. Also in these years he created his first unique building architecture designs and took a prestigious award for the best solution of a "saving cost and creative exterior project".

We spoke to him ...

REM: How do you find customers in times when other offices are searching for projects?

Mario Kleff: We don't search for a project or participate compete for them, but the investors find us. For example, the current projects in Dubai and New York arose because there are existing contacts between the developers and Wandegroup clients.

They questioned me about our ability to design whole projects overseas... of course that I agreed to be the chief architect and designer, while understanding that each is a major project in the public eye.

Let me explain why people ask me to design. For example, if they want a house in Northern or Southern Thailand ... I think it is because my ideas are so different. I opt for large spans

- not just four to eight, but 15 to 30 metres, lot's of glass and concrete, outstanding engineering and good architecture feel all over.

I think many architects wouldn't understand how to do this or why to present such ideas when can copy some simple ideas to receive the costumer's money faster?

REM: Do you believe investors are influenced by the political situation in Thailand?

MK: Of course they are. However, it is not affecting our business so far. Many new projects are coming up in the next months and our office is working harder than before.

REM: Reports say you sign contracts for very large amounts. Can you give us a idea?

MK: The highest architectural design fee I have booked in Wandegroup's existence is approximately US\$1,500,000 - that does not include the construction fee. This project will be a major one here in town and will be launched at the beginning of next year.

REM: Why would a investor choose to spend such large sums of money with an architect?

MK: Not every project will be charged at that rate. In fact, we do support some customers and serve them with design solutions for low margins. I believe our customers can recognise the difference in the design and management and agree to pay for it.

Finally, I can say that almost every project that Wandegroup creates has become successful on sales within a very short space of time.

Some customers have even asked me to integrate a personal signature plate made of steel or bronze into the skeleton or footings.

REM: Do you work out all these plans yourself or does Wandegroup use sub-contractors?

MK: We draw every single line in-house. I work together with my design team in which Tong (Saksit Vongaram) is the most active junior architect and 3-D designer.

Tong learned within the past three years how to lead a team, how to build a perfect, to-scaled miniature and create high-end computer 3-D designs.

Yes, we provide our clients with full-service to present their projects in an outstanding and easy-to-understand way for their clients or buyers from Pattaya or overseas.

REM: Thank you for spending time on this interview and best of luck for the future.

Mario Kleff can be contacted at www.wandegroup.com or email mk@wandegroup.com

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