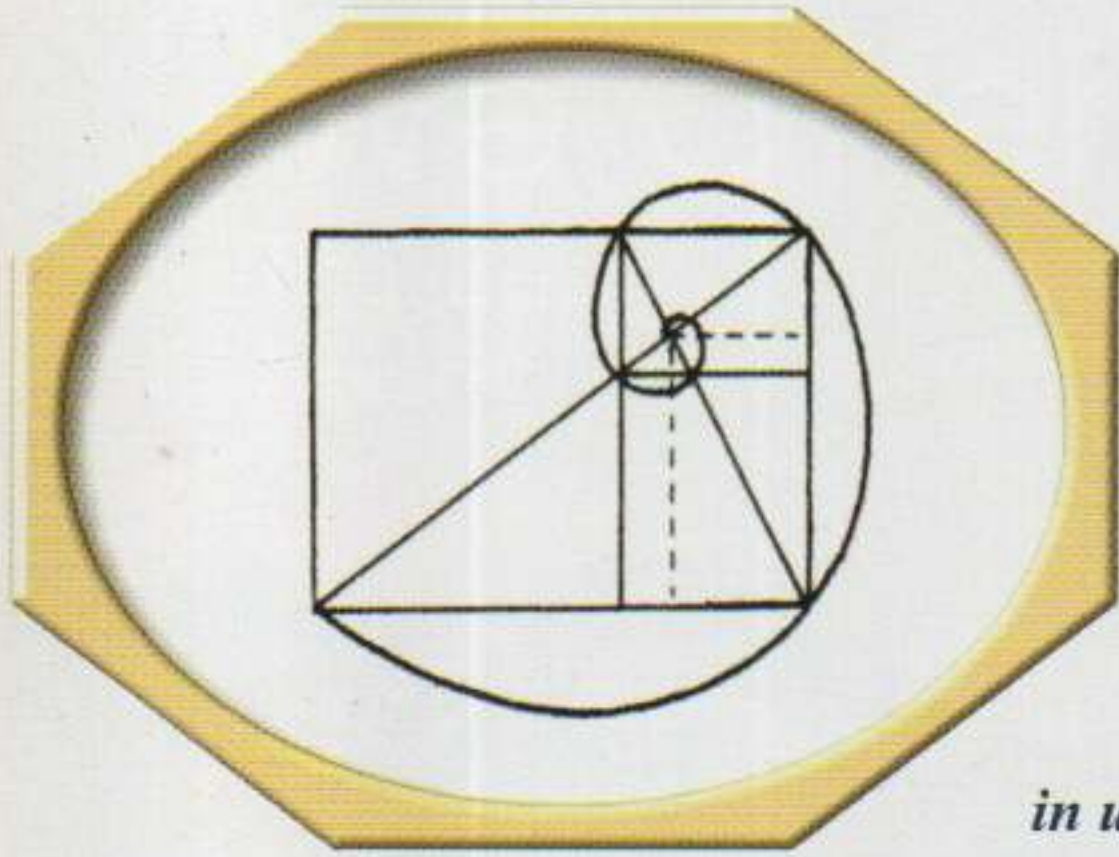


Mario Kleff

Master of the Golden Mean



Mario Kleff, owner/MD of the Wandee group, is a master architect and ultra-creative conceptualizer, designer, engineer and builder of exemplary lifestyle buildings; everything from entire resorts and ultra-modern hi-rise and low-rise condominiums to futuristically designed villas. His Wandee group specializes in ultra-modern, cost-efficient construction methods, maximizing light and space, with teams able to construct to German quality standards. To

date, his accomplishments stand at 50 projects, making him the most successful architect ever to grace Pattaya. What follows may appear overly mystical and abstract, but it's necessary to explain the secret of Mario's success and popularity as an architect-designer par excellence.

The very basis of every single one of Mario's designs is the Golden Mean, the archetype of the most efficient use of space and line, as embodied in the master works of the Renaissance artists, the architects of the Gothic cathedrals, the designers of the pyramids and the Great Architect of the Universe, Himself. The Golden Mean is the true da Vinci code, permeating all his works, and ultimately epitomized in the Divina Proportione; as well as in his sculptures, hydraulics, engineering and architectural masterpieces. Leonardo da Vinci has been called the quintessential Renaissance genius. It could be said that Mario has similar aspirations, albeit neo-Renaissance and on a slightly lesser scale. The sheer beauty of the Golden Mean, the rectangle based upon the ratio 1:1.618, is not merely that it epitomizes elegance i.e. the pinnacle of grace and style, but it also exerts a subtle psychological effect, inducing a feeling of serenity, relaxation and wellbeing. Accordingly, all Mario's architectural creations have this



Mario pictured above

selfsame effect upon all who reside or work in them.

From a German aristocratic background, Mario first studied as an artist, specifically of historical techniques, being deeply influenced by the master artists, especially of the Celtic culture and the Renaissance. Like them, he sought the universal meaning in art and design, recognizing that the materials and colourings were a combination, not only of mathematics and physics, but also of culture, religion, metaphysics and physiology. He asserts that design is a combination of aesthetics and intelligence and, moreover, that every new design has to be in balance with its environment and, ultimately, humanity. To give an indication of Mario's total dedication, over seven years, he painted and copied the greatest Celtic work of art, the Book of Kells, an illuminated Brito-Irish manuscript of the Gospels in Latin; itself based on the Golden Mean. To do this, he had to replicate the techniques of the original monk-painters, including creating the colours laboriously by hand like them.



Next, Mario attempted to give a new definition to art. He says: "Art is dead, but still alive. The human being is art." - a reinterpretation of the Renaissance artists' beliefs. And like da Vinci, he later augmented his historico-metaphysical conceptions of art with studies in industrial design, followed by industrial engineering and architectural design.

In his first career moves, Mario, attempted to apply this rich background as a media art director, devising new marketing presentation tools. After which, he became a creative director working out complex corporate designs and design strategies. Dissatisfied with the commercial sector, however, he returned to a study of the ancient techniques of balance and harmony inherent in traditional Japanese Zen and Classical Chinese Feng Shui; the natural augmentation to his study of the divine proportions of the Golden Mean, giving Mario the ability to work in a completely different dimension to most creative artists.

Thus admirably equipped with such a rich and diverse foundation, he brought these sublime conceptions to his current métier, that of a creative, architect-designer and the MD of the Wandegroup.

Mario steadfastly believes that no design can be successful in the future if the designers neglect to integrate the past. Accordingly, he integrates not only complex



Pictured top: Illustration from the Book of Kells & **Lower:** A house design by his student junior Architect Tong.

historical knowledge, but also timeless mathematical formulae (i.e. the Golden Mean) in his present architectural designs and reduces them to minimalist design; thereby performing architectural alchemy. What's more, he controls the whole process from conceptualization and planning to the final detailed designs, engineering and supervising the actual building.

Needless to say, he's a complete 'speed freak', always on the go and only requires between 4-5 hours sleep. However, as his office incorporates the Golden Mean in its interior design, he and all his staff work in an atmosphere of relaxation and bonhomie. That doesn't prevent them from being able to design buildings in record time, though. He estimates it took a month to design W Tower, including the exterior and interior design, engineering

and 3D rendering (the most time-consuming component). It helps to have super computers for this mammoth process; his own has 32 QUADCore cpus in line and a RAM of 288 GB, which he intends to double. I watched a demo 3D render of a 5000x3750 pixel design of W Tower, which took 1min 18 secs! He reckons he or his assistant, Saksit Vongaram, can design an 8-storey condo or a house in one day.

As a specialist in hi-rise architecture and extreme engineering, he currently has five buildings to his credit and four on the go, including W Tower, Wong Amat, Sky Park, a 180,000m² twin-tower shopping complex to be built on Jomtien's new 2nd Road, a 50-storey tower in Bangkok and a futuristic, 53-storey hi-rise on New York's Manhattan-Bronx borders, incorporating a Baptist church. He's designed 30 low-rise condominiums, including



Park Royal Phases I & II, Laguna Heights, and Happy Homes, On the Hill and South Beach 8-storey condominiums on Pratumnak. He also has two resort condos in Chiang Mai. He's also created a number of unique, futuristic villas in Chiang Rai, Koh Samui and Pattaya for private clients and eventually intends to construct a home for himself, which will be largely underground. Suan Sawarn phases 1, 2 and 3 are conceptual and engineered by Mario. Other noteworthy creations include a lifestyle resort in Rayong and the architectural memorial to the king to be built near Bali Hai, incorporating a museum, gallery, information centre and marina.

As an architect-designer, Mario can design virtually anything, be it a building, a piece of furniture, a car or any industrial product; he reckons he could even design a Lifestyle. He's currently in the final stages of designing and producing the ultimate pickup, a speed-monster capable of 260 mph, generating 2,000 bhp. The engine's being made by a formula 1 auto-engineer. He maintains he visualizes and conceptualizes everything first in his head and believes contemporary man only



thinks horizontally, having lost the art of vertical thought as practised by the pyramid designers. Mario's thought processes, he asserts, are circular-gestalt, incorporating both planes, and as such must be 30+ years ahead of his time. He believes in the functionality of the contemporary world and not 'quick buck' decorative solutions. For him, a good design is apprehended and accepted by the instincts and intuition, before the brain gets round to cogitating. He's one of a kind; a person who treats his clients as friends and is prepared to put himself devotedly, 100% into a project. Any client of his must indeed be honoured. It was an inspiration and privilege to interview him.

Pictured Left Page: architectural memorial to His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej.

This Page top: Conceptual rendering of a living room to be featured in the 'W' Tower project designed for Heights-Holdings

Lower: The Lifestyle resort designed for Rayong

