

## inson dubois wood

### LAMPHUN, THAILAND



Shuttling around the world comes easily to Inson Dubois Wood. Born in Connecticut to a French mother and Thai father, he summered and wintered alternately in Europe and Asia as a child, but has called New York City home for most of his adult life. So when he inherited a 100-acre property in Lamphun, Thailand, from his grandfather, he immediately had the idea of building a vacation residence, complete with guest cottages.

The town is twenty miles south of tourist-thronged Chiang Mai, in a rural area inhabited primarily by farmers—many of whom are also fine artists and craftsmen—and where street life centers on vendors selling exotic fruits, birds to buy and set free to symbolize the Buddhist concept of nonattachment, and flowers and incense for temple offerings. It took about a decade for Wood to finish his “European-bohemian-contemporary-Thai-styled Zen retreat,” as he portrays it. Clients kept him busy at home and Thailand’s monsoon seasons would stall progress for weeks on end. He did not have an urgent need for a getaway place and he was happy to allow the “extremely talented team of local craftspeople who take great pride in their skills” to work in a way that was comfortable to them. The slow pace was acceptable and, in fact, provided him with ample time to design the majority of the furniture, which was fabricated on site.

An atmosphere of peacefulness and harmony encompasses his 6,000-square-foot aerie, possibly due to the hand construction. “You can almost sense that no electric sawing occurred,” Wood says. The emphasis on ceramic, stone, and solid teak—some reclaimed from 200-year-old rice barns—adds to the feeling. Subtle contrasts encourage a closer look at practically every object. Sit-up-straight chairs surrounding a breakfast table display the designer’s carved interpretation of ancient dragons while smooth, gently rounded wood pieces populate an open-format living room; a twentieth-century mirror created with an undulating wood centerpiece from Africa decorates the granite river stone fireplace chimney, playing off the strict lines of the classical Thai chair from the 1860s close by.

In addition to the public quarters, the house comprises five bedrooms—with beds draped in silk from Shinawatra, a store known for its first-rate selection of antique and new fabrics—a gallery/studio Wood uses to paint, sculpt, and showcase art, the majority of it indigenous to the province; an extensive porch encircling most of the house, fitted with fire pits for impromptu barbecues and lounge chairs for reading and snoozing; and an enormous white party space. He points out, “It’s considered impolite not to entertain all your neighbors at least once during the year.” In between gala dinner parties, planning future projects, and occasional bike rides into the countryside, Wood can be found floating serenely in the pool that looks for all the world like a lotus pond.



