

## Business

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### PERSONALITY

## The Eugenia brings bygone era to life

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**Eugene Yu-Ching Yeh, a 45-year-old Taiwanese businessman, has achieved his dream of having a colonial-style home, which he believes will remind him of his past life.**

Last month he officially opened a boutique hotel named The Eugenia on Sukhumvit Road Soi 31, a three-storey, 12-suite establishment which exudes a bygone era of fine buildings, opulence and luxury.

The hotel embodies all these virtues in understated elegance and comes complete with swaying palms, antique furniture and fittings, and period furnishings and decorations throughout. Room rates are from US\$108 (Bt4,127) to \$138 a night.

"This is the house of my last life. When I first saw colonial homes like this I just knew I used to live in one, and now I can, in a dream, with memories of my past life," said Yeh, adding that he loved everything old, even cars, and adored living in a tropical country and eating very spicy food.

The furniture and fittings are an eclectic private collection picked up by Eugene and his family over the years in the erstwhile British and French colonies of India and Indo-China. The 300 antiques are now used to furnish the hotel's public and private rooms. Even shutters and hanging lamps were acquired before the hotel was built. Yeh started collecting when he was 12.

"I'm not a business professional but a dreamer," said Yeh, who has been in Bangkok for almost eight years. He was divorced 11 years ago and now lives with his daughter.

"Living in a colonial house is, and always was, one of my dreams. The colonial style has been one of my favourites ever since my first few travel experiences to Singapore, Penang, Bangkok and Hong Kong in the early 1970s.

Yeh named the hotel Eugenia in memory of an old Vietnamese woman who always called him Eugenia and gave him some impressions of the colonial style and a foretaste of his own hotel.

Yeh was a designer in Taiwan. He gave up the business in 1997 and moved to Thailand, where he set up a trading firm to export furniture and household decorations to Taiwan, Japan, Korea and China.

Like many another business expatriates, Yeh changed rented houses and serviced apartments quite a few times before settling in his present abode, now under the same roof as his hotel.

"I wanted to build a dream house and a different style of boutique hotel. I have no plans to make money from it: I just want to make my dream come true," he said.

Yeh said the Eugenia was more like a home than a hotel, with all the guests treated like family.

After spending more than 20 months searching for the best locations along Sukhumvit and Sathorn

roads, Yeh finally bought a half-rai plot 14 months ago for Bt40 million and spent 10 months building the Eugenia, which cost him another Bt1 million.

"We target anybody who travels to Bangkok, even people from upcountry, who needs a place to stay for a few nights," said Yeh. "I don't want to compete with the big hotels in town. Our customers are people who travel a lot and don't like to stay in big hotels. They want a home away from home," he said.

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The Nation

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