

19.22x25.27	1/2	עמוד 35	אטמוספירה - אנגליה	11/01/2016	51349555-7
44070 - אלמא בזכרון יעקב לילי אלשטיין - מייסדת מלון אלמא					



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Tourism



Elma de Schuyter
Photo: Guy Zarfati

hotel and art and music center. Elstein bought the building in 2006. After the dreamed-of renovation, it's been reincarnated as the Elma (for Elstein Music and Art) Arts Complex Luxury Hotel. Though the hotel was never formally designated as a preservation site, strict guidelines for the preservation of historic sites were observed in the renovation, as directed by architect Rani Ziss and Amnon Rechter, son of the original architect.

The original 80 rooms were transformed into 40 spacious ones with views of the blue sea and the green landscape; a new wing with 22 villas was added; the lecture hall and cinema were refurbished and turned into concert halls; the room formerly housing swimming pool machinery became a spa, and the pool itself had a complete facelift. Even the rooms formerly containing vats underwent a transformation into galleries for plastic arts and exhibitions outfitted with technology used in the world's most famous museums. The concert hall contains an organ with 1,414 pipes built at a cost of app. 420,000 euros, plus two Steinway D Concert Grand pianos.

It's all under the supervision of Bruno de Schuyter, a veteran hotelier with a wealth of experience in Israel and Europe. **Please describe the hotel's**

One Woman, One Vision

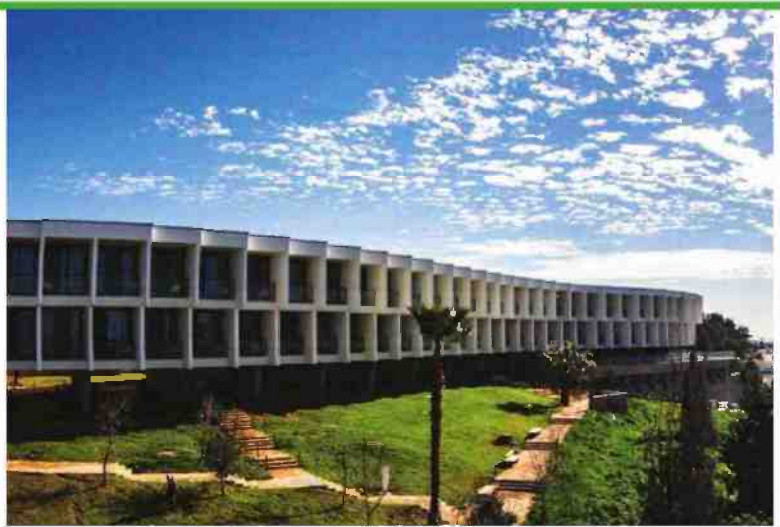
How did a pension fund's veteran rest home on Mt. Carmel transform into an elegant boutique hotel and international art center? Bruno de Schuyter, general manager of the Elma Arts Complex Luxury Hotel, provides the answer / **Shani Harel**

From the Coastal Road there is a view of the Carmel Ridge at Zichron Ya'akov. It's no mirage what you see there, right in the middle of the panorama. Yes, it's the same unique piece of architecture, an extraordinary building that blends in with the view with a kind of delicate stubbornness, which won its designer, architect Yaakov Rechter, the 1972 Israel Prize. In those days, the building was a sanatorium, a place for rest and recuperation, quiet and a healthy dose of beauty for people who

wanted to get well, maybe also to recharge their batteries. But as the rest home fashion fell off with the years, the building became a kind of orphan. Lily Elstein – descendant of Zichron Ya'akov's founding generation on both sites, long-time activist in promoting immigrant absorption and patron of the arts – heard that the iconic structure was targeted for removal. But she had a vision: To renovate the place from the foundations up and turn it into a combination luxury



16.08x22.2	2/2	עמוד 36	אנגליה - אטמוספירה	11/01/2016	51349583-8
17 אלמא בזכרון יעקב לילי אלשטיין - מייסדת מלון אלמא - 44070					



concept.

"Lily's vision, which is behind Elma, is to provide the population with an abundance of art and culture. We're talking about a high-quality population, which in this geographic area is thirsty for all kinds of culture and decent facilities. Therefore, our artistic content, for which Noam Ben Ze'ev is responsible, is very broad, including classical music, Shalom Hanoch in acoustic performances and everything between the two, including famous artists from abroad. Plastic arts, under the responsibility of curator Shirit Shapira, can be seen in all the public spaces; the approximately 500 works include pieces from Lily's private collection. The objective is to bring together as many people as possible, no matter what their age and/or ethnicity, with art."

Is there that kind of 'anything goes' audience in Israel?

"Certainly. Truth is, our audience is very diverse. In the middle of the week we host quite a few

conferences; people come on weekends looking for everything that Elma has to offer, and I assume that at the right time of year, families with children will come. The huge size of the complex (app. 120 dunams, which is 30 acres) enables absorbing all this variety with great ease. Those who want can visit the galleries and enjoy the performances that are offered, or have a full vacation experience. People come here wanting a boutique hotel experience on the mountain ridge, or to enjoy one of the really good restaurants in Israel, or for the art. It's possible to enjoy the lifestyle, the culture, and certainly a combination of the two."

As an experienced hotel manager, can you explain how managing this kind of establishment is different from an ordinary hotel, elegant and exclusive as it may be?

"A hotel, after it is built and is taking in guests, has to be one of the most orderly things there is. It just has to be that way as

a very large business, with so many aspects to it. Here you also need to consider artists and art people. Operating so many things under one roof is very challenging, but in the same breath very satisfying, particularly when our guests enjoy the experience and are enthused about it."

There's almost no Israeli who doesn't recall the place as a rest home, a sanatorium. Doesn't that make it hard to market it as a luxury hotel?

"No. That was one of the things that bothered me, but reality has shown that there's nothing to be afraid of. We're full of activity which includes domestic tourism from those who've heard of us from word of mouth, and also foreign tourism even though that does take longer to happen."

Where did the idea come from? Are there places like it abroad?

"One of the first things I did when they approached me to manage Elma was to research if and where in the world there was a concept like this. Turns out that there isn't. The only thing that might be like it is a concept hotel in Bavaria. It's entirely Lily's dream. She thought of it and did it. Two years ago I joined a small group of people who swore to protect the idea and realize it. We're convinced that there's really an audience here that will be overjoyed to accept a different experience and enjoy the culture, quality and serenity – each in the dose that's right for them." ➡