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## SUYING METROPOLITAN'S DEGREES OF ENCLOSURE

Singapore Indesign Intimate  
09-10 July 2015

AAMER ARCHITECTS | ATELIER M BY CHEN & CHOI COLLABORATIVE | MRS POUND BY NCDA  
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# BREATHING BOX

SUYING METROPOLITAN STUDIO CREATES A FINELY  
ARTICULATED HOUSE IN KRANJI THAT BLENDS  
MODERNIST INCLINATIONS WITH A TROPICAL SENSIBILITY.



Broad overhangs and filtering  
screens equip the house for its  
tropical context, and allow it to  
be opened up to the view



TEXT » NARELLE YABUKA  
PHOTOGRAPHY » EDWARD HENDRICKS



“THIS KIND OF SITE is very hard to come by,” says Edmund Ng of Suying Metropolitan Studio as we look out from the upper terrace of a semi-detached house in Kranji designed by his office. The house faces a forested reserve – the military training zone around the Mandai Camp – and at times the sounds of the firing range overtake the babble of birds that populate the canopies of trees immediately across the street.

This rare and valuable view just happens to face west, however, which raised the problem of how to enjoy the green aspect through ample openings while preventing the overheating of the interior. Ng’s solution, essentially, was to moderate and articulate the edges of the house, translating his modernist-inspired architectural form into a breathing, shaded tropical filter.

An extensive screened facade was developed for the western side of the house, with batons of dense, hardy ironwood in a staggered arrangement. Much of this facade is operable, with the batons encased by inconspicuous steel frames. “Because of the detailing, it’s difficult to see where each operable screen begins and ends. We achieved a nice uniformity across the facade,” says Ng.

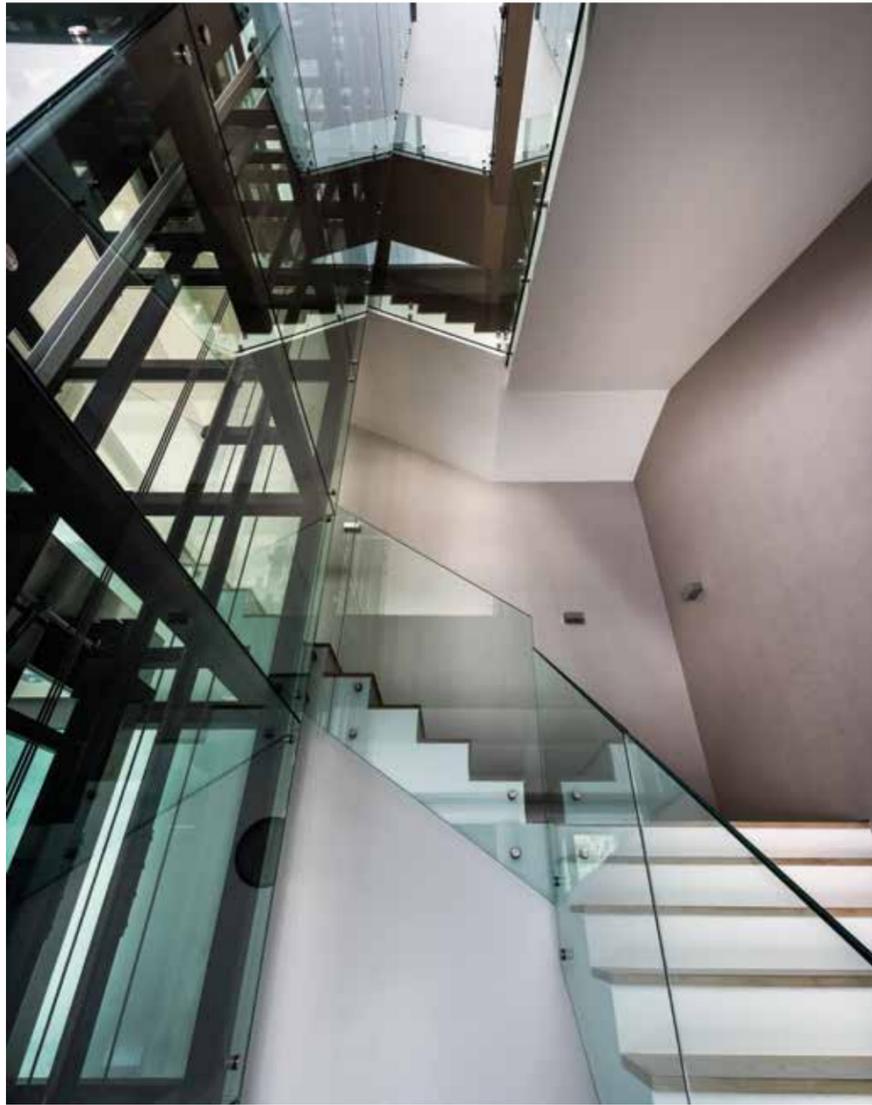
Gaps between the batons filter the sunlight as it enters the house, and preserve glimpses of green even when the operable screens are closed. A secondary layer of heat defence is provided by interior curtains, and rain is abated by sliding glass doors. Broad overhangs allow for deep shade and rain protection.

The moving screens are grouped and operated in trios by hinged connecting arms. Manipulating them reveals their sheer weight and turns the process of opening up and closing down the house into an experience that emphasises physical effort and time. A very different experience would have

Left: The entry sequence delivers one from the car porch, between two water bodies, and on to the concealed front door

Right: The living and dining area can be fully opened up to the pool, with the perimeter fence creating a courtyard-like atmosphere





THE ACT OF MANIPULATING THE WEIGHTY SCREENS PROVIDES A POETIC REMINDER OF CONTEXT – OF THE VIEW THAT IS PARTAKEN, AND OF THE RHYTHMS OF THE WEATHER.

been had if electronically operated rolling screens (for example) had been installed. The act of manipulating the weighty screens provides a poetic reminder of context – of the view that is partaken, and of the rhythms of the weather.

It was fortunate for Suying Metropolitan Studio that their client was also the builder of the house. The owner has provided repair services and undertaken A&A work for some twenty years, and is now venturing into the construction market. Says Ng, “The house couldn’t be too complicated and difficult to build, yet it needed to be iconic. We created a clean and simple house that is nicely articulated but quite straightforward in structural terms.”

Ng and his team designed the “tidy and controlled” facade with a clear separation of each component. “Everything is isolated and separated,” he explains. “Whatever is metal is black. If it’s white, it’s a plaster finish. Timber elements are expressed clearly. Each material is in its ‘natural’ state,” he elaborates. “The owner was very clean with the details. He didn’t dilute details for speed, ease or cost savings. He challenged himself to build a beautiful, iconic house.”

The approach of articulating elements extended to the car porch shelter and – in spatial terms – to the entry sequence. “There’s a considerable change in ground level from one end of the site to the

Left: The lift and stair core serves as a conduit for light, which flows between floors unhindered by glass balustrades

Right: The vivid green view can be enjoyed whether the operable screens are open or closed



- LEGEND  
 1 Car Porch | 2 Reflection Pond | 3 Pool | 4 Entrance | 5 Foyer  
 6 Guest Bathroom | 7 Guest Room | 8 Lift | 9 Dining/Lounge |  
 10 Dry Kitchen | 11 Wet Kitchen | 12 Helper’s Room | 13 Powder Room | 14 Shower | 15 Deck | 16 Bedroom | 17 Bathroom | 18 Walk-In Wardrobe | 19 Living/Lounge | 20 Master Lounge | 21 Master Bathroom | 22 Master Bedroom | 23 Junior Master Bedroom | 24 Junior Master Bathroom | 25 Roof Terrace | 26 Multipurpose Room



other, so we tiered the car porch roof to break down the scale. It steps down to a more human scale,” explains Ng.

“We created a feature wall so the parked cars remain separated from the interior,” he continues. This assisted in the creation of a sequenced entry experience. “From the gate, you first engage with this feature wall, then you walk beyond that and find water on both sides – the fish pond and the swimming pool. Then you enter a large foyer space – a sanctuary with the sound of water,” he says.

A layered approach was also applied to the living space. Explains Ng, “Because of the slope, at some points the road level is higher than the living space. So we had to artificially create a private environment. The pool area is almost like a courtyard, and the sound of the cascading water masks the noise from the road.”

The finely articulated vision was extended to the more utilitarian aspects of the house. A triangulated form on the top level, for example, conceals the air conditioning compressors from the view of the neighbours and acts as a vent.

At night, the neighbours’ experience of the house dramatically alters. As light emanates outwards through the staggered ironwood screens, the portions of solid wall become more apparent. Says Ng, “The box form of the house begins to disintegrate into the purity of the elements themselves.” «

“EVERYTHING IS ISOLATED AND SEPARATED. EACH MATERIAL IS IN ITS ‘NATURAL’ STATE.”

» EDMUND NG



## KRANJI HOUSE

**DESIGN FIRM** Suying Metropolitan Studio Pte Ltd  
**PROJECT TEAM MEMBERS** Edmund Ng (Architect),  
JR Ricafrente  
**BUILDER** AC Creative Pte Ltd  
**C&S ENGINEER** KKT Consultants

**TIME TO COMPLETE** 15 Months  
**TOTAL FLOOR AREA** 700.4 sqm

**SUYING METROPOLITAN STUDIO PTE LTD**  
(65) 6297 9797

The precisely articulated facade allows each material and surface to be read distinctly