



EDMUND NG: A HOUSE FOR A COUPLE'S GREAT LOVES

The architect's modernist style is on full display in this Sunset Way bungalow. BY CORINNE KERK

EDMUND NG BUILDS HOMES FOR families, for the preservation of heritage – and for love.

The Singaporean architect, whose body of work includes design for commercial spaces such as a resort, boutiques and exhibitions, constructed his home in Siglap as a ballad to his gallerist wife, Jazz.

Himself an art lover and collector, it isn't surprising that he sees his own profession through the lens of art.

"An architect should aspire to be an artist," says the founder of his eponymous firm. "The difference between the two is that the artist's work does not require the client's input. With architecture, you always have a client, the client will have needs and those needs have to be transformed into something artistic."

At its core, says Ng, architecture is about changing one's environment in order to improve wellness in one's life. "Other than physical health, mental health and everything else are influenced by the environment, so a home is not just a shelter."

Ng's clients go to him because they are aware of his architectural approach, which is modernist with a respect for the purity of materials – thus explaining his penchant for using off-form concrete. His projects are known for their tropicality; harnessing light while adapting to the hot climate.

Sometimes, clients return to him to craft their next abode, as do their children for theirs.

In one of his latest works, Ng had the pleasure of doing exactly that – creating a new home for a couple who are finally realising a dream from over two decades ago.

MEMORIES OLD AND NEW

The house in question sits on a 6,900-square-foot piece of land right next to Ki Residences condominium in the Sunset Way neighbourhood. The new development replaces its predecessor, Brookvale Park, which was sold en bloc in 2018.

For some, building a pricey home that borders a 660-unit residential project is a very bad idea, but for the owners, it was as if life had poetically come full circle.

Years ago, the couple – a businessman and his corporate professional wife who are now both retired – lived in Brookvale Park, including when they were raising their young son.

Today, the latter is himself a father, whose own home in the eastern part of Singapore was also designed by Ng.

The Sunset Way neighbourhood holds sentimental value for the couple, who had always looked at houses in the area and thought that perhaps one day, they could live in one of them. In the interim years, they

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[1] Architect Edmund Ng is an art lover and collector. [2] The house looks unassuming from the street. [3] An oversized portrait of the vivacious lady of the house. [4] The spacious master bathroom that sits cantilevered directly above the pool.

lived in a house in Holland Green designed by Ng, but jumped at the chance to return to the vicinity when the opportunity arose.

The first thing Ng did was to engage with the topography of the land, which slopes down towards the back that borders Ki Residences. He designed a three-storey residence with a basement and swimming pool at the rear to take advantage of the natural gradient of the land.

From the street, the house looks unassuming enough – an off-form concrete block punctuated by windows with black walls for contrast. The magic, however, begins when you enter. The home gradually reveals itself, starting with a spatial split between the reception and dining areas.

As you proceed deeper into the home, dubbed The

Green Sanctuary, you are struck by its porosity – full-height windows that dramatically frame the view of lush greenery on the side and back of the building.

And though the placement of its living room and pool at the back, directly facing Ki Residences, is unusual, there is shelter from prying eyes thanks to trees at the perimeter of the properties – both mature and newly planted.

"It's almost like a glass house, and although that's not very tropical, the whole point of a landed property is to enjoy the land and appreciate the greenery around. So you must have vantage points for the vegetation," says Ng.

That view of foliage is also the main feature for the dining room on the first floor, as well as the spacious master bedroom on the second level. In fact, the

master bathroom sits cantilevered directly above the pool.

Meanwhile, the attic enjoys an elevation that brings with it a prize: uninterrupted vistas of the trees and landed homes in the vicinity, as well as taller buildings in the distance.

Tree patterns are even introduced on the specially commissioned metal screens on the second floor, where the guest bedroom faces the street. From inside, you see what looks like the pleasing silhouette of a forest, and from outside, the shapes of the foliage pop when the lights come on at night.

A HOUSE WITH SOUL

This being the second house that Ng has designed for the couple, he was well aware of their passions and conceived the residence with these in mind. They centre around a vast assemblage of art that had been lovingly accumulated over 30 years, as well as a collection of classic cars and related paraphernalia.

"The collections are not just objects, but a part of their life," says Ng. "They give context to their home, and are the memories of their life journey together."

Looking outwards, one takes in views of the greenery; looking inwards, the house is akin to an art museum.

The works range from sculptures and wall installations by Belgian artist Daisy Boman and prominent Taiwanese sculptor Li Chen, to a painting by acclaimed Korean brush artist Lee Jung Woong and even drawings by the talented missus.

Throughout, simple materials and a palette of black and white dominate, allowing the often quirky art to take centre stage.

And they are everywhere, in purposefully created areas. From a sailor on a horse that gets its own 5-metre-tall window display and a sculpture garden by the front door, to works big and small - checkily inserted into nooks and crannies, or proudly sitting on shelves and pedestals.

The countless paintings include an oversized one of the vivacious lady of the house, prominently displayed in a space specifically designed to hold it next to the dining room.

The husband, an avid car collector, has his own man cave. This takes the form of a double-volume den where his vast collection of car- and rally-related paraphernalia - from posters and books to models and badges - are displayed.

Then there are the seven cars parked on the property (it can take eight); four of these are classic automobiles.

The home is also future-proofed, in that the attic level has been intentionally kept as a huge family room with an open layout, so it can be turned into an



(5) A view of the attic from the terrace.

(6) A closer view of the metal screen. (7) The metal screen shields the guest room on the second floor. (8) The basement living room and swimming pool face a condominium (not shown).



apartment if required.

Meanwhile, it serves the couple's needs well, with wall panels that slide away to reveal a large mirror in front of which the missus can dance. The attic also leads to a large terrace and "secret garden in the sky".

Noting that this is a house the couple aspired to and have now achieved in their later years, Ng says "It will mean many, many things to them."

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And just as the homeowners have loved and supported each other over the years, Ng credits his wife for his own success.

"I don't think I can do without her," he says. "She takes care of everything, so I am allowed to dream."