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REPORT

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- INSPIRED EATS
- + THE ART OF SIMPLICITY

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SPRING 2018



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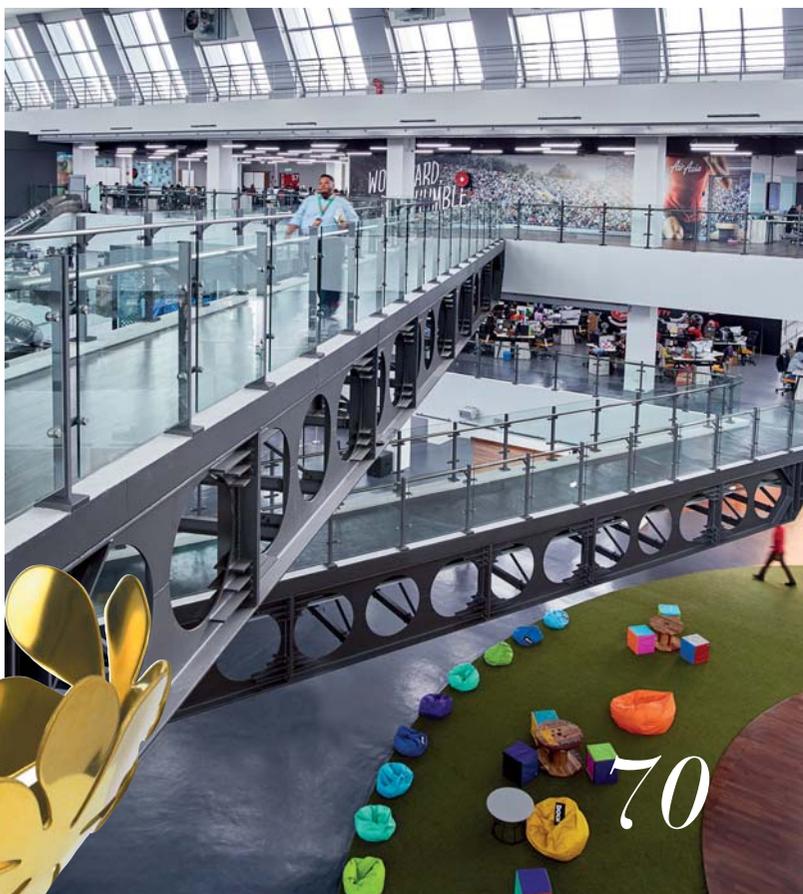
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EDITOR'S NOTE

S

SPRINGTIME BLOSSOMS



PHOTOGRAPHY: **SooPhye**

If your winter was as exciting and eventful as ours, we should be anticipating the next three months with equal relish. In this light, we have worked on a line-up of features and spreads that we hope will add punch and colour to your spring. From rainbow-hued product spreads and the most covetable stationery in every colour code on the Pantone chart to inviting homes that range from sprawling bungalows to chic condominiums and a curated list of designer-conscious products with which to update your decor, we trust you will find all that you need and want in our first issue of *Haven* this year.

Easter is also around the corner and to inspire the mistress or master of the kitchen (the heart of the home, we always say), we looked south and asked Kristang chef extraordinaire Melba Nunis to share a few of her favourite recipes. They are on Page 96. But if toiling away in the kitchen does not appeal to you, do know that all it takes is a short drive (preferably followed by a suite stay at The Majestic Hotel) to the historical city of Melaka where her eponymous restaurant, Melba at the Mansion, is ready and waiting to pamper your palate.

We could not let the recent Chinese New Year festivities pass without a splendid celebration either, so do turn to Page 90 to see all the fun and feasting that took place at *Haven's* special healthy Lunar New Year brunch in partnership with Bön Estates Kuala Lumpur. The event, held at the prestigious property developer's beautiful sales gallery in Bangsar, also featured special cooking demonstrations by celebrity model, chef and cookbook author, Danielle Graham, as well as Levy Li, founder of The Good Co. We will definitely be hosting more events where we can connect and engage with all readers of *Haven* on a regular basis, so if you would like to join us, do drop us an email. We would love to say hi.

Enjoy the issue and see you in the summer!

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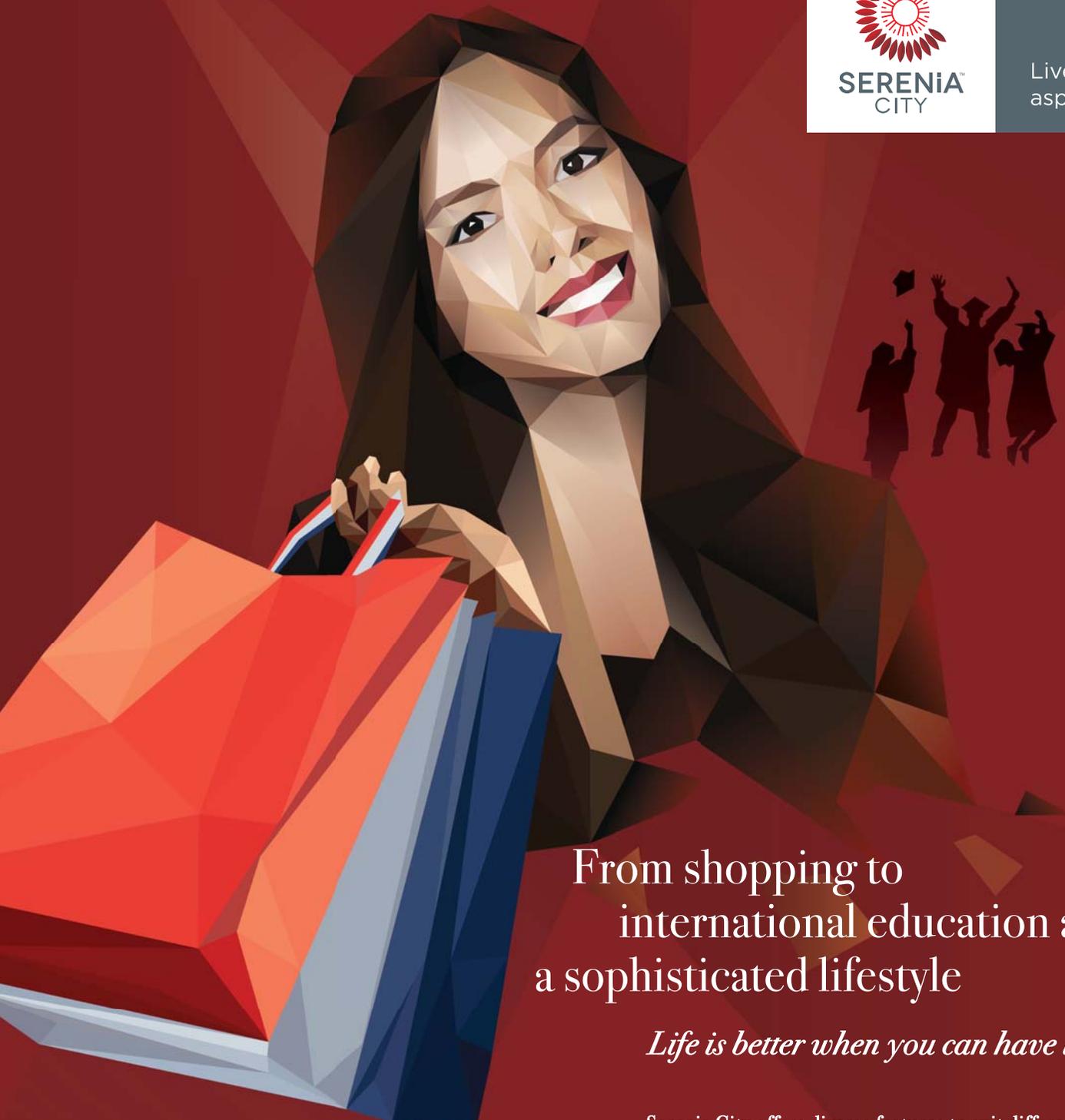
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diana Khoo".

Diana Khoo
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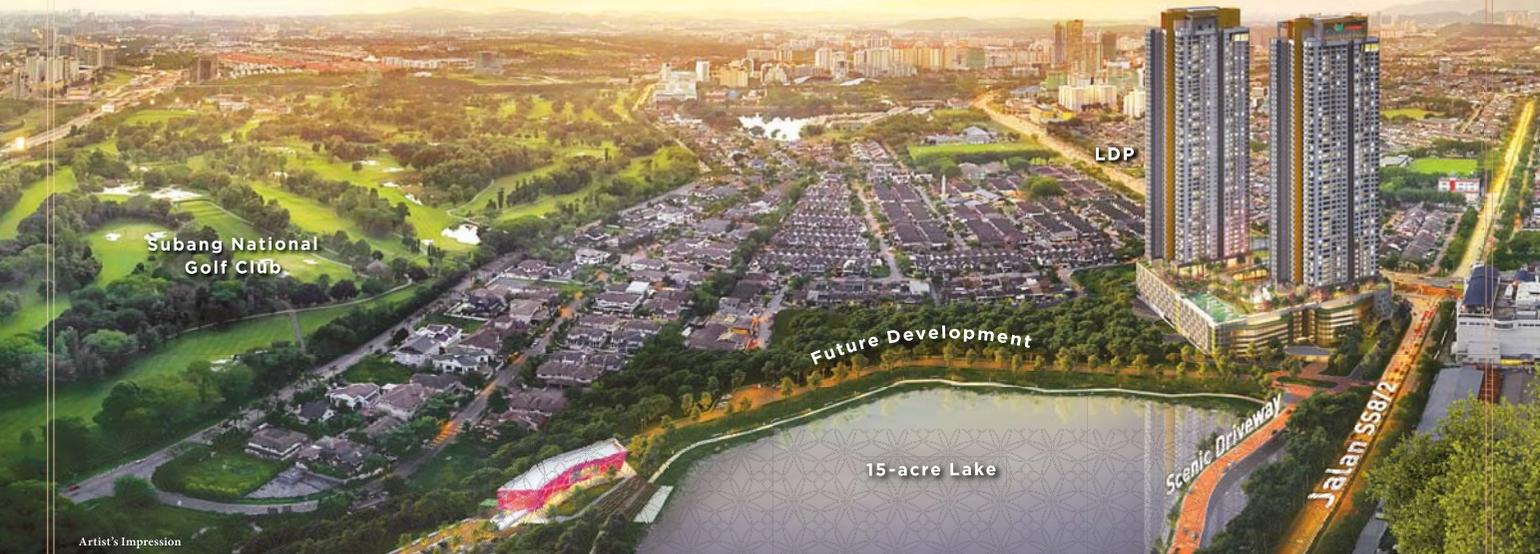
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STEP INTO OUR PARLOUR ...

Put a spring in your step, literally, this season. Just as spring is all about renewal, rebirth and regrowth, our living and working spaces should be blooming with good energy. The best way to inject some pep would be through the clever use of colour, prints and patterns. Floral designs are a given but do also look to bold, acid shades of citrus and soft yellow hues that hint at summer but are still gently clinging on to spring.



1



2



3



4

WHAT'S UP, BUTTERCUP?

Accent your living spaces with subtle touches of all things floral

Text **Petrina Fernandez**



5



6

1. Set the mood – and the table – with Blue Aegen floral bowls and plates with **Ruma (RM17.90 to RM23.90)** 2. Warm body and soul with hot drinks in the assorted Grandma's Flowers mugs from **Kare (RM59)** 3. **BoConcept** spruces up the living room with discreet cushion prints (**RM395**) 4. Vine motifs evoke spring in this **Royal Selangor William Morris** bottle chiller (**RM850**) 5. **Xtra Furniture** tracks the passing of time with George Nelson's iconic Sunflower Clock (**RM4,529**) 6. A prudent petal display comes in the form of **IKEA's Stockholm** bowl in evergreen gold or bronze (**RM69**)



HAVE A LARK

From birds to bees, all of nature anticipates the lushness of spring. Find room for your favourite fauna to frolic.

Text **Petrina Fernandez**



1. Don't let bright colours or hectic design put you off embracing spring. The minimalist will easily find a place for the folk art-inspired Eames House Bird from **Space Furniture (RM990)** 2. Create an animal wonderland in a bedroom with the Lattjo quilt and pillowcase set by **IKEA (RM59)** 3. Enliven a workspace with this Butterfly Parade Box Set, comprising vibrant desk boxes from Christian Lacroix Papier at **Janine**. Thumbing through your stationery essentials has never been so gratifying. **(RM350)** 4. Native to us, this small chrome gecko figurine from **Kare** will look at home in any corner or shelf **(RM399)** 5. Nendo subtly salutes the season with the Aram low coffee table at **Linds Furniture**, whose stainless steel hand-woven design recalls the graceful intricacy of a bird's nest **(RM3,680)**

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1



2



3

THAT CAN BE ARRANGED

Vessels to showcase your spring bouquets

Text **Petrina Fernandez**



5



4



6

1. Coloured glass asserts the Escama from **Kare** as a conversation piece (RM289) 2. A classic silhouette meets striking copper paint in this mouth-blown Flower Metallic Cylinder piece from **Gudang** (RM500) 3. Skilled craftsmanship by **Royal Selangor** infuses the Samarra Vase with clever geometry and dimension (RM990) 4. The Ikebana vase at **Xtra Furniture** highlights the art of floral arrangement (RM768) 5. The voluptuous curves of the Ypperlig by **IKEA** are hand-painted for best effect (RM99) 6. Delft porcelain is quirkily interpreted as a powerful gust of wind in Moooi's Blow Away Vase at **Space Furniture** (RM4,900)

Accomplishing that fine ambition of matching form with function are the Hexagon Pots by **Ferm Living**. Carried by **Smuk Living**, the pots are available in three sizes and finished in aesthetically-pleasing powder coating or brass. Accompanying small and large plant stands in black, grey, blue and dusty green complete the collection, allowing versatility in styling. (Hexagon pots from **RM200 to RM370**, plant stands from **RM165 to RM260**)



Bright Young Things

Pick-me-ups are best had from shots of citrus. Here, are our hand-selected picks of the brightest accoutrements for your kitchen this season.

PHOTOGRAPHY SHAWN LOR @ PIXELPIX
ARTISTIC DIRECTION JOANNE LIM
STYLING SHOKELUI
COORDINATOR EN SZE



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:
 GEOMETRIC TRAYS, RM80 & RM135,
HAY @ SMUK. COMPACT UMBRELLA,
 RM34.90; LIME WATER BOTTLE,
 RM19.90; ORANGE TUMBLER,
 RM17.90; TRAVEL MUG, RM98.
 ALL FROM **LIVE IT UP! @ 1 UTAMA
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 GRINDER, RM410, **SMUK**. FROG
 DECORATIVE ORNAMENT, RM69,
**KARE @ 1 UTAMA SHOPPING
 CENTRE**. LEMON SOMBRERO JUICER,
 RM19; GEOMETRIC CONTAINER,
 RM29. BOTH FROM **LIVE IT UP!
 INITIALS POST IT NOTES, RM9
 EACH, TYPO @ 1 UTAMA SHOPPING
 CENTRE**. EGG CUP & SPOON,
 RM19; EGG SEPARATOR, RM9.90.
 BOTH FROM **PARKSON @ 1 UTAMA
 SHOPPING CENTRE**. TABLE CLOCK,
 RM79, **KARE**. MILK FROTHER,
 RM59.90, **LIVE IT UP!** ASSORTED
 BOWLS, RM9 EACH, **PARKSON**.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:
BRAIDED PATENT CUSHION, RM399.
KARE. PLASTIC JUG, RM79.90,
PARKSON. MULTI-COLOURED WALL
CLOCK, RM255, **SMUK**. ASSORTED
SALAD BOWLS, RM39.90 EACH,
LIVE IT UP! FOX COIN BOX, RM99,
KARE. PANTONE MUG, RM25,
PARKSON. VEGETABLE SLICER,
RM7.90, **PARKSON**. POLKA DOT
NOTE BOOK, RM5.90, **DAISO**.
ORANGE WATER BOTTLE, RM19.90,
LIVE IT UP! EGG SLICER, RM7.90,
PARKSON. LIME SOMBRERO
JUICER, RM19; MILK FROTHER,
RM59.90. BOTH FROM **LIVE IT UP!**
HOUNDSTOOTH PRINT CERAMIC
JAR WITH COVER, RM299, **KARE**.
KITCHEN TOWEL HOLDER, RM245,
HAY @ SMUK.







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SPACE

CIRCLES OF LIFE

Sweet serenity and a sense of zen reign supreme in this tranquil Damansara Heights home

Text **Diana Khoo** Photography **SooPhye**







Natural light and a predominantly white colour scheme punctuated by an abundance of tropical greenery and countered by warm oakwood floors make this Damansara Heights home seem like a perfect study in smart, contemporary simplicity. Yet, it's hard to imagine that just two decades ago, a completely different home sat on the site — one that was completely Balinese in essence, embodying all the fantasy and romance that brings artistic Ubud or perhaps, magical Manggis, to mind.

“We’d bought the land in 1994 and had a Balinese-style house built on it in 1996. Balinese was all the rage then,” recalls the lady of the house. “The kids hadn’t arrived yet and we were free and easy, newly married, and treated the house like a holiday home, in a way.”

Once the children — two beautiful boys — arrived and the homeowner’s spiritual practice deepened, it was decided that a home originally designed for newlyweds and entertaining friends and hosting house parties was not quite suitable for raising a family. An overhaul was needed.



This zen-like home is inspired by the lady of the house's spiritual practice and visits to monasteries.

"We decided to knock everything down," she says, matter-of-factly. "We still wanted to live on the land as it had great sentimental value. After all, it was where my late husband proposed to me, right on the empty land. I accepted, of course, but told him he had to build a house first."

Fast forward to the present, the home today is luminous and serene. Having designed everything herself, being a trained interior designer, she focused on the immediate needs of her family and their lifestyles. "I definitely wanted a meditation room and I envisioned an overall space that was big and open, yet quiet and tranquil. The land itself is not very big, about 14,000 sq ft, so I knew I had to bring the outside in," she says. "I also wanted open, free-flowing spaces, with lots of natural light and a 'heart' at the centre of it all. I was inspired by the many monasteries I'd visited. I love how the rooms all open and connect easily, from one to the other. You'd also be surprised to know it's very easy to maintain!"

When entering the home — spanning three storeys with five bedrooms and the precious meditation room — guests are first welcomed by a Rangoon-style *buddha rupa* (sculpture of Buddha). Surprisingly, the almost life-sized statue of the buddha of compassion and loving kindness was purchased not by the devout Buddhist but by her late husband. "He bought the buddha long before



FAR LEFT: A mystical moon can just be seen in Raphael Scott Ahbeng's *The Hills of Bidi — Moon Spy Over Union Gap* painting



CLOCKWISE, FROM LEFT:
The house is bathed in natural light, courtesy of a central airwell

A serene figurine of hands in *namaste mudra*

Symbols of the rooster, the animal zodiac of the homeowner's late husband, abound throughout the house



he met me,” she shares. “Originally, he had wanted to buy a sports car but decided to first have a holiday in Bangkok. Somehow, while walking around, he saw the statue and found himself drawn to it. Upon enquiring, he was told it had already been sold. My husband then pleaded and told the seller how he was supposed to buy this sports car but was willing to part with the money for the buddha instead. Somehow, it touched the seller’s heart and, so, the statue ended up coming home with him!”

Flanking the buddha are two specially-commissioned paintings by Dr Choong Kam Kow, a well-known contemporary artist and art academician. “Our brief to him was simple: the artworks had to be related to Buddhism.”

Behind the *buddha rupa* lies the heart of the home: a wonderful airwell that allows light to flood in through glass panels on the ceiling all the way down to the recreation area in the basement.

To the buddha’s left is an eye-catching feature wall of cascading plants and creepers. “I wanted a feature wall but I didn’t want it to look like a shopping centre,” she laughs.

The walls of the main entrance are also cleverly fitted with wood inserts to allow air to flow through as well as let in the melody of fresh running water, courtesy of a small pond filled with water cabbages by the driveway. The indoors and outdoors meld harmoniously via a verdant inner courtyard, complete with a celadon water feature, further allowing natural light to fill all the surrounding spaces.

The main living room is particularly pleasing to the eye, adorned with massive paintings by Raphael Scott Ahbeng, family photographs and large round Glo-Ball lamps and pendant lights by Flos, which, as the homeowner says, “represent the cosmos”. If one



The bar, on the lower level, leads out to the deck area and lap pool



inspects the celebrated Sarawakian artist's work a little closely, you'd notice the mystical moon being strongly represented, further continuing the symbolic circle of life design element pervading throughout the home.

And while erudite touches abound, normalcy has not been abandoned. An upright piano stands in a corner while a television underscores the functionality and liveability of the space. "After all, it's still a home," says the lady of the house.

The walls and hallways bear further testimony to the artistic and well-travelled couple's life together. Persian carpets, lovingly-chosen artefacts and a stunning phoenix-adorned antique screen from China add interest to every corner. And, almost as if to drive home the fact that the house is, first and foremost, a family home and not a showcase, the owner's playful French bulldog Biggie comes charging through, almost skidding on the specially-imported American oak flooring and bunching up the carpet, a sight that makes the lady of the house laugh out loud. "I knew I didn't want marble as it is overly grand and feels cold," she points out. "I also noticed I have less aches and pains when I walk on wood, versus hard marble."

A gracious hostess who loves to entertain enthusiastically, it is no surprise that her dining area is versatile and able to accommodate as many as 60 for a sit-down party. The formal dining room opens up easily to combine with the terrace area while a clever hidden

side staircase leads down from the main kitchen to the basement level — making it ideal for transporting food and drinks — where there is a bar (complete with an industrial-sized *ais kacang* machine) and recreation area that leads out to an outdoor deck and the inviting lap pool. Clever glass doors that are fully sliding and foldable further accentuate the free-flowing energy of the home.

"This level is for my boys," she smiles. "It's essentially the entertainment area while the space can also be used to host talks and discussions, which happens if I have visiting monks or teachers. I also do my arts and crafts here," she adds, sharing her love of painting, mixed media work and scrapbooking. A quick look around also reveals a full entertainment system. "I do love karaoke," she admits, laughing.

Her little gym lies to the side, neighboured by her beautiful and bountiful vegetable patch filled with passionfruit, pandanus, bittergourd, mint and chilli. We return to her kitchen, where cut fruit and cups of soothing ginger tea await on the massive kitchen counter. "When I have big parties, this becomes my buffet table," she smiles.

Seeing her love for life and her generous spirit reflected in her inviting home, I am reminded of a saying — how the more positive energy you surround yourself with, the better you will feel. After spending a few hours here, I am sure you will agree with me. **H**

ABOVE: Clever landscaping makes the 14,000 sq ft piece of land appear bigger than it is

RIGHT: Beyond the pool lies the homeowner's private gym and vegetable garden



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Chic in the city

Against a palette of black, white, gold and brass, marketing maven Yun Wen Lai's trendy apartment radiates a restrained urban glamour while exuding a welcoming and comfortable feel

Text **Anandhi Gopinath**

Photography **Edmund Lee**





LIVING

In gorgeous and ultra-chic Dua Residency, Yun Wen Lai's 2,100 sq ft apartment is a sanctuary from the hustle and bustle of Jalan Tun Razak just outside. Right from the time he opens the door, I am totally relaxed and at peace — while subscribing to a fairly minimalist theme, Yun's home is also warm and welcoming while exuding an urban chic suited to its location in the middle of the city.

“I liked the layout of the units here and the location — it's served by both the LRT and the MRT, making it a good investment. It's nice and spacious, and I liked the open plan as well. I love marble floors, so when I saw that, I was thrilled too,” Yun says as he takes me on a quick tour of the home. Indeed, the layout is thoughtfully designed — a slender balcony runs the length of a living space that Yun also uses as a TV room, which opens up to an open-plan dining and kitchen area. A corridor then leads to the bathrooms and two bedrooms, including the master suite.

Pristine white walls are brought to life by personally chosen artwork and stunning black-and-white photographs, painstakingly picked for their specific appeal — not necessarily by acclaimed artists or





photographers, the works have a personal affiliation to him. One painting was picked up in Bangkok, for example, and some of the photographs relate to his liking for vintage New York chic.

Yun has applied a light — and yet evidently skilled — hand to decorating, ensuring the generosity of the layout comes through. “I had decided on a colour theme of black, white, brass and gold, so when the unit was ready, I went shopping accordingly,” he says. “I spent a lot of time in the furniture stores in Bangsar Shopping Centre to pick out what I wanted. The photographs on

the wall and some of the furniture are from Gudang, actually.”

Rather than limit himself to a specific theme, working within the constraints of his chosen colours has given Yun more creative freedom. As a result, the home is just as much an expression of his passions as it is of his personality. For example, a few coffee-table books arranged carefully on a console table reflect his interests in fashion and photography while a statue of a Laughing Buddha next to it is an artful nod to his ethnic background.

While gold and brass accents provide an elegant glamour, the addition of plants brings life into the space in an organic and tasteful way. Yun has combined hardy money plant creepers, masculine lobster claws in bright red, languid orchids and lush outdoor greens to remarkable effect.





The devil is in fact in the details — although Yun's decorating style oozes an effortless aesthetic, it takes careful curation and a meticulous eye

A bold floral arrangement with lilies and bright red lobster claws oozes masculine energy and joins other greenery in the apartment, from money plant creepers in the kitchen to the plants thriving on the balcony. It seems Yun has a green thumb! “The plants are hard work but the effect is definitely worth it as I really like having some amount of greenery around the house,” he smiles.

Yun enjoys cooking and entertaining, so the dining and kitchen area is the highlight of the home. A wet kitchen for heavy-duty culinary work is neatly kept out of sight while a more stylish dry kitchen brings together colours and visual elements that he likes — marble countertops, gleaming white cabinets with matte gold accents and a brass hood hovering elegantly over two smaller stove hobs. A coffee machine commands pride of place — as it should — on one counter, and the day we are there, a box of chocolates beckons.

On the broad dining table in soft brown, a collection of architecturally inspired centrepieces continue the matte gold theme while olive green dining chairs provide a

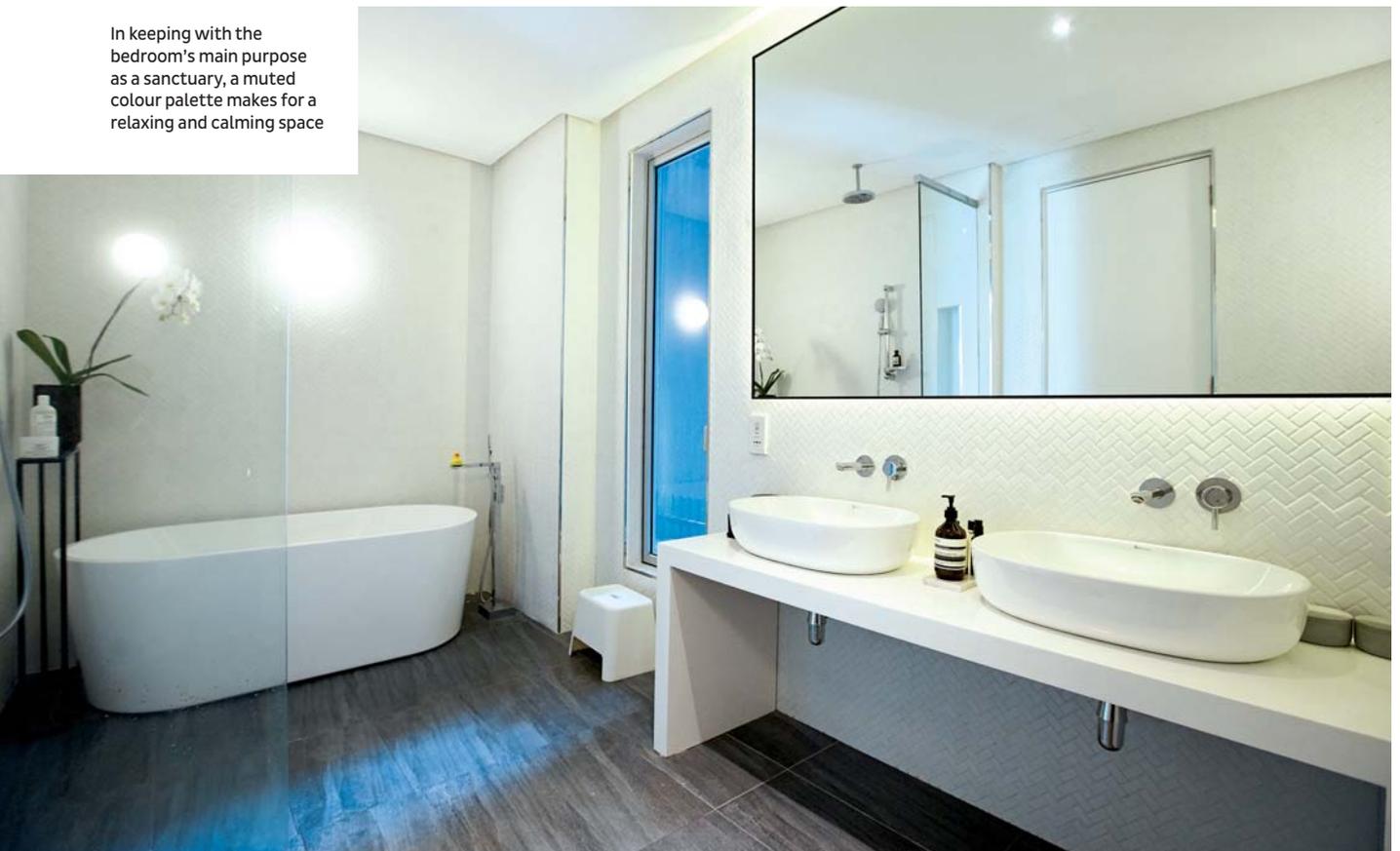
restrained but elegant dash of colour. “I love entertaining at home and this sort of layout really makes it enjoyable,” Yun says. “These days, it's the host who does the cooking, so it's nice that the kitchen isn't tucked away at the back or hidden away from the dining area.”

In the master bedroom, the colour palette is as minimal as possible without feeling sterile. Against a backdrop of the same white walls, bedlinen in white and grey along with matching darkened carpets make for a sensuous and relaxing space, ideal to rest weary bodies and tired minds at the end of a long day. A photograph of the New York cityscape lends itself to some late-night daydreaming while a bathroom with a similarly minimalist feel ensures that even early morning ablutions are a sublime experience.

As is the case with all homes, Yun's is a work in progress. He expects to acquire a few more pieces of furniture as well as some more artworks to grace his pristine white walls. After all, the apartment has only been home for a year — there is a lifetime of decorating and personalising to come. **H**



In keeping with the bedroom's main purpose as a sanctuary, a muted colour palette makes for a relaxing and calming space





All TOGETHER NOW



Family life comes together beautifully in two distinct but expertly designed condominiums that somehow work as one expansive, extended home

Text **Diana Khoo** Photography **Chris Leong**



The clever use of colour makes this Mont'Kiara home bright, beautiful and inviting

It couldn't have been easy, transitioning from life in a spacious 1970s-style bungalow in SS2, Petaling Jaya, to a condominium in Mont'Kiara. But somehow, this practical and security-conscious family decided to make the leap, aided by the know-how and gimlet eye of a trusted interior designer turned family friend. Deciding to purchase two 2,550 sq ft condos in Kiaramas Danai to accommodate all seven of them, the family turned to Raymond Lee, creative director of Xceptional Interiors, for help to fuse the two spaces into a single, vibrant home. "It was a little tricky at first as the units weren't adjoining," says Lee. "But they were on the same level with a private lift, and my brief was to make it work."

With the parents and the two younger children in one unit and the elder two children and their grandmother in the other, Lee decided to break down the separate spaces as much as possible. For example, one dining room was designated for the family's main meals while the other would be repurposed for entertaining. With two wet kitchen spaces available, Lee transformed one into a functional laundry room. "I wanted to place equal emphasis on both units yet create a single space. I really wanted to make the spaces work for the family," he points out.

Lee also took into great consideration the lady of the house's love for colour and texture, opting for a look and feel that is contemporary yet not minimalist. "I also



Two 2,550 sq ft condos become one integrated family unit with the clever use of space, lighting, colour and furniture



An antique Art Deco marble dining table is paired with kopitam-style chairs



wanted to include as much of the existing furniture as I could while ensuring it all worked beautifully with the new chosen pieces.” The result? A striking home that is at once warm and welcoming. Visitors will be greeted by great views of the Kiara hills and the space is bright and airy. Lee chose warm hues of burnt orange and chocolate to liven up the fabric-upholstered chairs while a design-conscious coffee table from Fiske and lighting from Flos keep the ambience subtly sophisticated. As the homeowners love art and period pieces, a beautiful antique sideboard adds interest to the living room as do original works of art picked up from notable auctions about town. To the side, an

antique Art Deco table with its original marble top is paired, interestingly, with traditional kopitiam chairs.

Visitors to the home would also notice Lee's recurrent use of bold wallpaper, particularly in all the bedrooms. The youngest daughter's bedroom is particularly charming, livened up by red-and-white gingham roman blinds, candy-striped wallpaper and bright pink walls. "I go to Janine for wallpaper," says Lee, "and I also ordered several custom-design rugs to add boldness, pops of colour and soft texture to the space, with the exception of the oriental pieces, of course. This is to give contrast to the cold, grey marble floors."

A corridor connects the second apartment to the first and, here, things take on a decidedly masculine feel yet link back to the matriarch of the family. A big leather ottoman serves as a coffee table and the sofas are upholstered in jade — a gentle tribute to grandma's signature jadeite bangles. An





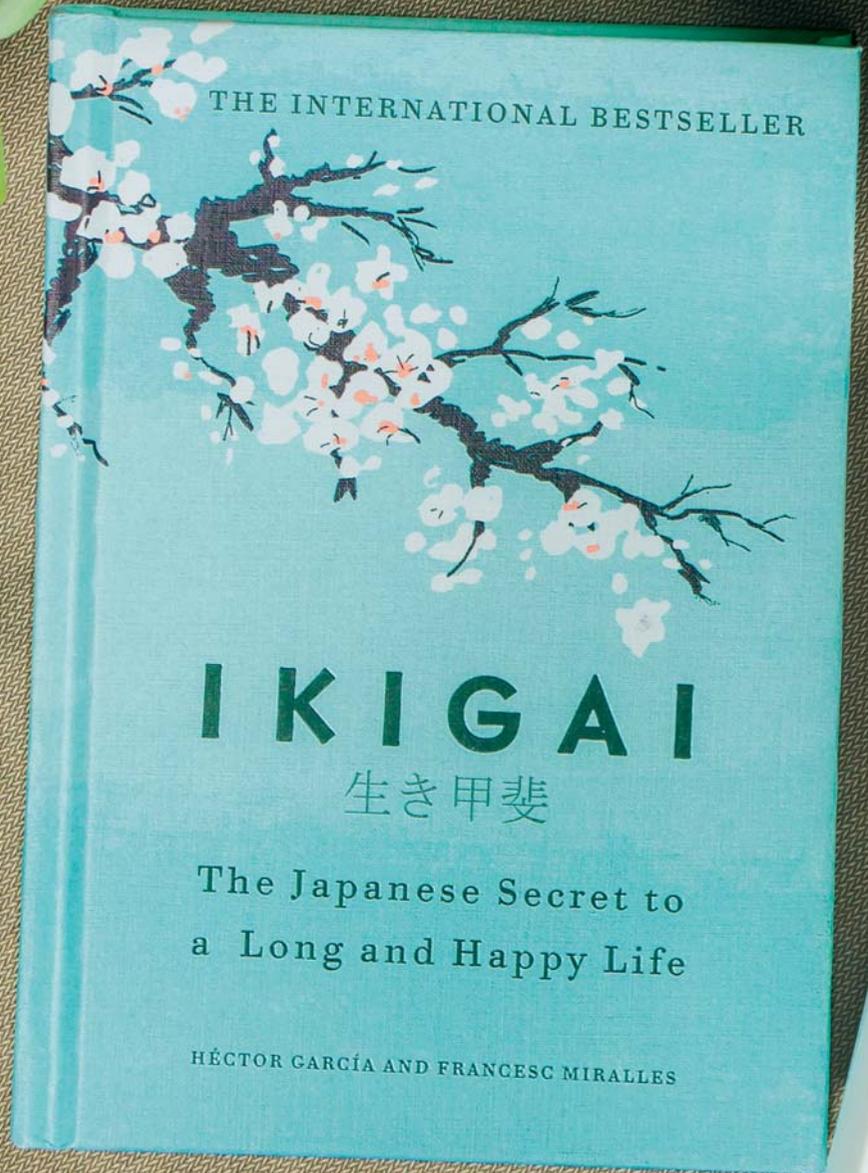
Patterned roman blinds and bold wallpaper make strong design statements throughout the home



antique Malaccan cabinet also houses her collection of crockery, while ancestral portraits and family photographs adorn the walls. Patterned roman blinds keep the searing sunlight out when the day gets overwhelmingly bright and the dining area is more fun and casual with chairs as well as bench seating — all underpinned by a massive, solid acacia wood table, which “took eight strong men to carry in”, says Lee.

With beautiful spaces to weave in and out of, we ask Lee how the family has adjusted from formerly living on landed property. “Now, they are completely sold on the idea of condo life!” Taking a look around us, it’s not hard to see why. **H**

LIVING



The allure of **RECALLIBRA**

Text **Suridah Jalaluddin** Photography | **Vern Cheng** Artistic Direction **Joanne Lim**



Reset your life with the help of this trio of inspired reads — Marie Kondo’s *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying*, Dominique Loreau’s *L’Art de la Simplicité* and Héctor Garcia and Francesc Miralles’ *Ikigai*. Each book is about the wonders of an organised environment, the richness of an existence where less is more, and living with a purpose. Perfect springtime reads, don’t you think?

With the dawn of a new year and Chinese New Year just over, it would mean that I have completed my “big clean-up”, usually begun by first addressing each room separately for what needs to go and what is permitted to remain. In short, it is a cathartic purge of things that have become clutter in my space. I honestly believe in the Chinese custom of cleaning and tidying the house before the new year to sweep away the angst of the previous year and usher in good *chi*. Every corner of the house is cleaned, objects that are broken are thrown out and belongings are put away in an orderly fashion.

TION

This year, I decided to start early by decluttering my new home of decades of books, clothes, linen and files. I had downsized in 2016 from a house to an apartment and found that most of my things could not fit into the smaller space. I also found myself clinging to my late mother's belongings, mainly because it was an amalgamation of her life. By chance, I discovered two books that spoke about the joy of an orderly home and the principle of minimalism — creating a home that exudes absolute harmony and attracts positivity.

Marie Kondo is Japan's most famous home organiser who, over the years, has mastered the art of tidying up. Her “KonMari” method promises a home that will leave you in a state of “organised bliss”. Quite an eccentric, Kondo pursues each category (not by location) — clothes, books, paperwork, home appliances and more — with an extreme frenzy. No category is left unturned.

Her militant-style counselling — she has a three-month waiting list in Japan — particularly resonates with women who find the task of decluttering and organising overwhelming. She believes learning the secret of how to put your house in order can be fun by simply keeping what you love and discarding things that cease to yield pleasure or to have purpose. In *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying*, she reveals the formula and details the process of how to discard and organise based on the ultimate determining factor — does it spark joy?

Kondo recommends starting with two major categories — your clothes and books. Taking all your clothing out of storage and reviewing each item to determine what makes you happy at the present moment and then eliminating what no longer gives you pleasure. As simple as that. But before she gets rid of things, she talks to the objects first, giving thanks and bidding farewell, taking a moment to appreciate how it has served her life. A little eccentric for some (but probably very Japanese in culture), it is an act of respect for all the things acquired in your lifetime. I actually found it spiritually soothing to mentally thank my old but favourite clothes and shoes and wishing them well in their new home.

Discarding is the easiest area of Kondo's method. It is then followed by the hardest part — putting things away; folding as much as you can into smooth rectangles so that the folded items can stand on edge in the drawer, rearranging your wardrobe space by colour, type, texture and function. Kondo also has a system for storage that begs patience and a certain level of compulsiveness to follow. Nevertheless, I took the ideas that were helpful and ignored what were incomprehensible and laborious.

With books, the next big category (and, personally, one of the hardest items to let go of), she again

suggests laying every book you have on the floor and physically checking each one to see if the book still resonates with love when you touch it. Decide on your own “Book Hall of Fame”, featuring the best-read books that inspired your life, which will then give warmth to your home and bookshelves.

Kondo advises to keep sentimental objects for the last as they are the hardest to rationalise. She understands that many things are there for an emotional reason or have a unique memory attached to them. By handling each item (instead of dumping everything into a box to be kept in your storeroom), Kondo believes that you confront the past. Choose only the items that evoke joy and clear away sad recollections that will then create space for new opportunities in the future.

After reading a couple of chapters of Kondo's book, I came across Dominique Loreau's *L'Art de la Simplicité* or *How to Live More with Less* (the English translation). Apparently a bestselling author in her native France, Loreau, who has lived in Japan for many years, wrote a book based on the Oriental philosophy of living with a very French twist. Her book has a “je ne sais quoi” feel to it and although some may find it pretentious (like eating sushi with foie gras), her raison d'être is to single-mindedly get her readers to detach from everyday materialism. Her style is more pared down, promoting a subdued aesthetic yet embracing beauty and sensuality.

With Loreau, the reader must adopt a minimalist state of mind. Simplify your home and life with only the best; keep it subtle yet rich in beauty. Loreau seduces you into a world of high-level minimalism, which includes head-turning art and select designer pieces, compelling the reader to discard everyday acquisitiveness. Only keep what satisfies your senses as well as things that are functional and robust. Everything must have its own place and a home that is tidy beckons good energy. Simplicity, according to Loreau, is the union of beauty and the appropriate.

Ultimately, quite similar in substance to Kondo's book and with the same goal — to live with just your best — Loreau goes beyond the home and delves into one's inner ecology ... from the space you live in to finding a more centred life. The book provides an opportunity to reorganise your daily living habits — eat less but well, feel well in your home and in your body, savour simple pleasures that are free — and even clearing your mind.

In search of a new resolution that I could possibly keep for 2018, I was happily introduced to *Ikigai* by a friend who knew of my search for purpose. Both Garcia and Miralles write about the Japanese secret to a long and happy life. The authors interviewed





the residents of the island of Okinawa, which has the highest percentage of people over the age of 100, to understand their secret to longevity.

According to the authors, the residents lived longer because of their *ikigai* — reason for living. A state of mind that allows you to keep going, keep busy and keep living — “the happiness of always being busy”.

A good and easy read that investigates Japanese culture and philosophy, it provides solutions to overcoming stress, the importance of moderate physical activity, a select diet and social connections. Apparently, Okinawa leads in the world’s Blue Zones — where people live the longest and much of the secret to their longevity is to respect your body, and stay active and connected to loving

environments. The book is the perfect weekend read for the newly retired, although the Japanese do not have a word for that or believe in it.

Since reading the books, I have minimised my “maximalist home” and given my stockpiles of clothes, books, linen and more to deserving people. I now go with the “flow”, having found my *ikigai* to live in the present and to constantly learn, giving myself new challenges each month. I did not take all of the advice offered by the three books. Some I found conceptual and even needless. But the essence of the books — to live intentionally surrounded by meaningful possessions, to embrace humility in everything you do and to create a purposeful life — is endearing. More importantly, if followed and respected, the end result is definitely rewarding. **H**

A NOUVEL IDEA

Within Le Nouvel KLCC, a coterie of uniquely designed units in the heart of the city await discerning homeowners

WITH ITS STRIKING façade that integrates lush greenery and glass with an emphasis on welcoming as much natural light as possible, Le Nouvel KLCC is an iconic building along Jalan Ampang. Facing the Petronas Twin Towers and Suria KLCC, the highly-sought-after address combines world-class architecture and a holistic approach to landscaping and displays a remarkable eye for interior design within its spacious units as well as public spaces.

Featuring 195 luxurious units in two towers – 49 and 43-storays – connected by the pool deck on level 7 and a Sky Bridge on level 34, Le Nouvel KLCC bears the creative handprint of Pritzker Architecture Prize Laureate Jean Nouvel, who has won nearly every accolade in his field and whose most famous works include the Louvre Museum in Abu Dhabi and the Tour De Verre in New York. The innovative architect's approach is unique, transforming varying landscapes while echoing a style that demonstrates his keen perception of the intricacies of light, shadow, transparency and opacity.

Le Nouvel KLCC also features the work of lighting designer Hervé Descottes, landscape architect Patrick Blanc and, for the property's many public spaces, interior designer Koichiro Ikebuchi. The star-studded list of collaborators include award-winning interior design firms Saporiti and SuMisura, which have put their magic touch on selected units that are available for purchase as they are – all you have to do is bring your personal effects, and you are home.

Le Nouvel KLCC's developer Wing Tai Asia subscribes to a specific vision that led to assembling this coterie of renowned designers: Living Art, Living Heritage. This has resulted in a project where art celebrates life in homes that stand to hold value for generations through a dedication to quality and detail and passion for design – true hallmarks of living heritage.

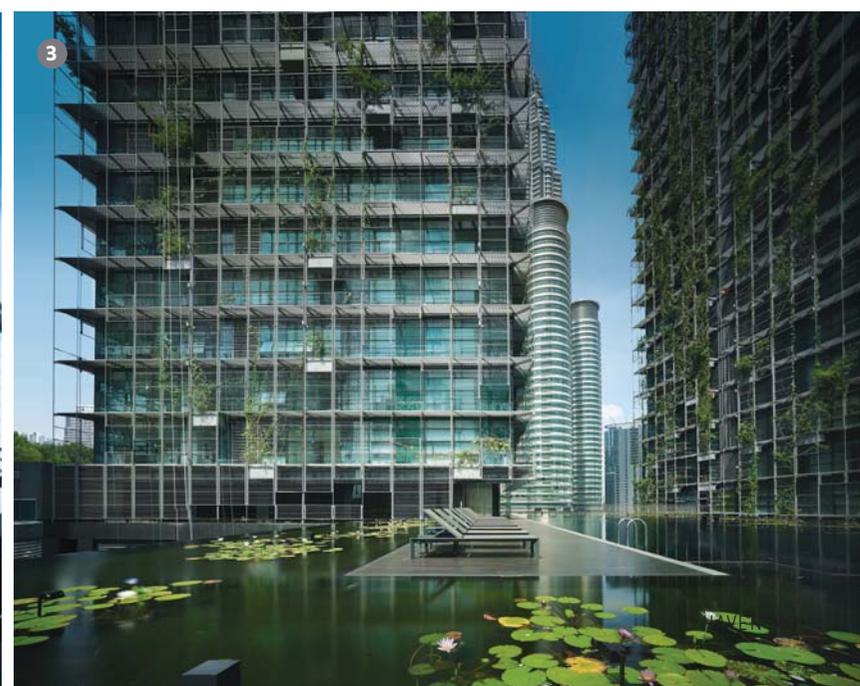
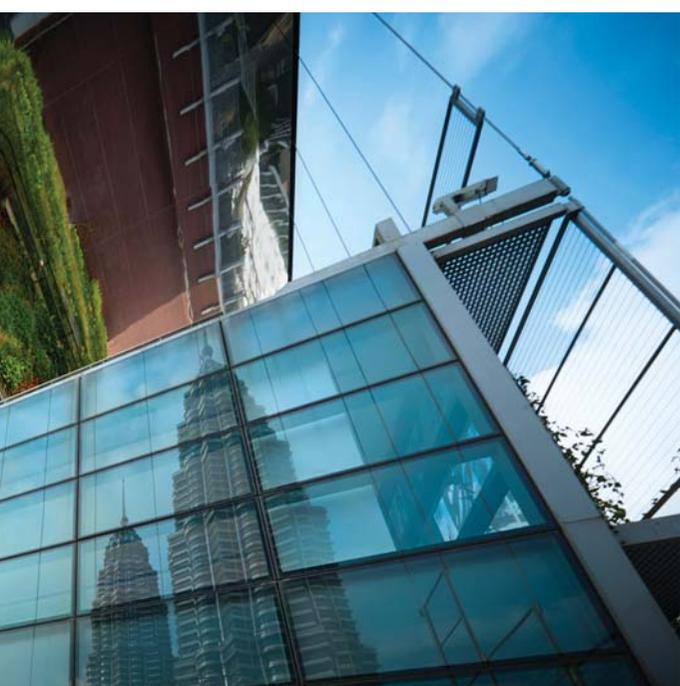
Both Saporiti and SuMisura boast impressive provenance. Making its debut in 1950, Saporiti remains in the hands of the founding family and is credited with producing some of the most sophisticated and advanced pieces of furniture in the history of Italian design. SuMisura is one of Singapore's leading ID firms and is famous for designing luxurious bespoke interiors.

1 Le Nouvel KLCC sits across from the iconic Petronas Twin Towers

2 A green façade with climbing plants wrapped around the building was designed by Patrick Blanc, a notable French botanist and landscape artist

3 State-of-the-art facilities include swimming pools, a fully equipped gym and yoga *shala* as well as game, theatre and karaoke rooms





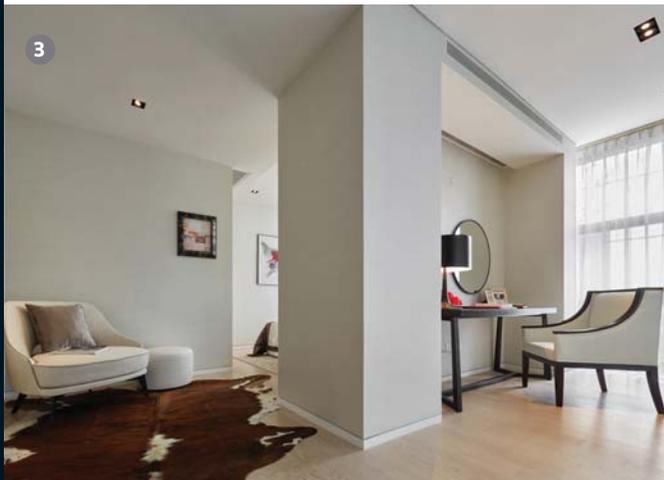


1

1 Effortless elegance can be chosen from an array of highly refined interior design choices from Saporiti Italia, one of the most influential Italian designers and manufacturers of high-end furniture

2 The 1,894 sq ft duplex unit has a breathtaking double-volume ceiling. The Poggenpohl kitchen features top-notch fixtures and fittings, including appliances from Miele.

3 Light colours are chosen to provide a dash of brightness and freshness to this space



3



2

Each firm took creative control of selected units across various layouts and the results are impressive: While each home subscribes to a very different aesthetic, all of them do have certain common elements – extravagance in the service of restrained style, an eye for unique and personalised touches and a generous use of practical luxury.

Saporiti's creative handprint took various forms to create unique living spaces, suited to its varying layouts. In the spacious 2,110 sq ft unit, an "Optical Imagination" theme combines fine lines, a dash of colour and a play on objects – carefully chosen artwork and upholstery – to create a sense of brilliance. In the 1,830 sq ft unit, the "Garden in the Sky" theme results in a clean and cultured space that is a centrepiece of refinement. The use of precious materials, intricate details and a mix of light and dark colours makes for an incredibly stylish and classy atmosphere. The specially curated series of artworks by several young Italian artists is a great touch.

The contrast of light and dark pieces in the 1,722 sq ft unit takes inspiration from the vibrant nature of modern Italian city living. The clean design palette is marked by distinctive and timeless art pieces – ideal for small families who entertain often.

However, it is in the 1,894 sq ft duplex unit with a breathtaking double-volume ceiling that Saporiti's design language truly takes flight. It uses a careful interplay of elegant fabrics and stylish lacquered wood to create a delicate-yet-vibrant, timeless and classic setting. In the bedrooms, light colours are chosen to provide brightness and freshness. In the master bedroom, warmer colours are adopted for a touch of class and elegance. Sophisticated wallpapers, carpets and accessories complement specially commissioned artworks to lend a sense of refinement to the entire apartment.



Every unit features an expansive master bathroom wrap in Volakas Marble



The use of precious materials, intricate details combined with a mix of light and dark colours make up an incredibly stylish and classy atmosphere





Meanwhile, SuMisura has created another set of designs that express its passion for haute couture living and designer touches. In the two-bedroom 1,722 sq ft unit, a muted palette of grey, black white and nude is anchored by clean lines and elegant silhouettes create a modern and minimalist space. Much of the furniture, including the award-winning Masters chairs, is from Italian design house Kartell. Meanwhile, the open-plan 2,110 sq ft unit features a different colour theme, anchored by metallics. Champagne hues and soft greys are a brilliant foil for star pieces in metallic gold, including lighting fixtures by British designer Tom Dixon.

Natural materials like timber take centre stage in the 1,830 sq ft unit, where furniture in brown gives the space a comforting, welcoming air. Linear designs and a clean approach keeps everything modern while textured accessories add some life. The eclectic range of furniture is by Sean Dix and Mario Mazzer, award-winning designers with a unique design language. The duplex – which features SuMisura’s most feminine design style among the four – has a taupe palette inspired by South African interior designer and author Kelly Hoppen. Statement lighting in the living space is all the glam it needs, while textured fittings in the master suite and en-suite study beautifully complement the luxurious bedlinen, which are in soothing beige tones.

For more information on Le Nouvel KLCC’s designer suites, call (03) 2181 8536/38 or email enquiry@wingtaiasia.com.my

- 1 SuMisura features a taupe palette in the duplex unit that is inspired by South African interior designer and author, Kelly Hoppen
- 2 Champagne hues and soft greys are a brilliant foil for star pieces in metallic gold, including statement lighting in the living space is all the glam it needs – the Etch Pendant Light designed by Tom Dixon
- 3 The award-winning Masters chairs from Italian design house, Kartell
- 4 A cosy work/study space that provides peace of mind





BACK

TO WORK!

The festivities are over and done with, Q1 results are just in and it's time to pick up speed where work is concerned. Better your performance with these nifty tools that double up at making your work space look a tad sharper.

PHOTOGRAPHY **SHAWN LOR @ PIXELPIX**
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PLAYING SAFE



Playground Safety Association of Malaysia co-founder and secretary Noriah Mat on creating certified outdoor spaces where parents can let their children play without fearing for their well-being

Text **Tan Gim Ean**

Play is a job for children. Without play, they will not have the critical experiences they need to grow into confident, competent adults.

Empirical data shows that children develop motor skills and interpersonal relationships in the playground. They are healthier, happier and better able to reach their full potential. Studies also show that over the last six decades that children's play has been declining in the US, childhood mental disorders have been increasing, says Peter Gray, a psychologist and research professor at Boston College in the US.

With all the evidence of the benefits of play, it is important to build good playgrounds so that children can run around safely, and parents will let them, with peace of mind. "With proper standards in place, you don't have to worry about accidents," says Noriah Mat, co-founder and secretary of the Playground Safety Association of Malaysia (PSAM).

Fear restrains many parents and caregivers from letting children play outdoors. It is not unfounded. Reports say the second-highest incidence of accidents involving children occur at the playground.

The first step towards preventing mishaps at play areas is to "become a society that cares about safety. It is a head and heart thing. Singapore has done it. If we want to, we can", says Noriah, a landscape architect and arborist by training. She was formerly director of parks and recreation with Putrajaya Corp's park and landscape department and is now a director in PPlants Sdn Bhd.

In the 1980s, she adds, very few people knew about landscaping. But today, architects and landscape artists work together on the design of a property following certain criteria. The same goes for playground safety. Keep emphasising its importance and, in time, the authorities as well as industry players will take note and make it happen.

The good news: During a presentation at the Playground Safety National Seminar last November, the director general of the Public Complaints Bureau of the Prime Minister's Department said Form G22 for playground safety would be included as part of the Certificate of Completion and Compliance issuance in the building approval process. Under G22, every playground component of a building has to be certified by the professionals and contractors responsible for its planning and installation.

"No date was cited as to when the authorities should start making it mandatory. The Ministry of Urban Wellbeing, Housing and Local Government would need to go through other processes before we can see local authorities undertaking the responsibilities set forth by the Federal government on this matter," Noriah says.

Policy and publicity are crucial to create safety awareness among decisionmakers of the playground industry in Malaysia, where standards are outdated, she adds, unlike in Singapore, where they are upgraded every few years.

"We cannot just build a playground and leave it to

the elements and let it become a death trap. If we build, we must take care of it, and eventually decommission it. Once people understand the importance of playground safety, it is not difficult to keep them safe. Now, they don't see the need to have standards and to maintain recreational facilities properly. They don't [realise] that regular maintenance costs less than injury or loss of life."

A child who falls and lands on a concrete or asphalt surface can fracture his skull. The signs of a fall, consistent with those of blunt force trauma, are not evident immediately. But within two weeks, the child may become feverish and start vomiting. Within two months, he might succumb to the injury, Noriah says.

Among other things, playground owners must know that 70% of falls occur at the monkey bars and that the right rubber flooring can attenuate the impact of a fall. Often, such information is not available. PSAM, formed in December 2013, serves as a resource centre for owners and equipment suppliers. Last July, it inspected and audited 40 playgrounds to assess their maintenance needs and came up with reports for the PM's Department.

The association advocates mandatory post-installation inspection and audits of playground sites to ensure they are safe for use. In 2012, with support by PPlants and RIS Learning, it brought in the International Playground Safety Institute of the US to conduct certification courses and examinations. There are 50 such certified inspectors in the country today — Noriah is one — and they do the inspection rounds.

Screws jutting from panels can hurt a child who hits his arm against them. Rusty pipes and handles are dangerous, as are small parts that can penetrate the eye or snag belts, bows and chains. Broken swings or missing slides are potential hazards and improper openings on equipment can result in head entrapment.

Playground design is the attraction for children, and

Playground equipment must meet certain specifications before they are considered safe for use, says Noriah Mat





Children love to climb and there is the risk of falling. Rubber flooring with the correct thickness can attenuate the impact of a fall.

parents should take them to those appropriate for their age. The design should include an element of risk so that if a child falls and feels a bit of pain, he will learn to be careful. “That’s the value of play,” Noriah says.

Manufacturers have come up with all sorts of playground equipment that are acceptable as long as they meet safety requirements. However, problems can arise when a piece is placed wrongly or when, after it has been certified safe, a mistake occurs during installation, resulting in the distance between bars and floor mat, for instance, being too big.

Does cost stand in the way of those who may want to do the right thing?

“It’s more the attitude. When no one is around, we beat the red light,” Noriah says. “We must look at the issue on a bigger scale — money or life? The value system has to be embedded in the person.” Quality equipment is expensive, she agrees, but demand determines supply. “[At some point], it will reach equilibrium and be affordable.”

The aim is to have Malaysia adopt the latest safety standards and practices so that its recreational facilities meet international requirements, and our children can do their job at the playground.

Designing playgrounds for fun

Unlike the proverbial all-work-and-no-play, Joanna Ong’s job takes her to parks and playgrounds, where she enjoys watching children having fun. Her observations impact the design concepts she presents clients who want to build play areas for children.

Ong is the business development manager of Playpoint Malaysia, a distributor of outdoor play equipment from around the world. Its core brand is Kompan of Denmark.

In the mid-1990s, a handful of Malaysian companies imported equipment for sale from the US, she says. When the ringgit was pegged at 3.80 against the US dollar during the 1997 Asian financial crisis, they stopped importing and began manufacturing their own products, replicating the foreign designs.

Safety was not a big issue then, Ong says, and the minimal safety guidelines in place were based on the machinery the companies had and whatever they could fabricate.

Water features give children splashing fun as they hone their motor skills at play





A good playground is one that children want to go back to again and again, says Ong

The industry has evolved since but what is still lagging is awareness of safety standards, a fact the Playground Safety Association of Malaysia recognises and has been working to address in the last few years.

Two types of clients approach Playpoint to set up playgrounds. The first has the budget and wants to put everything within a small area. “I tell them I cannot do it because we have to abide by the safety perimeters.”

Space constraints mean that a developer may not get to install swings, a playground favourite, in his project. The rule is every swing must have a 4m radius of space around it to prevent children from hitting each other as they play.

The other type of client has no budget and will constantly ask to cut down on the equipment.

“We cannot stop a child from trying or doing something different at the playground,” Ong says. “You cannot prevent accidents from happening, just as you cannot stop someone from driving at 220kph in a car equipped with six airbags. After taking into account all the calculated risks children take at play and how they use equipment, we can install safety features.”

For example, rubber flooring with the correct thickness can reduce injury from falls, the most common playground mishap. Recreational equipment uses rounded or flattened nuts and bolts so there is no danger of clothes snagging on them and causing strangulation, she explains.

The Malaysian standard for rubber flooring is 25mm compared with the international requirement of 50mm. In Singapore, the thickness goes up to 100mm because they are building 7.5m-long slides, Ong says.

“Children enjoy climbing and we encourage them to do so because that is how they learn to take risks. If they fall, they learn not to fall again.”

Safety is a key consideration when she designs recreational concepts for a client, besides the landscape and architecture. “I would say a good playground or park is one that children want to go back to again and again. Our buyers are adults but we design what the users like. The play area must look nice and be functional.”

It is a space where children develop physical and cognitive skills as they scale bars and nets, balance on beams and romp with other kids. Sitting together around little tables in playhouses teaches them interaction.

A cool playground — minimum size: 100 sq m — should have lots of climbing structures (rope climbers are popular) and slides with features grouped according to age zones because children of different ages differ in height and motor skills. The younger ones are attracted to bright colours while those older enjoy interactive activities with music and lights.

Slides, ramps, multi-layered mounts, tunnels, skywalks, recess trampolines, sculptures and water-play equipment are welcome features. Also, open spaces encourage robust children to run around and release their energy.

Two decades ago, Ong took on an administrative position in a local playground manufacturer and developed its export market to Southeast Asia and the Middle East. She then joined an export company dealing with high-density polyethylene panels and got to know playground equipment manufacturers from around the world.

In 2011, she was approached by Playpoint Asia to take charge of its new office in Malaysia and replicate what it has been doing in Singapore since 2001. “We started as a one-man show and now have 12 employees.”

Ong says in the last decade or so, big private developers in both countries have been clamouring to differentiate themselves. They want something unique that reflects or represents their development — whether it is the architecture, landscape, design or concept — and which they can use to market it.

Playpoint’s first Malaysian project was Central Park at Desa ParkCity, completed around 2008. The key attraction for buyers was the huge lake in the project, she reckons, which prompted other clients to replicate that feature, and the company to move into design and customisation.

Her principle, regardless of the project size, is to propose, cost and supply the equipment. “Clients want higher, bigger and more exciting things. If they customise [structures], they may go beyond the safety guidelines. So we advise them on what they can or cannot do,” says Ong, who now works closely with the developer from the start of a project.

“Every project is something new and when you get it all done up, there is a sense of achievement. When you see the children playing, you feel even happier. They give way to each other on the slide, reach out to grab someone who falls, and help each other climb,” the mother of two adds. **H**

DESIGN WONDERLAND

Ambiente 2018 unveils the latest consumer products that hit the mark in functionality and innovation

Text **Tan Siok Hoon**
Images courtesy of **Messe Frankfurt**



The Messe Frankfurt exhibition centre once again became the focal point as members of the international consumer goods industry assembled at Ambiente, the world's leading trade fair for consumer goods from Feb 9 to 13. In the 308,000 sq m (or 43 football fields) space, 4,441 exhibitors from 89 countries congregated to showcase their innovative products and check out the latest trends.

A wealth of ideas, designs and inspiring highlights were presented in three key areas: dining, giving and living. This year's trends included modest regenerations, colourful intentions, technological emotions and opulent narrations.





TREND 1: MODEST REGENERATIONS

The keywords that define this trend: timeless, modest, minimalist. The tried-and-tested is given a new twist in the form of industrial charm and craftsmanship with a workshop character. Case in point: A country house being refreshed with a modern touch to evoke a simple and relaxed vibe.

Bamboo artistry

Natural materials like bamboo and rattan are not only enduring but will become more beautiful over time. They are used in creative home décor items such as wine jar holders, hanging planters and lampshades.

Touch of blue

Blue is the perfect hue to energise materials like wood, stone, concrete, tiles, ceramics, aluminium, bronze, cast iron, steel, linen and wool – without overpowering or stealing the limelight from their natural polish.



Bare allure

The raw concept in tableware is synonymous with an unpretentious aesthetic that is personal and atmospheric.

TREND 2: COLOURFUL INTENTIONS

This trend conjures dynamism with a spiritual and folkloric sensibility. Bold colours and patterns permeate objects to give them a powerful vitality. The creation of these products is also influenced by sustainable considerations and ethical practices such as the recycling of materials like plastic, metal, wood and textiles.



Colour by numbers
Solid colours transform ordinary utensils into striking and attractive objects.



Eclectic spirit
Patterns such as checks and stripes and techniques such as braiding, quilting and ethnographic ornamentation infuse a sense of energy into products.



Heart and soul
Ecological considerations and an ethical philosophy are the starting point in the creation of these sustainable-yet-efficient products.





Metallic accents
Metallic details interplay with materials such as wood, glass and ceramic to create innovative and sublime optical accents.

TREND 3: TECHNOLOGICAL EMOTIONS

The refined, intelligent and visionary embody this trend, experimenting with new technologies to create products that appeal to the emotions, fashioned using unusual material juxtapositions and sophisticated effects.



Clear vision
Glass takes on new dimensions with the application of tactile textures and optical accents in the form of iridescent colours and gradients, evoking a sense of warmth and emotion.



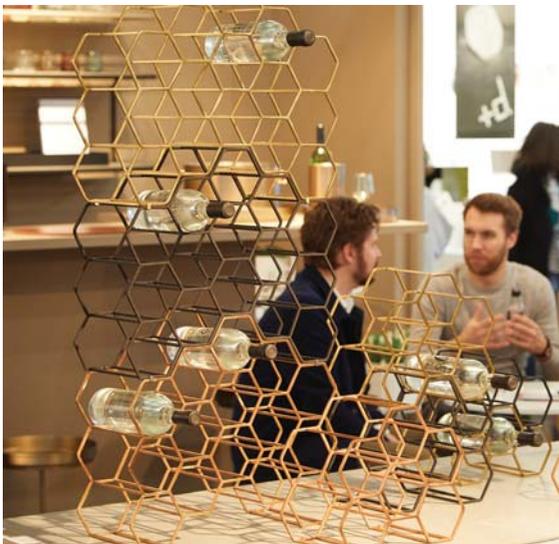
TREND 4: OPULENT NARRATIONS

Maximalist tendencies inform this trend, where the historic and oriental take on a contemporary sensibility. A lush-yet-delicate palette, opulent materials and magnificent details intermingle to create picturesque products that are rich in allusions.



Purple reign

This regal colour injects an audacious and extravagant touch to everyday objects, adding a sense of eye-catching drama.



Lavish details

Sumptuous materials, techniques, patterns and decorative elements define these ornamental products.





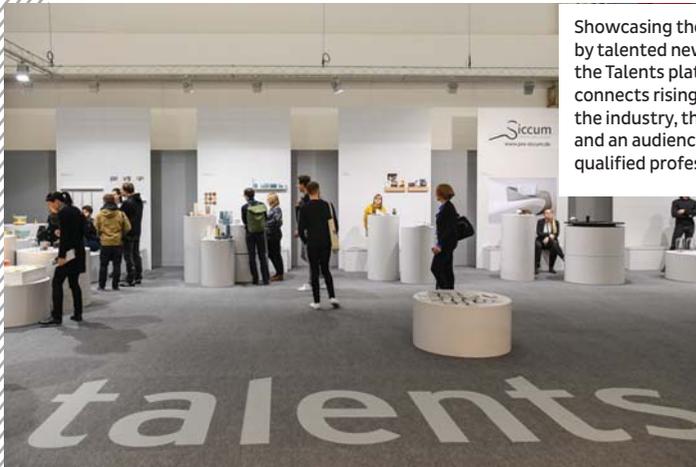
GO GREEN

With house plants and balcony gardens gaining in popularity, pots and pot holders to contain domestic greenery come in the most diverse forms.





DO DUTCH, curated by industrial designer Robert Bronwasser, depicts the typical Dutch habit of fusing humour with a solution-driven philosophy. Form meets function here.



Showcasing the designs by talented newcomers, the Talents platform connects rising stars to the industry, the media and an audience of qualified professionals.



Industrial designer Sebastian Bergne is the curator of Solutions, a special presentation that has been running for seven years, focusing on innovative and clever solutions to simplify life in the kitchen and the rest of the home.



At Speed-dating@Ambiente, CEO and R&D director Clemente Bugatti presents the Bugatti smart kettle, which allows water to be boiled to a set temperature, controllable via an app on a device.

CUTTING EDGE

The process of product sourcing took place not only at the exhibitors' booths, but also at the diverse platforms as part of Ambiente's comprehensive support programme to provide insight into and guidance on consumer trends, technical innovations and the latest designs. The platforms included the Ambiente Academy (2nd edition), which hosted shows and lectures on trends and a plethora of topics such as Solutions, an edit of intelligent kitchen and household products; DO DUTCH, a special focus on the product culture of the partner country, Netherlands; Trends 2018 presentation; and the Talents showcase of emerging independent designers. In addition, the exclusive Speed-dating@Ambiente event saw selected exhibitors present a product in three minutes to the global media. **H**



Entrepreneur and product and industrial design educator Professor Mark Braun heads the Glaslabor (Glass Lab), a studio project of sculptural glass structures created from the experimentation of applying digital thought processes to analogue mechanisms.



1

1. Dubbed the ultimate recliner lounge, King Living's King Cloud III is not only a luxurious indulgence but is also a masterpiece of engineering – the TouchGlide Control technology offers effortless adjustment. It has a minimalist silhouette and optional Smart Pockets storage. (www.kingliving.my)

2



3



2. Sometimes, less is more when it comes to sprucing up your home. Harvey Norman is offering a range of Australian homeware and decorative furnishings. Choose from contemporary designs ideal for impressing at a brunch or dinner party, or some beautiful textured lanterns, lidded jars and faux-gold plated vases to add a pop of style to the home. (www.harveynorman.com.my)

3. Le Creuset introduces a new evolution in its enamelled cast-iron cookware in the form of the Signature Cast Iron Casseroles. The new range, which comes in a variety of sizes, shapes and colours, features larger easy-grip handles, a secure-fit lid enhanced with built-in stabilisers and a stylish new heat-resistant stainless steel knob. (www.lecreuset.com.my)

4. A gift from the heart can be expressed more clearly with a personal touch, as in the case of Royal Selangor's engraving service. Beyond hand-engraving for pewter surfaces, the proudly Malaysian brand also offers laser engraving for its wood and glass products, making every gifting occasion a truly memorable one. (royalselangor.com)

5. At Milan Design Week 2017, Italian furniture company Flexform introduced the Adda sofa to much interest. Understated and a vision of simplicity, it has a cosy charm, as envisioned by renowned designer Antonio Citterio. He is a two-time recipient of the Compasso d'Oro, one of Italy's most important industrial design awards. The sofa is now available in Malaysia at Studio216. (www.studio216.co)



4

Eclectic Assortments

Text **Mae Chan**

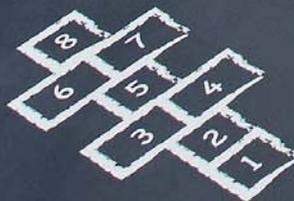


5

Red alert

AirAsia's headquarters, RedQ, is designed with the award-winning airline's DNA in mind — eternally youthful, fun and friendly

Text **Anandhi Gopinath** Photography **SooPhye**







With slanted walkways and meeting rooms that purposely extend from the wall, RedQ's architecture is deliberately bold and yet completely functional – a nod to the award-winning airline's youthful and exuberant personality

A key feature of the facility is the sun-drenched atrium, which is considered the heart and soul of RedQ. A dramatic chrome slide is a new addition, adding both visual appeal and a distinct sense of fun.



When AirAsia's new CEO Riad Asmat was introduced in January, the management of the low-cost carrier came up with a rather clever way to reveal who he was to the staff — the ex-Naza director emerged out of a chrome slide that connects the upper floors of AirAsia's headquarters with its light-filled central atrium, where everyone waited with bated breath. That slide is the latest addition to the company's headquarters in Sepang, images of which have become a viral hit on social media platforms since it was occupied in late 2016. Announcing Riad's arrival through the slide channels the charming irreverence that the AirAsia brand has come to exemplify, and it is exactly what inspired the bold and lively approach to the design of the headquarters.

Called RedQ, the sprawling 18,000 sq ft facility is the first real home of the pioneering low-cost carrier, featuring a design that reflects the airline's determination to become No 1 in Malaysia and across the region while incorporating elements that showcase its professional, fun

and friendly attitude. This may be the headquarters of a regional company but it does not conform to prevailing notions of corporate ID. This airy, sun-drenched space is based on an open concept, designed specifically with the employees in mind, that is, a home-like ambience to encourage everyone to meet, mingle and communicate.

"The guiding principle of the overall design was to ensure that there was no department compartmentalisation, which would have resulted in the segregation of departments on different floor levels. The emphasis was on constructing a building based on a 'one big happy family' concept," says an AirAsia spokesperson.

"This required the building to be more value-driven, more interactive, facilitating communication between the staff. The design had to be responsive and adaptable to accommodate various staff activities, which are now held at the atrium. Another design principle was the open concept to ensure less hierarchy. The provision of the atrium and link bridges connecting different sections



of each floor addressed most of the design criteria. The optimisation of glass for the building's façade and the provision of a 'butterfly roof' optimised natural lighting."

The six-storey building serves the needs of 2,200 employees, including airline crew — a 453m pedestrian walkway connects RedQ to the klia2 main terminal. On the lowest floor, an atrium flooded with natural light is an arresting anchor and what the company considers to be RedQ's heart and soul. Covered in astroturf and dotted with comfortable seating in bright colours, the space is ideal for informal meetings, to take a break from work or even to enjoy a relaxed lunch.

This floor also houses all of RedQ's dining options — a café, coffee shop, salad bar and staff pantry. With all that space, RedQ is also able to offer an enviable list of staff amenities, including a barbershop, convenience store, clinic, gym, physiotherapy centre, laundromat, an innovation lab and, best of all, a crèche.

"Our working environment requires us to work

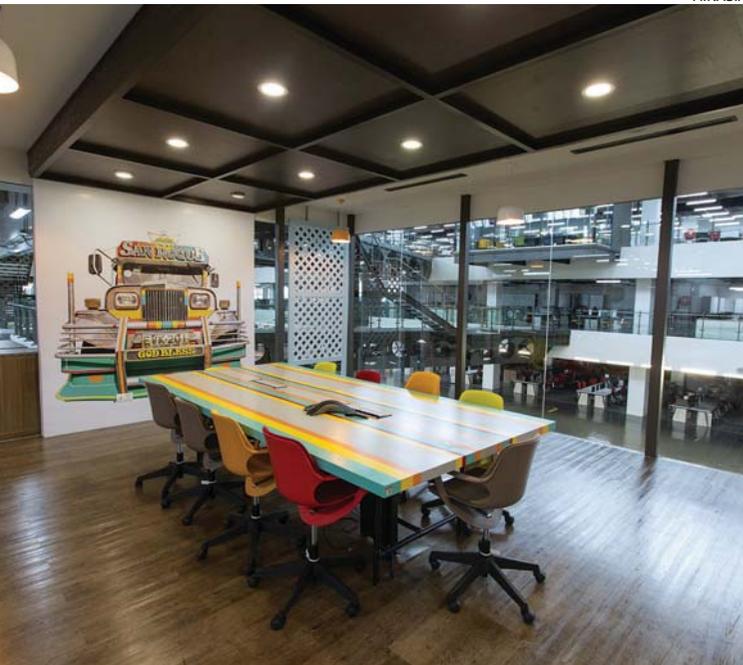
closely with each other. Communication is key. The provision of an innovation and interactive workplace increases the employees' productivity as they would be able to communicate with each other more efficiently, effectively and in a less time-consuming fashion. Collaborative equipment, such as for video-conferencing, installed in all meeting rooms at RedQ allows our employees to conduct discussions/meetings with anyone in different locations. Also, as interactive space plays a vital role in social interaction and collaboration, the current open workspace concept increases productivity in the sense that the staff are encouraged to work or have quick discussions among themselves easily in any corner of the office, be it the cafeteria, the atrium or even the sitting area in the lobby," the spokesperson adds.

Apart from the atrium, RedQ's themed meetings rooms are also especially interesting as they stimulate creativity and inspire wanderlust. This was a result of discussions held ahead of the design process, where a key

Meetings rooms are inspired by the various locations that AirAsia flies to, with cheeky references like the jeepney from Manila (below). However, might the Star Wars-esque take on design in the board room (right) hint of future 'otherworldly' expansion plans?



AIRASIA



AIRASIA

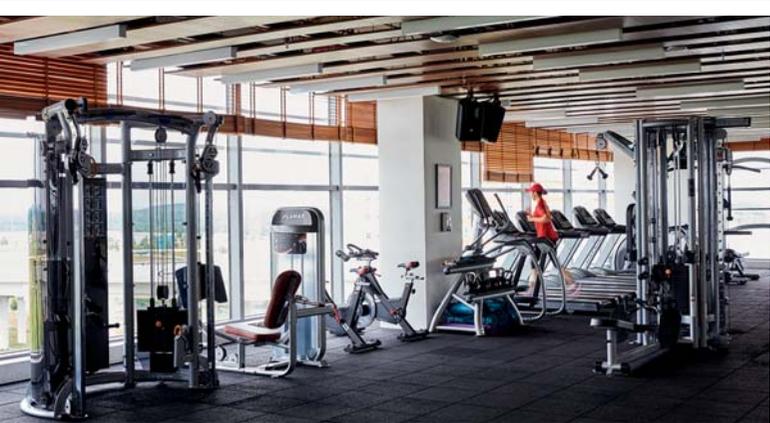
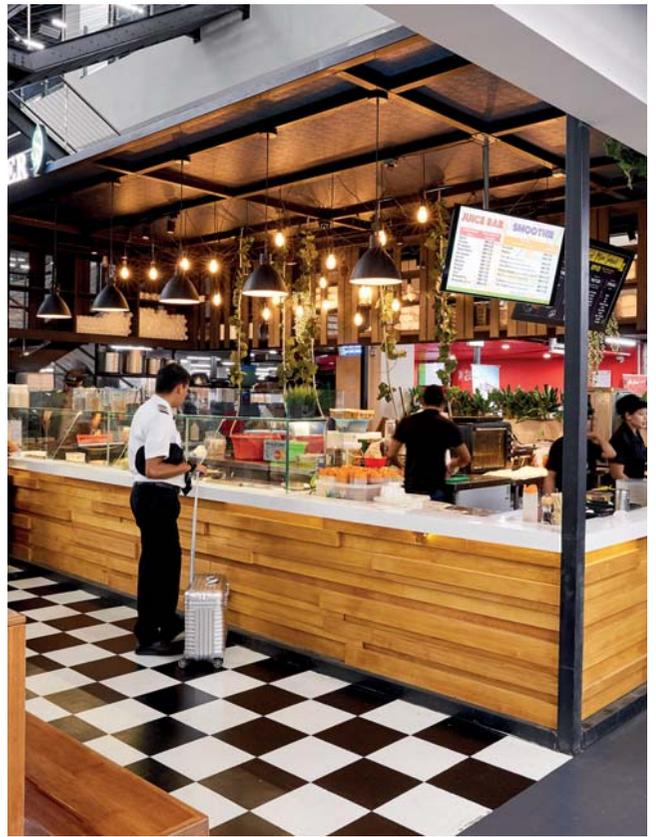


consideration was to create an environment that would encourage idea generation. From a functional perspective, the meeting rooms are equipped with state-of-the-art teleconferencing facilities while design-wise, they are destination-themed as a visual reminder of the airline's wide network spanning Asean, North and South Asia, Australia and beyond.

The Manila room features a colourful striped table and the image of a jeepney emblazoned on one bright surface, the Tokyo room features skyscrapers from the vibrant city wrapped around all four walls while the Jakarta room boasts a warm, batik-inspired carpet for a truly comforting feel. The Sydney room overlooks the green plains of Sepang with the world-famous opera house overlooking a table surrounded by summery orange chairs, and the minimalist Seoul room gets a delightful pop of colour from multihued lanterns suspended directly above a light-brown table.

Two meetings rooms are especially notable. The boardroom is called Millennium Falcon, inspired by the light freighter that played a role in some of the greatest victories of the Rebel Alliance and the New Republic. Dark carpets with matching fittings and furniture go perfectly with white bands on the floor and a unique circular lighting fixture above the boardroom table. AirAsia project manager Jim Ratteree was a key staff member during the construction process of RedQ, and a bright and cheery meeting space is dedicated to his memory. Floral carpets strike an interesting contrast with multi-coloured door-shaped panels on one wall.

It's not often that an organisation is able to create a physical base so closely attuned to its DNA, not to mention one that aids productivity and creativity too. What a great place for great ideas and big plans to take flight. **H**



GENERAL PATTERN

All hail the gorgeousness of geometrics!
From funky trays to terrific tea caddies, polished
plates and fun, fabulous frames,
it's all just groovy, baby.

PHOTOGRAPHY **SHAWN LOR @ PIXELPIX** ARTISTIC DIRECTION **JOANNE LIM**
STYLING **SHOKELUI** COORDINATOR **EN SZE**



VERMILION CHAIR WITH CRISS-CROSS BACKING, RM1169, **XZQT @ 1 UTAMA SHOPPING CENTRE**. ELONGATED CUSHION WITH TRIANGULAR PATTERNS, RM280, **FERM @ SMUK LIVING**. POLKA DOT PHOTO ALBUMS, RM5.90 EACH, **DAISO**. ART DECO AND MING INSPIRED CUSHION, RM169, **MAISON CURIO @ BANGSAR SHOPPING CENTRE**. HOUR GLASS SHAPED MESH LAMP, RM1199; CERAMIC STOOL, RM799; EMBROIDERED POLKA DOT CUSHION, RM289. ALL FROM **KARE @ 1 UTAMA SHOPPING CENTRE**.

MIAMI LUXE GUIDE,
RM39.90, GUDANG @
BANGSAR SHOPPING
CENTRE. TRAPEZIUM VASE,
RM189; HEXAGON VASE,
RM150. BOTH FROM KARE
@ 1 UTAMA SHOPPING
CENTRE. THÉ GLACÉ AQUA
PARFUM (100ML), RM595,
TERRY DE GUNZBURG @
KENS APOTHECARY.



PSYCHEDELIC PATTERN
ROUND TRAY, RM139;
SQUARE-BASED TRIANGLE-
PRINT CERAMIC JAR WITH
COVER, RM369; SQUARE-
PRINT PATTERN CERAMIC
MUG, RM59. ALL FROM
KARE @ 1 UTAMA SHOPPING
CENTRE. GEOMETRIC-PRINT
PLACE MATS, RM136, NALA
@ ISETAN. ASSORTED GAMES
WITH GEOMETRIC-PRINT
BOXES, BOTH FROM GUDANG
@ BANGSAR SHOPPING
CENTRE.



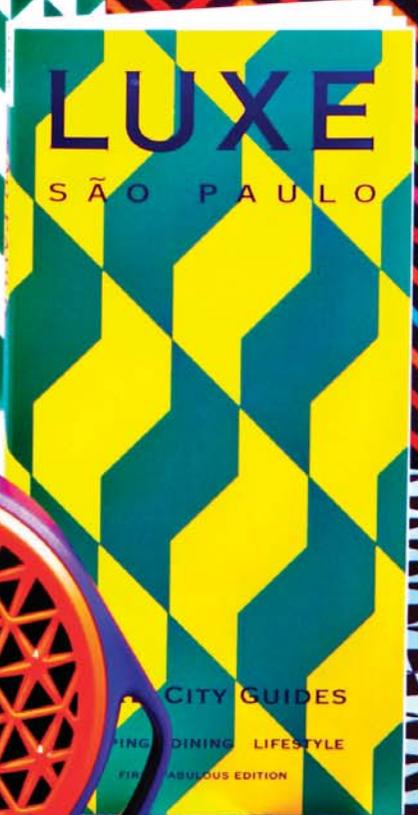
GEOMETRIC-
PRINT TEAPOT
AND CUP SET
WITH SAUCER,
RM36, PARKSON.





ASSORTED GEOMETRIC-
PRINT TABLE WARE, RM23
- RM162, ROBINSON'S @
GARDENS, PARKSON AND
GUDANG @ BANGSAR
SHOPPING CENTRE.

CARD GAME WITH GEOMETRIC-PRINT BOX, RM60; SÃO PAULO LUXE GUIDE, RM39.90. BOTH FROM GUDANG @ BANGSAR SHOPPING CENTRE. GEOMETRIC-PRINT BONE FRAME, RM159, MAISON CURIO @ BANGSAR SHOPPING CENTRE. ROUND PORTABLE SPEAKERS WITH TRIANGLE SHAPES, RM118, NXGEN IT @ 1 UTAMA SHOPPING CENTRE.



ART DECO PRINT PORCELAIN
JAR WITH COVER, RM699;
BONE TRINKET BOX, RM259.
BOTH MAISON CURIO @
BANGSAR SHOPPING CENTRE.
BACKGAMMON GAME WITH
GEOMETRIC-PRINT BOX,
RM101; LOS ANGELES LUXE
GUIDE, RM39.90, BOTH
FROM GUDANG @ BANGSAR
SHOPPING CENTRE.





Making chores a cinch

Text Tan Gim Ean

Tell a Dyson design engineer the floor is his and he will jump up — not to grab the mike but a vacuum cleaner, and proceed to demonstrate its efficacy. Energy, passion, dedication and innovation are words you hear when these engineers talk about what they do. And when they pause to let their machines do the talking, it is obvious why they get so excited about cleaning.

Excitement fills the Rockacademy Bangkok, venue of the Southeast Asian launch of the new Dyson V8 Carbon Fibre cord-free vacuum cleaner, one January evening. After a brief introduction to what this addition to the DV range offers, Sam Twist, design engineer for the floorcare category, takes the floor to show how it works.

Then, it is the media's turn to get the low-down on dust, dirt and debris scattered on floorboards, carpets, shelves, a catwalk, bed and keyboard. The room is abuzz as members, dressed for dinner, fiddle with buttons and tools and watch as pockets of litter vanish before their eyes.

Well, keeping the home clean is more a chore than fun group activity. With this in mind, Dyson sets out to create transformational products which satisfy the needs of customers and make life that little bit easier.

The V8 Carbon Fibre has 30% more suction power (155 air watts) than the V8, released in April 2016 and now the British brand's fastest-selling product. Its re-engineered carbon fibre brush bar has nylon bristles that enable users to dig deep into carpets and rugs to remove ground-in dirt and pet hair, and soft filaments to suck up fine dust from hard surfaces.

Fifteen cyclones arranged in two tiers inside the V8 Carbon Fibre capture fine dust from the airflow and fling

it into a 0.54l clear bin. The filtration system is sealed to minimise dust returning into the room. Press one button and you can eject the dirt without getting your hands dirty.

For those who like to tackle floor-to-ceiling cleaning at one go, the vacuum, powered by a battery that does not fade or need replacing, runs for 40 minutes when set on low mode. A quick-release catch transforms it into a hand-held device so you can move from cobwebs on the wall to crumbs littering the stairs and furballs under the furniture.

On top of the fluffy and direct drive cleaner heads, the V8 Carbon Fibre comes with tools designed for precise cleaning around edges and in tight spaces and crevices. A combination tool allows you to switch from one textured surface to another as you clean. Attach an up-top adaptor to other tools and they can be used at different angles in high-up areas of your home. There is a mini soft dusting brush with bristles to lift dust and allergens from your keyboard.

When you are done with cleaning, just place the vacuum back on a wall-mounted dock and leave it to charge for five hours.

The V8 Carbon Fibre weighs 2.55kg and its polycarbonate bin is made of the same material as riot shields. Ergonomic balance — the motor and battery are positioned to ensure that its centre of gravity is in line with the hand grip — makes the vacuum feel lightweight and easy to handle. As Twist shows at the launch, you can lift one finger and get the housework done!

And hooked to that digit is the challenge for Dyson's design engineers: Solve the problems that others ignore and keep improving the inventions.

“Solving problems is [like] a disease — you want to do it. You want to make the products better and better with technology,” Twist says.

Creating a new product is a long process that involves research, trial and error and concerted effort: Prototypes are subjected to months of repetitive and rigorous testing and it takes 120 engineers 50,000 hours and 550 tests to be satisfied that the units are robust enough. As an example, Twist says, engineers worked on the DV fluffy cleaner head from 1999 to 2015 before it was rolled out.

Dyson general manager for Southeast Asia Martyn Davies says incremental improvements over 25 years produce technology that ultimately goes into the brand’s products, from the first vacuum cleaner sold under its name in 1992, to its first cordless model launched in 2010 and now, the V8 Carbon Fibre.

“There is this attitude of [striving for] constant improvement. We want to make existing products more efficient and pursue things with authority,” says Davies, who has been with Dyson for 11 years.

The brand has an array of innovations, from heatless hand dryers to bladeless fans, air purifiers, humidifiers and lamps that incorporate heat pipe technology. It is keen to develop a great core technology by building up bits of expertise.

Dyson is building an electric car that is slated to go on sale in 2020, using the combined expertise of its engineers. The project dips into the £2.5 billion (RM13.7 billion) it is investing in future technologies, such as robotics, artificial intelligence and batteries.

Looking at a technology pipeline of 20 years, the company, which has about 10,000 employees globally,

over one third of whom are engineers and scientists, is keen to develop young talent and immerse them in the mindset of founder James Dyson: Nothing is impossible. Last September, the Dyson Institute of Engineering and Technology welcomed its first intake of 35 students to a four-year programme that combines academic learning with hands-on experience alongside engineers at its headquarters in Malmesbury, UK.

“Technology moves so fast and is intelligent and connected. As we grow into new markets, there will always be steps to make. There are 200 future products being worked on at Dyson now. We’re looking to make an electric car that will combine all of our technologies, [such as] motor, battery, lighting and air-conditioning,” says Twist, who started as a fresh graduate at Malmesbury four years ago.

He is currently based in Japan and looking at how Dyson can stay in touch with the Asian market and tailor its floorcare products to meet the specific needs of the region, where many live in apartment units.

The Asian relationship with floors is different, he notes. People here clean their homes every day, unlike Europeans, who do it less frequently. They do not wear shoes indoors, where there is less carpeting, and many sit on the floor to eat.

With technology becoming more connected and integral to everyday life, “we may look to localise [products] and make them smaller and better suited for Asian apartments,” says Twist, who recently spent two months at Dyson Manufacturing in Senai, Johor, where there is a temperature-controlled wall of debris from around the world. No wonder these engineers obsess about rubbish. **H**

BOTTOM, FROM LEFT:

The brush bar has nylon bristles that suck up fine dust from hard surfaces

You can use the Dyson V8 Carbon Fibre in stick mode or as a hand-held device, as Davies (left) and Twist show



The birth of a tropical paradise

Mangala Resort & Spa emerges from under the radar as a holiday gem to be reckoned with

Text **Tan Siok Hoon**

Photography **SooPhye**

Gambang may be unfamiliar to most, but this sleepy town in Pahang, about 20km from the state capital of Kuantan, is home to a hidden gem. The brainchild of Datuk Franky Chua, Mangala Resort and Spa made the headlines recently for its win in the Environmental (Rehabilitation/Conservation) category at the Malaysia Property Award 2017.

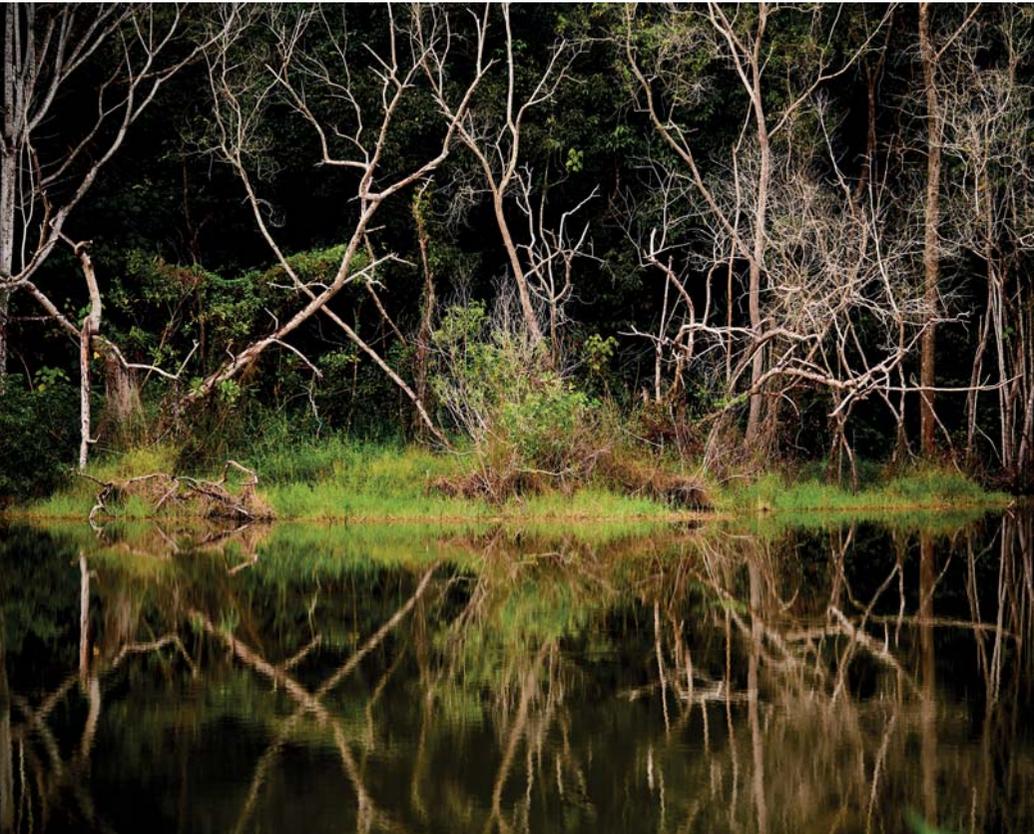
The 62-acre Mangala Resort and Spa is nestled within 400 acres of oil palm plantation and water features. It is hard to believe that the area was a mining site when it was acquired in 2002 by the Franky Group of Companies. Thanks to Chua's vision and more than a decade of sheer passion, determination and commitment, the once-barren and degraded land has been rehabilitated into an environmentally sustainable and ecological paradise.

As a brief sojourn proved, it does not take long for the resort's tranquil charm to wield its magic on guests. Past the boulevards of verdant palm trees, the stunning vistas of lakes — which we learnt were transformed from disused mining ponds — and the cultivated beauty of the wetlands truly steal the limelight.

The transformation (the planning and replanting is an ongoing process) first involved fertilising the land with empty palm oil fruit bunches sourced from neighbouring plantations. The next step was to replant tropical trees to attract flora and fauna back into the area and return the land to its primeval state.

Today, the area is the habitat of over 80 species of birds as recorded by Taman Negara's Bird Group, says Mangala Resort & Spa general manager Mario Indran.





The surreal and beautiful wetlands at the resort — more than 80 species of birds have made Mangala's lush vegetation their home



Among those we saw during a buggy tour (typically given to guests upon check-in) were kingfishers, hornbills, herons, wild magpies and migratory ducks. At sunrise, the chirping of the birds is nature's sweet symphony.

With the myriad of fauna — from butterflies to aquatic life — inhabiting the extensive natural areas surrounding the resort, there is infinitely more for nature lovers to enjoy besides bird-watching. With the resort's "no hunting or fishing rule" in place, the fauna population is protected and will continue to flourish.

The verdure of jungle plants, coconut trees and a large variety of fruit trees such as mangosteen, rambutan and fig helps the resort's ecosystem to thrive.

To manage the water levels of the lakes and wetlands, a simple and sustainable water control gate system was designed to channel rainwater into water reserve ponds during the monsoon season and release it into the lakes and wetlands during the dry

season. Looking at how verdant the environs of the resort are, the device is without a doubt most effective and ingenious.

After the tour of Mangala, which means "well-being" in Sanskrit, it is a surety that the resort lives up to its name. Being enveloped by the abundance of greenery and wildlife, the stresses and strains of everyday life dissipate quickly, leaving one feeling serene and refreshed.

What initially started as a project to build a retirement abode — an estate comprising a bungalow, vegetable farm and an orchard — for Chua somehow evolved into a luxury resort. Designed to integrate into the rejuvenated landscape, Mangala Resort & Spa is an ultra-special place for one to connect with nature and bask in its beauty and redemptive power to heal the body, mind and soul.

The resort offers different types of luxurious villas. The most rustic of them are the four Sara Cottages overlooking a gorgeous expanse

of wetlands. Replete with a private verandah, whirlpool tub and pantry, the villas offer guests close proximity to the best of the resort's natural resource.

The 10 units of Jala Villas also offer guests a waterfront setting with a verandah, pantry, whirlpool tub and rain shower. Perched on stilts, these villas have a more contemporary interior, yet evoke a natural ambience not unlike the Sara Cottages. The two-bedroom Jala Villa Family Suite is just perfect for families.

The 11 recently constructed Vana Villas are built on gentle slopes, offering scenic views of the lake and forest. The villas' modern aesthetic provides a laid-back yet plush feel that would appeal more to urbanites. The generous indoor living area and open-air bathtub provide a true vacation flavour.

Upping the ante on luxury, four villas come with a private pool. At the top of the range is the super spacious Vana Suite, where its two

bedrooms and living area are built as separate annexes that have access to the private pool.

In the pipeline are 34 Orchard Villas that are functional and stylish, perfect as a home away from home. There will be five family suites that come with a private pool, kitchen, living room and two bedrooms.

Besides lazing at the poolside in between dips in the pool, guests can engage more intimately with nature with an array of recreational activities

like cycling, kayaking and archery.

To knead away all the tension and muscle tightness, the Mangala Spa offers a full-service spa menu that provides not only restorative treatments and therapies but manicures, pedicures, scrubs, facials and hair and make-up services as well. Enjoy being coaxed into a state of ultra-relaxation amid the resort's panoramic vista and calming backdrop.

Meanwhile, the resort's all-day dining restaurant, The Lakeside,

offers a wide repertoire of meals — from buffet breakfast to à la carte lunches and dinners — which guests can partake while enjoying views of the stunning lakes framed by luxuriant greenery.

The unique natural setting, well-appointed villas, impressive facilities and attentive service staff firmly establishes Mangala Resort & Spa as a memorable destination — be it for weekend escapes and family holidays to corporate retreats, conferences and weddings. **H**



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: A full service spa awaits at the resort; a night view of the upcoming Orchard Villa with a luxurious private pool; one of four Vana Villas, which promise privacy and luxury; the Vana Villa's indoor/outdoor bathrooms





THE GOOD LIFE

The recent *Haven* x *Bön Estates* Healthy Lunar New Year Brunch marked the start of the Year of the Dog with wellness

Text **Mae Chan**
Photography **SooPhye + Suhaimi Yusuf**





The morning was bright and sunny when we arrived at Bön Estates Gallery in Bangsar, Kuala Lumpur, heralding it a cheery start to the day. Stepping past the heavy-set wood-and-steel swivel door at its entrance, we felt an immediate sense of serenity, enhanced by the soothing sounds of water flowing into a koi pond.

The three-storey gallery – which includes vegetarian café The Good Co, and show units of its flagship project, The Estate, due to be completed in 2020 in Bangsar South – is an embodiment of the award-winning boutique developer's vision in design. The Tibetan teachings of “Bön”, which emphasises the unity of the five elements of earth, fire, water, air and space, inform its core values.

But a lifestyle of harmony, balance and holistic living goes beyond the surface, as an intimate group of invited guests found out at the Healthy Lunar New Year Brunch hosted by *Haven* in collaboration with Bön Estates and The Good Co. Celebrity chef Danielle Graham, author of *On The Table At Home*, her debut cookbook, was on hand to present the appetiser and main course, giving a cooking demo along the way.

We were first ushered up to the third floor, where The Estate's 2,519 sq ft (Type-C) show unit sat. An array of floral teas steeped in delicate glass pots lined the open kitchen counter, setting the tone for a late morning tea party to kick-start our day.

Our surroundings, a decidedly contemporary living and dining space, were imbued with distinctive qualities of the five elements. Most prominent was the wood ceiling and wall, which provided a warm contrast to the otherwise monochrome furnishings. The grey marble flooring brought the design of the room together with a naturalistic and understated flair.

After the pre-meal socialising over tea — during which guests took their time to walk through the four-bedroom ‘home’ — we ventured down to The Good Co. The sunlit but cosy space, decked predominantly in black and gold, was ideal for a leisurely brunch.

In keeping with the festive season, The Good Co founder Levy Li had prepared special Yee Sang platters, using shredded fresh vegetables and fruits, as well as Chinese herbs such as ginseng and goji berries. Sea bird's nest was added for extra crunch, while cornflakes replaced the usual crispy crackers as a healthier alternative.

After a lively session of tossing and well wishes amidst banter and laughter, the atmosphere was set for the sit-down meal, with champagne being a cheeky complement. Soon, appetisers of crispy fried vegetable wontons made with cabbage, water chestnuts and





shiitake mushrooms were served, prepared by Graham, using a recipe from her book.

Following that, she stepped up to the counter to demonstrate the preparations involved in making the main course of the day, a five-spice tofu salad. The light but satisfyingly tasty dish was served with another signature recipe from her book, fragrant rice, as well as a side of roasted pumpkin and radish. But it was really the accompanying chili sauce that stole the show with its savoury, spicy

burn, perfect for the Malaysian palate.

Whilst the gathering centred on a meal, it was not just another feasting event. Li made sure there were some healthy take-homes on food — both literally and figuratively — as she served a specially-created version of The Good Co's signature smoothie bowl. Using frozen mango and bananas as the base, she drew inspiration from the HK-style Mango Sago Pomelo dessert, topping hers with goji berries, desiccated coconut, pomelo and chia seeds.



Healthy take home: Guests paying close attention to Li as she explained how to make their very own overnight oats and yoghurt jar

From left:

1 Danielle Graham, Diana Khoo, editor of *Haven*, and Melinda Lee

2 CS Fan, Serena San, Karin Tan and Wa Ying Wat

3 Hubert Hoi, Celest Thoi, Lim Ai San and Ken Lim

4 Datuk Kelvin Tan, Mala Chandran, Tanny Tee and Sheryllyn Tan

5 Datin Dr Fanny Foo, Datin Seri Joey Tor, Christine Cheah, Datin Joanne Leong and Datuk Seri Jackie Tor

6 Levy Li, Datuk Kelvin and Selina Yeop Jr

7 Chief commercial officer of *The Edge* Sharon Teh, Graham, Li and Angeline Liau, marketing director of Bön Estates

8 Berry Eng, Pixie Ng, Melinda Looi and Emily Kwong

9 Trudy Ganendra

10 Thevi Ramalingam, Nik Tasha Nik Kamaruddin and Vimi Rajgopal



暖
木
庭

EVENT

Guests had an opportunity to be hands-on and create their own overnight oats and yoghurt jar – which resulted in some fun and healthy competition to make the prettiest one. Each jar was labelled with our name (or names of friends for those who wanted to gift it) for a personalised touch.

Marketing director of Bön Estates Angeline Liao, who presided as host, said eating well and living well were part of the company's principles in property development. The brunch event underscored the "Good Living" series it rolled out last year, which included activities highlighting sustainability, the environment and use of space, among others.

"We want people to live better and recognise our role in creating a more sustainable lifestyle and community through our projects," Liao emphasised. **H**



The Good Co founder Levy Li and Danielle Graham shared their signature recipes with the guests over a lively cooking demo



FIVE-SPICE TOFU AND PICKLED VEGETABLE SALAD

by **Danielle Graham**

In her cookbook *On The Table At Home*, model and celebrity chef Danielle Graham says one of her go-tos for a quick, nutritious meal is salad. But one does not have to sacrifice taste for speed, as her Asian-style dish proves. With its sweet-and-salty dressing and a Japanese twist, Graham's claim of it being a "healthy and light meal tailored for the tropical weather" is no exaggeration. Here's the recipe:

INGREDIENTS

1 small carrot, finely julienned
1/2 daikon (white radish), finely julienned
1/2 tsp salt
1 tsp white sugar
1 tbsp sesame seeds
1 Japanese or 1/2 telegraph cucumber, deseeded and finely julienned
2 tbsp dried wakame, rehydrated in cold water for 5 minutes
200g five-spice flavoured firm tofu (or other flavoured tofu of choice), thinly sliced

DRESSING

1 tsp finely grated ginger
1 tbsp soy sauce
2 tsp apple cider vinegar
2 tsp white sugar
1/2 tsp sesame oil
1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil

PREPARATION

Place the carrots and radish in a bowl and mix well with salt and sugar, and let them rest for 10 minutes. Then drain the liquid and set the pickled vegetables aside.

Toast the sesame seeds quickly in a small dry frying pan over medium heat, shaking the pan regularly, for about a minute or until light brown. Prepare the dressing in a small bowl, mixing all the ingredients well.

Add the cucumber, wakame and tofu to the pickled vegetables and mix it all gently but well, followed by the dressing. Divide up the portions (this recipe serves four) and scatter the sesame seeds evenly on top. Serve immediately.

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Kristang creations

This Easter, be inspired by authentic family recipes from renowned chef Melba Nunis

Text **Shalini Yeap**
Photography **SooPhye**
Styling **Bianca A**
Recipes **Melba Nunis**



Listening to Melba Nunis interact with her guests, you may wonder if you have walked into the friendly celebrity chef's own kitchen. There is always a welcoming air about her, one that is bound to make anyone feel right at home when, in actual fact, one is seated amid the Old World ambience of Melba at the Mansion, the well-loved restaurant of The Majestic Malacca that bears her name. Located on the second floor of the YTL Hotels-owned property, it serves authentic Kristang cuisine, lovingly prepared by chef Nunis and her team.

There is a still-vibrant and close-knit Kristang community in Malaysia whose roots may be traced back to 15th-century Malacca when the Portuguese first set foot on our shores. Inter-marriage between the Portuguese, who were predominantly traders and sailors, and the local women led to the birth of the Kristang community. Like its people, the cuisine too possesses multicultural elements, the most important of which is spices, according to Nunis.

Nunis hopes to share the culture of her people with the world through her cooking and her first culinary endeavour was Simply Mels in Bangsar South, Kuala Lumpur, which opened its doors for business in July 2011. "It was quite frightening at first — I knew nothing about the restaurant business, I only knew how to cook! But I am never afraid to try something ... I know God has a plan for me and I will go with it," she says.

"My only aim was to share our cuisine with others ... I don't want anyone to be left out," says Nunis, referring to her decision to not serve pork at the restaurant. She managed Simply Mels until end-2016 when the restaurant ceased operations, only to take on a bigger challenge — running Melba at the Mansion. Nunis, who is thankful for the opportunity, is ably assisted by her dedicated team, comprising JR Rodolfo Balaqui, Khay Jesus Alfredo Tamaño and Henry Trivino Sarmiento, all of whom have worked with her for years now, from her time at Simply Mels.

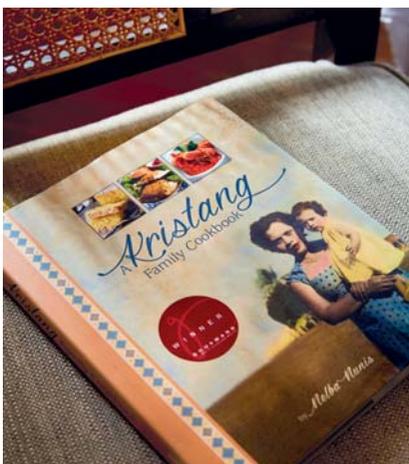
"All my life, I was a homemaker but my husband was a real shopper as far

as groceries were concerned," says the chef of her late husband, S M Victor. "My refrigerator was always full! So I had to constantly come up with dishes to cook. He was always encouraging me and we enjoyed eating together as a family."

Realising that not many people were familiar with Kristang cuisine, Nunis was inspired to document the treasured family recipes that her mother had kept safely in a shoebox. With the assistance of her daughters, Cheryl Anne Victor, Alison Joan Victor and Stacey Jane Victor, she penned her first cookbook, *A Kristang Family Cookbook*, which was published in 2014. The cover of Nunis' book, like her journey into the culinary world, is personal and dear to her. It is a picture of her mother, carrying young Nunis in her arms. "The photo was originally in black and white but my grandfather found a way to add colour to it," she smiles.

Little did Nunis expect the cookbook to win her an award in the Woman Chef category at the Gourmand World Cookbook Awards (GWCA) in China, a recognition that played a part in her being noticed by The Majestic Malacca. Last year, she partnered MPH Books in publishing her second book, *Everything Kristang*. "There are some simple recipes that would be forgotten eventually," says Nunis about the bilingual cookbook that aims to attract a wider local audience.

She wears her pride in the Kristang heritage on her sleeve — literally —



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A Kristang Family Cookbook and *Everything Kristang*, both by chef Melba Nunis, feature family recipes that are significant to the Kristang culture and close to her heart. The cookbooks are available for purchase at The Majestic Malacca and online at www.mphonline.com, respectively.



Overlooking the Malacca River and Kampung Morten, Melba at The Mansion is where you can savour Kristang favourites, lovingly prepared by chef Nunis and her team

in the form of an orange chef's uniform, a rare colour choice for chefs. This is her way of paying homage to the Kristang culture through a reference to the *patui* card game.

"I am a people person," the chef says, and after spending some time in her company, this becomes abundantly clear. To her, cooking is not a job or a chore. "Even when I am off, I invite my friends and family over for a home-cooked meal," says Nunis who drives back to her home in Ara Damansara, Selangor, on her days off.

Having lived in Klang, Alor Setar and Penang before this with her late husband and children, her current role at Melba at the Mansion is a homecoming of sorts for the Malaccan. Curious, I ask her what motivates her work and how she remains active — juggling between cooking for hotel guests and private functions as well as running culinary classes at the hotel. Nunis, who turns 65 this year, has this to say: "The secret is to be happy, cook and make other people happy too!"



Born and raised in Garden City, Malacca chef Nunis' cooking is inspired by the familiar flavours she grew up with



SUGEE CAKE

450g butter, at room temperature
450g caster sugar
225g sugée (semolina)
12 egg yolks
1 tin (225ml) cream
5 egg whites
170g almonds, chopped and toasted
¼ tsp vanilla essence
½ tsp almond essence
½ tsp rose essence
2 tbsp brandy
225g self-raising flour, sifted

1. Using an electric mixer, beat butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Add the sugée and mix well. Cover and leave for at least four hours or overnight.
2. When ready to bake, preheat the oven to 160°C for 15 minutes. Grease and line four 18cm x 10cm loaf tins or a 30cm square cake tin.
3. Beat the egg yolks into the sugée mixture, one at a time, mixing well after each addition. Add cream gradually while mixing.
4. In a clean grease-free bowl, beat egg whites to stiff peaks. Set aside.
5. Add almonds, essences and brandy to sugée mixture, then fold in flour. Repeat to fold in egg whites.
6. Divide the batter equally among the prepared loaf tins or pour into square tin.
7. Lower oven temperature to 130°C and bake for one hour or until a skewer inserted into the centre of the cake comes out clean.
8. Remove from the oven and set aside to cool. Wrap with aluminium foil and store at room temperature if not eaten immediately.

TIPS

- a) Once baked, let the cake cool completely so it will keep. Do not store in the fridge as it will dry out. Because it is baked with brandy, the cake will keep for up to a week wrapped in aluminium foil and stored in a cool and dry place.
- b) If not using brandy, wrap the cooled cake with aluminium foil and store in the fridge. Bring to room temperature before serving.

“MY REFRIGERATOR WAS ALWAYS FULL! SO I HAD TO CONSTANTLY COME UP WITH DISHES TO COOK. HE (MY HUSBAND) WAS ALWAYS ENCOURAGING ME AND WE ENJOYED EATING TOGETHER AS A FAMILY.”



BOLU KOKU (COCONUT CAKE)

225g grated skinned coconut
½ tsp ground turmeric
½ tsp ground cinnamon
½ tsp mixed spice
225g butter, at room temperature
225g caster sugar
4 eggs
2 egg yolks
200g self-raising flour, sifted
1 tbsp brandy

1. Preheat the oven to 160°C for 10 minutes. Grease and line a 18 x 10cm loaf tin or 15cm round cake tin.
2. Grind the grated coconut in a food processor until fine. Pour into a bowl and add the ground turmeric, cinnamon and mixed spice. Mix well.
3. Using an electric mixer, beat the butter and sugar until light and fluffy.
4. Add the eggs, one at a time, mixing well after each addition. Add the egg yolks and mix again.
5. Fold in the flour, followed by the grated coconut mixture and brandy.
6. Lower the oven temperature to 130°C and bake for 20 minutes or until a skewer inserted into the centre of the cake comes out clean.
7. Remove from the oven and set aside to cool. Slice and serve.

TIPS

“I find using good quality brandy makes a real difference to the flavour of the cake. I prefer to use an XO (extra old) cognac, but a VSOP will do if you do not want to break the bank.”



PIKADEL PESI (FISH CUTLETS)

150g white sandwich bread
400g boiled Spanish mackerel (ikan tenggiri) flesh, bones removed
1 tsp ground black pepper
¼ tsp Worcestershire sauce
¼ tsp chicken stock powder
2 tbsp chopped spring onions
1 egg yolk
Cooking oil for deep-frying
Breadcrumbs, as needed

1. Dip the slices of bread in a bowl of water, then remove and lightly squeeze out water, then remove and lightly squeeze out the water.
2. Place the bread in a large bowl with the fish, pepper, Worcestershire sauce, chicken stock powder, spring onions and egg yolk, and mix with your hands, using your fingers to feel for any bones you may have missed.
3. Portion the mixture into 45g balls and shape into oblongs.
4. Heat the oil in a pan and wait until it is hot but not smoking.
5. Roll the patties in breadcrumbs and deep-fry in batches until golden brown.
6. Remove and place on paper towels to drain excess oil.
7. Best served with pineapple onion salad and chili sauce.

TIPS

“I use Spanish mackerel (ikan tenggiri) as its delicate flesh, oily texture and strong flavour are suitable for this type of patty. After boiling the fish, use your fingers to shred the flesh. This way, you will be able to feel and remove any bones. Make extra cutlets and freeze them for serving another day, but be sure to thaw them before frying.”

EPOK-EPOK SAYUR

FILLING

Cooking oil, as needed

½ square firm tofu (taukwa)

1 tbsp chopped garlic

20g chopped prawns

20g minced chicken

1 tbsp light soy sauce

½ tbsp stock powder

½ tbsp sugar

½ tbsp oyster sauce

½ tbsp ground white pepper

200g yam bean (sengkuang), peeled and shredded

120g carrot, peeled and shredded

125ml water

4 tbsp chopped spring onion

PASTRY

500g plain flour, plus more for dusting

250ml water

½ tsp salt

250ml cooking oil

1. To prepare the filling, heat 1 tbsp oil in a pan over medium heat. Add the firm tofu and pan-fry until golden on all sides. Remove and cut into small cubes. Set aside until needed.
2. Using the same pan, heat 1 tbsp oil and brown the garlic. Add the prawns, minced chicken, soy sauce, stock powder, sugar, oyster sauce and pepper. Mix well and cook for 5 minutes.
3. Add the shredded yam bean, carrot and water and simmer over low heat for about 10 minutes or until the filling is almost dry. Add the firm tofu and mix. Set the filling aside to cool before stirring in the spring onions.
4. To prepare the pastry, place the flour in a mixing bowl and make a well in the centre. Add the water, salt and oil and mix gently to form a dough.
5. Dust a work surface with flour and roll the dough out into a 0.5cm thick sheet. Using a 6 cm round cutter, cut out circles from the pastry.
6. Place a tablespoonful of filling on each pastry circle and fold the pastry in half. Crimp the edges to



seal. Repeat until the ingredients are used up.

7. Heat sufficient oil for deep-frying in a wok over medium high heat.

Fry the epok-epok in batches until golden brown. Drain on kitchen towels.

8. Serve hot with chilli sauce.

Recipe makes 24 to 30 pieces.

TIPS

“The filling needs to be dry so the puffs will seal and not be soggy or fall apart. If there is too much water in the filling or the liquid does not seem to reduce, simply strain the filling before use. The puffs can be made ahead and kept chilled or frozen before frying. Do not thaw the puffs or they will become soggy. Fry chilled or frozen.” **H**

Text **Anandhi Gopinath**

SCENT OF A WOMAN



British accessory designer Anya Hindmarch has collaborated with perfumer Lyn Harris to launch her eponymous brand's debut fragrance collection that evokes happy memories of family summers spent in the English sunshine, her morning routine and newborn babies. Part of an ongoing commitment to recreate the everyday in an extraordinary way, her first collection comprises candles in two sizes — 175g and 700g — available in three fragrances: Sun Lotion (fresh and floral), Coffee (dark and woody) and Baby Powder (soft and oriental). The candles are finished with graphics from the Anya Hindmarch Sticker Shop to add a signature dose of humour, and each of the three different boxes can be twisted to create different phrases and faces. Find them at Anya Hindmarch's boutique in Pavilion KL for RM360 and RM990. **H**



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