

Tatler SINGAPORE Homes

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ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

Brighter Days

Seek inspiration
from uplifting designs in dozens
of homes around the world



We visit the favourite nooks
of tastemakers and learn more
about the creative impetus
behind various new collections

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Creative Impulse

Interior designer Ed Ong makes room for work and play in a shophouse his family are proud to call home

“I read a lot; I think a designer must always ‘feed’ himself with the things that he sees and experiences,” says Ed Ong, founder of Dwell Interior Design. “Travel is very important for that reason. It’s not necessary that you travel to look at buildings if you’re an architect, or to see decor if you’re a designer; it’s about being there to understand the culture and the sense of place, which I think are very important.”

At a time when travel opportunities are scarce, his study continues to be a treasure trove of inspiration. Situated on the first storey of a shophouse that Ong and his family have lived in for a decade, this workspace is where the designer reads and reflects; it’s also frequently a space where he meets his clients and guests.

“Books allow you to travel across time and get into the minds and perspectives of others through both the visuals and the words,” he says. “I would only buy a book if it makes me think and it’s able to spark off new ideas. That explains the collection of books that I have that I constantly refer to, even during meetings. These show my clients what I’m thinking about; that’s why I meet my clients next to where all my books are.”

In terms of the overall interior design, Ong has kept a pared-down approach that stays true to his creative philosophy. “We didn’t go nostalgic with the design of this shophouse even though it’s a historic building; this reflects who I am. I believe in having strong, clean lines.”

This minimalist scheme is reflected in the concrete screed walls that run the length of the shophouse, matched with dark timber boards for the flooring. These walls feature recesses that act as shelves to display awards, memorabilia and practical items. The simple material mix is paired with a monochromatic palette; his study notably features black walls that contribute to the calming, cocooning nature of the space.



This page: Interior designer Ed Ong crafted the study as a calming zone to reflect and read in, while acting as a space conducive to meetings; the fountain next to the kitchen now serves as a display for design curios and found objects

Opposite page: Ong often consults his stacks of books and cites the work of architects Tadao Ando and Tom Kundig as his key influences; the interior designer loves to collect vintage stationery, such as the antique staplers pictured here



Another key area on the ground floor is the kitchen, which is the heart of this home. Instead of having a living area on the first floor, Ong created a large culinary space that also occasionally functions as a venue for classes by The Kitchen Society, which his wife Teo Hsin Yi runs.

“The kitchen has always been something of a personal passion,” he says. “I was the first Southeast Asian designer to design a Blum showroom, which deepened my interest in culinary spaces. The Kitchen Society was started as we envisaged people gathering around a chef to learn the techniques up close, rather than be seated three rows behind in a studio.”

Looking back, Ong is proud of what his design firm and The Kitchen Society have achieved; his practice coincidentally was launched in the same period as *Tatler Homes Singapore* in November 2005. “I always keep copies of *Tatler Homes* because the magazine features a good selection of projects, and I’ve been following it almost from the start.”

Although it’s been a challenging year, Ong is quick to count his blessings. “With clear communication and clarity of thought, a lot can be achieved even without face-to-face meetings,” he says. He remains hopeful about the year ahead. “We’ve managed to overcome most of the challenges with the support of our clients and vendors. A designer must always know that he needs a team; we depend on hands that are not ours to fulfil the vision. Communication is key to the successful execution of any project.”