

ELLE

Karma Chameleon

LUCY OOI'S HOME IS NOT WHAT IT SEEMS. ALEXANDRA KOHUT-COLE FINDS A VERY PRIVATE FAÇADE, DECEIVING IN ITS APPEARANCE



PHOTOS BY MASANO KAWANA, IRIEYES

A GATE LEADS TO A KOI POND AND THE FRONT DOOR OF THE OOI home where the tinkling sounds of water lure visitors into an oasis in the city. Lush greenery and the sounds of water are everywhere. General practitioner, Lucy Ooi and her husband, Malaysian-born gynaecologist, Alex, have crafted an architectural delight. Their home features light seeping through glass panelling, dark timber which warms outside seating areas, and strategically planted, colour co-ordinated trees, plants and flowers which lend a luscious backdrop to the centrepiece – an infinity swimming pool.

This is home to Lucy and Alex, their daughter, two sons and Siberian husky, Ash. “We were fortunate with the timing of the purchase of the property as no one wanted to buy it,” explains Lucy of their acquisition two-and-a-half years ago. “I saw the potential of the house. It’s close to amenities, the land area is great, and it’s quiet yet close to the main road.”

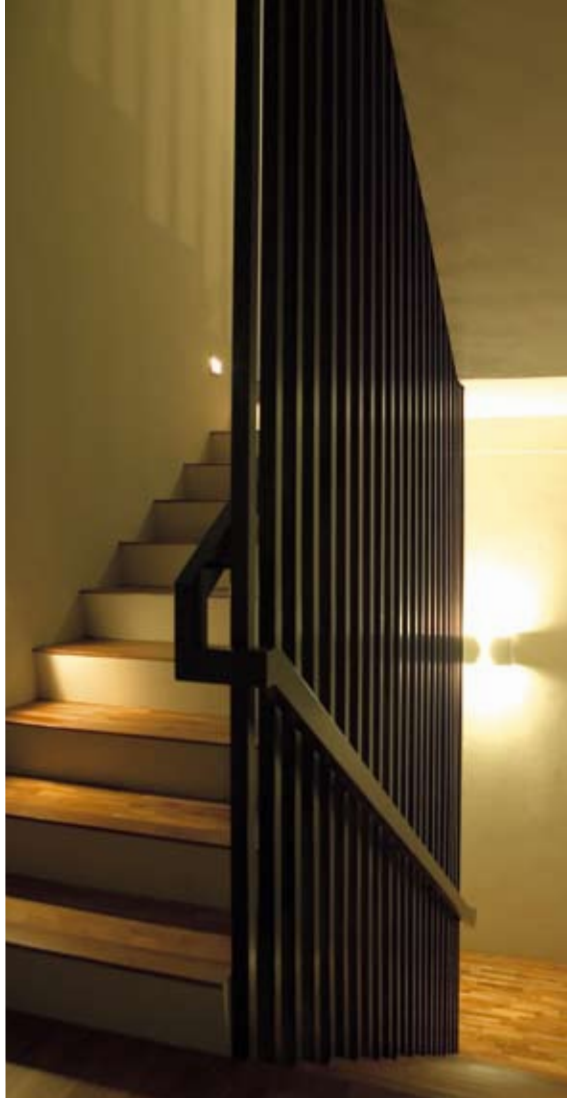
The land and home were planned as a total concept for outdoor family living with a sitting room which opens onto an extended outside sitting area, the shelter for which doubles as a balcony to the upstairs wing. “We connect with nature here,” says Lucy. “It’s open, calm and serene. I didn’t realise how lucky we were until I heard all the birds chirping.”

Founding president of the Singapore Association of Women Doctors, chair of District 330 International Inner Wheel and chair of the Medical Advisory Council of the Salvation Army Singapore, Lucy’s real passion has always been singing. Now, she sings for fun and charity, sometimes performing with Dick Lee.

At home, each of the Oois have a wing devoted to them comprising a study, bedroom, balcony and bathroom. The ground floor is the domain of the parents, their bathroom leading to an outside jacuzzi and pool area. Upstairs is the domain of the rest of the family and the third floor houses the gym and guest suite. Says Lucy: “We told our architect, Richard Fan, the basics of what we required because we wanted to see what he came up with. It was better than we expected.”



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Outdoor seating area; Koi pond; A romantic vista at night



Night-lit view of the landscaped sloping garden

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During construction, she visited every day and tried to imagine living there. “It was an evolving process that took one-and-a-half years to complete,” she explains. “Our architect had free rein. The nitty-gritty of the alignment took the most time – choosing the marble, placing the stones and the wooden slats, making sure that everything was well done – the meticulous parts.”

Interconnectivity is the name of the game here: Stone steps by the pool lead to the basement which cuts into the land so the cinema room is in darkness. There are no windows, yet the area next to the cinema is able to look up to greenery through raised glass via an up-lit water feature.

Homes are Lucy’s passion, not only architecture, but interiors. What was the main inspiration for this residence? “We wanted something modern and tropical which took advantage of the weather so we could sit outside. We love greenery so glass was a significant feature.”

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Leading to the entertainment area; Geometric shapes dominate; Indonesian-style garden dining furniture



Lucy had worked with Fan before and was aware of what he could achieve. “He can conceptualise well,” she says. “When he saw this piece of land with the old house in the centre and the terrain, he knew exactly what to create. We were fortunate to have higher ground and a slope, so the basement was planned to be interconnecting. It all came about in this fluid way.”

The devil, as they say, is in the detail. The Ooi’s front door was constructed by three teams to create the aluminium element and timber ventilation, as well as the ironmongery facet. It features a combination lock custom-made in London. The dark timber outside is hardy to handle frequent rain showers. “It’s called ironwood and is very scarce, but my architect insisted upon it because of exposure to the elements,” says Lucy.

The Ooi’s kitchen indicates a love of cooking: A dry kitchen is on display for entertaining, while the wet kitchen for cooking is out of sight.

Downstairs corridors are used as something of a gallery. Painted yellow, they break up the white of the balance of the home and display Zimbabwean stone sculptures and a mixture of Australian, Japanese and Chinese art. Lucy used



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TOP:
Sitting room
RIGHT: A place
for music



to paint landscapes in oil as a hobby and enjoys painting, sculpture and buying art.

In the hallway leading to the sitting room proudly sit two polished dark timber chairs either side of a matching table and mirror. Lucy purchased them 20 years ago from the then Thai ambassador to Singapore before he moved. She is so fond of them, she says, "I make sure I find a place for them everywhere I move." The wall behind which they sit hides a secret drinks bar.

"We wanted something modern and tropical which took advantage of the weather so we could sit outside. We love greenery so glass was a significant feature"

TOP LEFT:

An outdoor seating area

TOP RIGHT:

Chest from the residence of the Thai ambassador 20 years ago

BELOW:

Zimbabwean stone sculpture; part of a set of two

The soft pinks of the double-aspect dining room are infused with a soft, natural light. Lucy redesigned the heavy, round dining table to make it bigger with wooden cladding and a removable glass top. As calm water trickles into a pond, silent koi display their orange shades to a backdrop of greens. ■

