

12 Homes of the Rich & Famous

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One of the island's older homes has proved the perfect space to showcase a plethora of family heirlooms and other collectibles. *Sonia Kolesnikov-Jessop* talks to the designer in residence





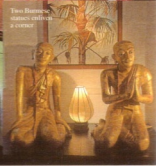
A dining room set with unusual table decoratives.



Designer Stefanie Hauger brings her artistic skills to this lovely home



Two Burmese statues enliven a corner



Like many Europeans who come to Singapore, designer Stefanie Hauger fell in love with the island's black and white houses. It took her 10 years before there was one she could call home, but she and her family are now happily ensconced in their own heritage residence. She found the 2,700-square-foot three-bedroom property (with a 1,000 square foot extension) amid the greenery of Bukit Timah.

"These old houses are so beautiful; I had seen many, going to my friends' houses, but we had to look for a long time before we found this one last year," says the German native who has been calling Singapore her home for more than a decade.

The house has provided Hauger with the perfect backdrop on which to unleash her artistic expertise and she has effortlessly mixed beautifully crafted pieces of Asian furniture, accumulated over the years – such as a Javanese four-poster bed in the bedroom and a tall Sumatra shop cabinet in the dining room – with many European heirlooms and a few contemporary touches from her decorative lighting shop, Vanilla Home. "I come from an artistic family. My mother is a painter, my father used to research for museums and was an avid collector, and my sister is an art historian," she explains.

The couple lived in an old shophouse in Chinatown for years, but the arrival of Sophie, now a two-year-old toddler, prompted them to look for a home with outdoor space, more light and fewer >>

Photography: Chester Commercial Photography



A plethora of faces
look down on to the
dining room




The office is actually
in an airy corridor

stairs. "Light is an important factor for me. I need a lot of daylight. It affects my mood and I really love the way the late afternoon sun shines through the trellises above the windows," says Hauger.

"That's why I don't have curtains, because I want to maximise the daylight. I find these windows so attractive and we have a stunning view of lush greenery, including pink bougainvillea, so there's no need to screen anything off."

The compact property is built into a slope so there is no real ground floor and all living areas are up on the first floor, which opens straight on to a garden with a large swimming pool surrounded by greenery. There is a wonderful open space between the living room and dining room and Hauger has also put the spaces linking the main living and dining rooms to the bedrooms to good use, by transforming small but airy corridors into an office space for a nursery and a small vanity room to get ready for a day's work or an evening out on the town.

The overall decorative theme is European antiques meet traditional Asia. "I've been travelling in Asia for quite a long time and I'm an incorrigible collector. I've also been in the furniture business for many years – and I've inherited many beautiful antiques from



**"Nothing should
be fighting for
attention: everything
should harmonise"**

my grandfather and great aunt," she explains. "I'm naturally drawn to antiques," she admits. Many of the small trinkets which are displayed throughout the home are from her grandfather's travels around Asia during the 1920s. "Almost all of the pieces here have stories. I don't want to own anything that doesn't mean anything. They have huge sentimental value for me. I also tend to buy things that are well-crafted and highly decorative – but nothing glitzy."

She admits that it was the pantry adjacent to the kitchen that clinched the decision to take the house because she has a lot of heirloom pieces, such as crystal and porcelain that she can now use regularly. "Without a room like this, everything would still be in boxes, a

“Almost all of the pieces here have stories. I don’t want to own anything that doesn’t mean anything”

real pity,” she laughs. The kitchen looks deceptively unmodernised – enamel pots and pans are carefully arranged on metal hooks and old 1940s posters emphasise the time-worn look – yet the home boasts the latest in electric cooking equipment.

For the living room, the designer used a background of neutral tones of black, oatmeal and white adding a few touches of colour wisely. Her decorative philosophy is “nothing should be fighting for attention: everything should harmonise. Nothing should be screaming, yet nothing should fade in the background either.” While many pieces are Asian in character, the lay-out of the living room remains European. “In a traditional Chinese room setting, furniture is often placed along the walls with the middle of the room empty. There can be huge gaps. It’s very different from what we have here,” she says, pointing to the two sofas facing each other in the middle of the living room, designed for entertaining and interaction.

Hauger’s love for Italy is also apparent with the use of reproductions of Renaissance masters’ drawings in the master bedroom and the corridor leading to it. “One of the disadvantages of this type of home is that it’s all windows. There are very few walls for our art collection – you really have to fight for hanging space,” she laughs. One of the few available walls in the dining room showcases a huge collage of Asian faces by local Indian artist Ketna Patel, which she had bought as a visual memory of Asia when she thought she would be leaving the region. The guest bedroom has a heritage feel with old European paintings, silver trinkets and an antique Chinese wedding dress bought in Hong Kong and now displayed on a mannequin. “Almost everything in here is a family heirloom: paintings of my forefathers, an oval painting of my great-aunt. It’s like a little time bubble.” ■



The old-world kitchen is equipped with modern appliances

