

The Referral Guide for SINGAPORE

April 2009

# expat **LIVING**

## **BEAUTIFUL HOMES**

European Flair  
Retro Appeal

**BOAT ASIA**  
at Keppel Bay

At Home with the  
**KIWI HIGH COMMISSIONER**

## **FAMILY OUTINGS**

Local Adventures  
Trekking Nepal with a Baby  
Beijing with the Boys

**FRENCH CUISINE**

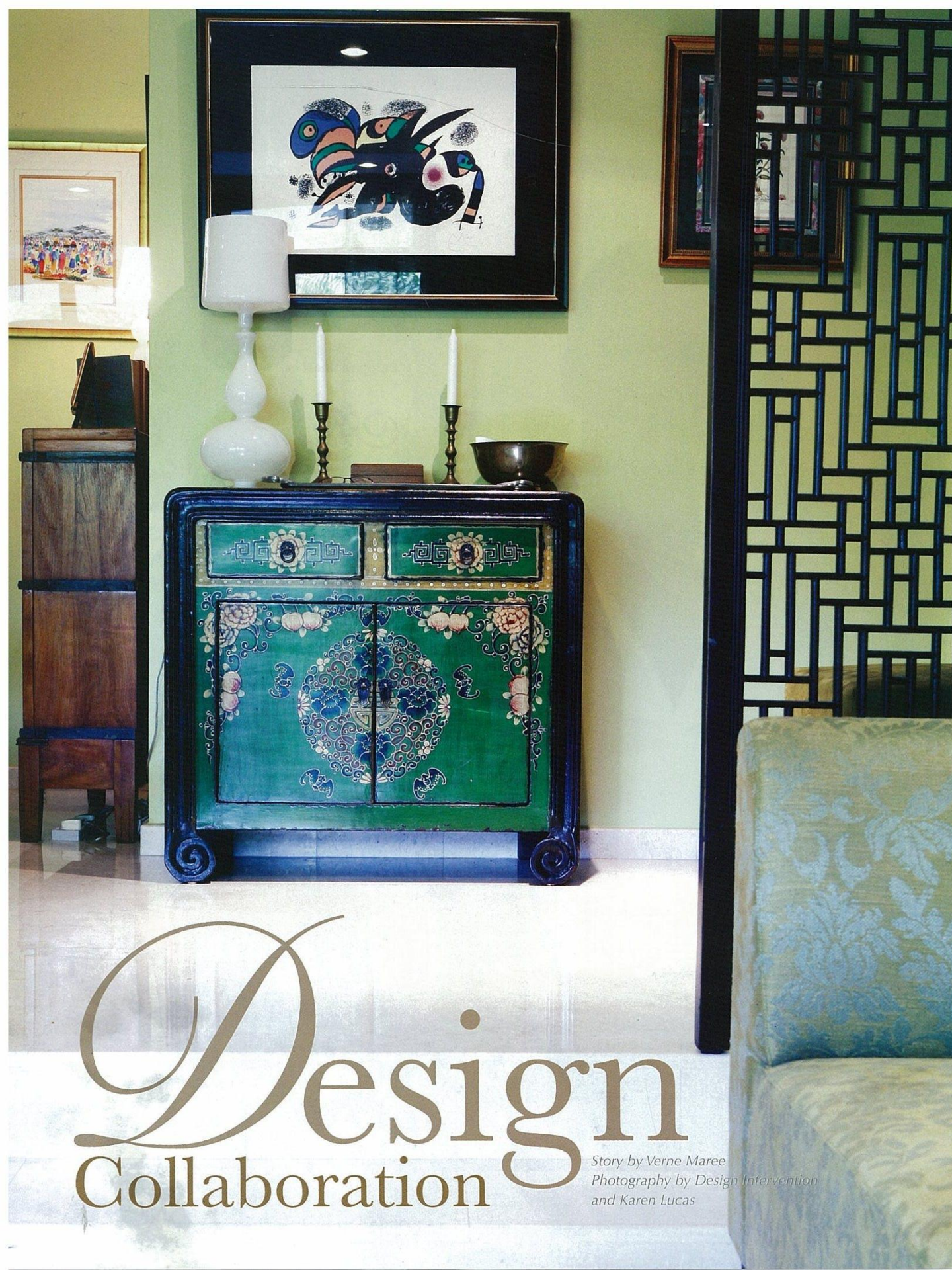
**BABY SHOWERS**

**WOMEN IN BUSINESS**

S\$5.80

**CHINA ROUNDUP • SHANGHAI • KASHGAR**





# Design

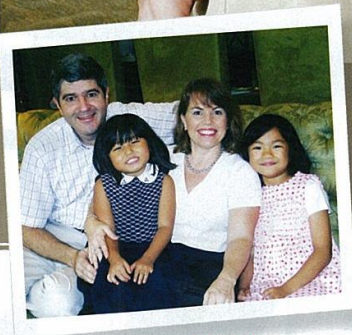
Collaboration

Story by Verne Maree  
Photography by Design Intervention  
and Karen Lucas





“ We wanted our home to reflect our life, which is a mosaic of places, people and events ”



Here's a family that works, cooks, eats and plays together. Both Alison and James Eyring, from Texas, have doctorate degrees in organisational psychology. They now live at Regency Park in Nathan Road with their daughters Susan (7) and Megan (4).

**EL:** What brought you to Singapore ten years ago?

**ALISON:** My job with Caltex. A year after we got here, I left Caltex and started Organisation Solutions – an organisational design, development and change consultancy. Our clients are mainly very large MNCs such as Shell, Cisco, and BHP Billiton. Apart from our staff here, we have a number of associates around the world and we deliver work globally. We've also done some local projects at the stock exchange and the

prime minister's office. At the end of 2007, James finally agreed to join me, after I'd been recruiting him like mad for six years, and it's been great.

**EL:** What is it like to spend so much time with each other?

**JAMES:** People were sceptical about us working together. Some of my friends said, "James, are you sure this is a good idea?" But it has actually enriched our relationship and our family life. We



Being nearby, it's perfect for us at the moment, especially as we like to do voluntary work there. The staff members are so family-oriented. They even encourage you to pop in to have lunch with your children.

**EL: Where have you lived while you've been in Singapore?**

**ALISON:** Our first place was an Emerald Hill shophouse, and the second an apartment in Emerald Garden in Club Street, the heart of Chinatown. My first office was in a shophouse, and I could walk to it. I love shophouses!

**JAMES:** When we bought our own place, we wanted something child-friendly and all on one level. Shophouse steps and indoor pools with goldfish don't go with children. Fortunately, it was the right time to buy.

**ALISON:** I loved Regency Park's big, semi-circular balconies, so I asked our extraordinarily patient estate agent – Iris Chua from HSR Property Consultants, who has helped us find all three of the homes we have had in Singapore – to see if one was for sale here. Having been built in the 1980s, Regency Park has spacious rooms and high ceilings. Outside there is lots of greenery, space for the children to play, and plenty of other kids for them to play with.

**EL: What changes did you make to this apartment?**

**JAMES:** We gutted it and redid the flooring. We also opened up the kitchen to the dining room – there's nothing worse than being stuck in the kitchen and cut off from the rest of the family.

**ALISON:** When the time came

to furnish the place, we made the mistake of going direct to a fabric shop and consulting the in-house designer. As a result, we ended up with fabrics that matched nicely, but a home that lacked integrity of design. Then we visited a friend who had received help from Wendy Smith from Design Intervention and liked what she had done for them, so we called her. Not only was she a good listener, but she suggested things we would never have thought of, presented us with many choices, and asked the right questions to help us decide what we wanted.

**EL: What was your brief to Wendy?**

**ALISON:** We wanted our home to reflect our life, which is a mosaic of places, people and events.





Most of our stuff was Western, and we wanted a mix of West and East. But as we had quite a few antique wooden pieces from my parents, we did not want our new furniture to look too modern. We feel that the lounge and dining room furniture, which was all custom-made by Barossa, complements our older pieces well. The dining table splits into two, which makes it very versatile, and our girls love sitting on the unusual bench that runs along one side of it.

**EL:** What would you call the colour of this upholstery? Green? Avocado?

**ALISON:** It's a Wendy colour! I had a completely different shade in mind, but this one is better. I wouldn't have chosen the various hues of blue and green for the walls, either, yet they work. And though the high-backed dining chairs are perhaps not something we would have picked out, we like them. What's more, Wendy dug around our closets to find bits and pieces from our past that we had not thought of displaying.

**JAMES:** She was also clever in the way she moved and reframed pictures to display them better. Our two Kenyan paintings, which had been hidden in the hall, were brought out into the dining room. She created a little corner for some ceramic ware that we had bought in Italy eighteen years ago and put away in a closet, and she mounted some shields and swords that had been living under the bed.

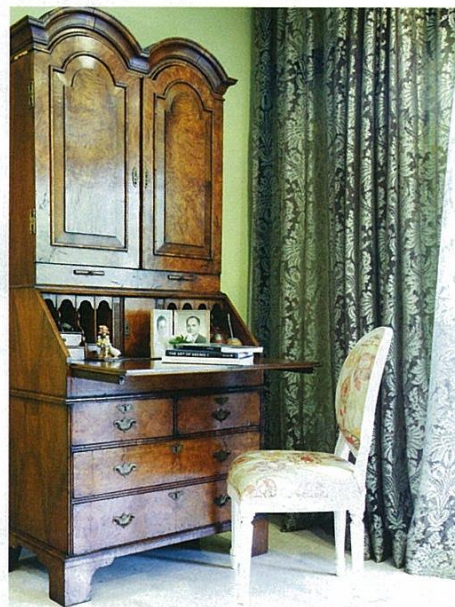


**EL:** The den has a lovely, welcoming feeling, doesn't it?

**ALISON:** Yes, we love this room. The décor revolves around the painting – again reframed by Wendy – which we bought a while ago at HaKaren Gallery. The cushions pick up the floral and jungle theme, and the carpet, which used to be in the living room, pulls the look together. And on the side wall is a hodgepodge of things centred around this poster of the South Pacific that I have had forever.

**EL:** Tell me about the master bedroom.

**JAMES:** We wanted something different here, yet it had to blend in with the rest of our home. This carpet used to be in the living room. We picked out colours from it to bring out in the bedcover and cushions. Barossa custom-made the bed. Alison's writing desk in the corner is an 1860s Mexican antique, and the picture above the bed, called *After the Rain*, was the first one we ever bought together, when we were grad students in Houston. Wendy has given it a new lease on life. Wendy's design process is similar to what we do in our own business: we find out the client's intent, then we work closely with them to help them achieve it. As organisational psychologists, we understand that it sometimes takes a new, fresh eye to see potential for changes and improvements.





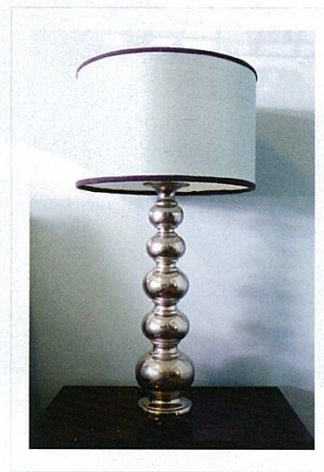


have a “sunset to sunrise” rule – no talking about work after sunset or before sunrise – and every Thursday night is date night, when we go out to dinner without our children.

**EL:** Tell us about the children and the adoption process.

**ALISON:** Susan and Megan were both born in China. Susan is from Fujian province and Megan from Hubei province. International adoption is never easy. The paperwork is endless and the waiting time is long, especially for US citizens. But it’s absolutely worth the wait.

**JAMES:** Susan’s in first grade at OFS (Overseas Family School), and Megan’s in K1. They love it, and the teachers are great.




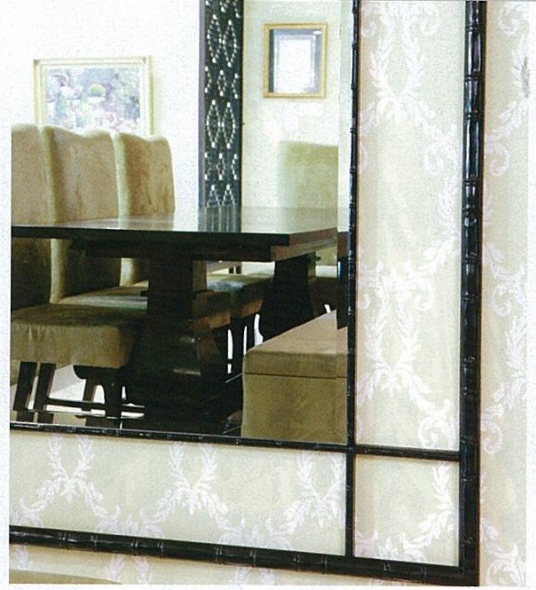


**EL:** What do you do in your spare time?

**JAMES:** Our first activity is being a family, and having your own business lets you be more flexible than you would otherwise be. I love to cook. For me, heaven is spending a Saturday afternoon with the girls in the kitchen, then eating our meal outside on the balcony as a family. Apart from the Cartoon Network, we mainly watch the Asian Food Channel. That gives you some idea!

**ALISON:** I do triathlons. Once I ran a 100-kilometre race, but training for it was just too demanding in various ways, so now I do mostly triathlons. My bike used to live on the front balcony, but Wendy didn't like it being there, so we moved it to the back. In the decade we've been here, the emphasis on sport and outdoor activities has grown tremendously. There are some wonderfully long, natural trails, for example a 36-kilometre route from MacRitchie Reservoir to the zoo and back.

**JAMES:** We always tell people they have to get out and discover what this place has to offer. Sungei Buloh and MacRitchie are two of our favourites. In Susan's Girl Scout group, the girls can earn a patch for getting to know Singapore. I think all newcomers should work towards this kind of patch. 





RECOMMENDATIONS

Barossa Furnishings  
Block 13, #01-03B Dempsey Road  
6471 2042

Da Paolo Il Jardino, Italian restaurant in  
the Botanic Gardens  
501 Bukit Timah Road  
#01-05 Cluny Court  
6463 9628

Design Intervention  
75E Loewen Gardens  
Tanglin Village  
6468 1942  
[www.designintervention.com.sg](http://www.designintervention.com.sg)

HaKareh Gallery  
Tanglin Shopping Centre #02-43  
6733 3382  
[www.hakareh.com](http://www.hakareh.com)

Iris Chua, estate agent  
9792 3773

Keyaki at the Pan Pacific Hotel,  
for high-end teppanyaki  
6336 8111

Mustapha's Department Store  
320 Serangoon Road

Organisation Solutions – Architects for  
Growth  
Dr Alison Eyring  
6557 0914  
[www.organisationsolutions.com](http://www.organisationsolutions.com)

Overseas Family School  
25F Paterson Road  
6738 0211  
[www.ofs.edu.sg](http://www.ofs.edu.sg)

The Butcher House  
464 River Valley Road  
6887 3464  
[www.butcherhouse.com.sg](http://www.butcherhouse.com.sg)

Vintage India, Dempsey,  
for high-end North Indian cuisine.  
#01-21 Dempsey Hill  
6471 3100

The Wine Company @ Dempsey, a bar  
specialising in South African wines.  
Block 14-3 Dempsey Road  
6479 9341

Wisma Atria Food Republic food court,  
for low-end teppanyaki  
Level 4

