

Eclectic elegance

Interior designer Wendy Smith opens her louvered doors for an exclusive LUX Living photo shoot and shows us how a practised eye and a good dose of individuality make for a truly stylish home.

BY CANDICE CHAN



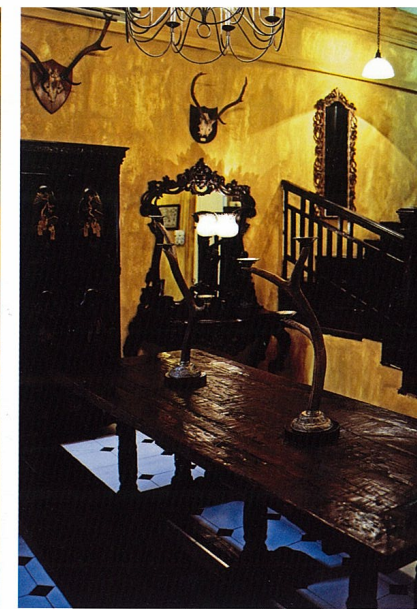
DECADENT LIVING: AFRICAN ART IS PAIRED WITH ROMANESQUE STRUCTURES AND SET AGAINST CONTEMPORARY FURNITURE TO ACHIEVE A LOOK THAT IS UNIQUE AND FULL OF CHARACTER



“Always add splashes of colour. It’s the fuss-free way of decorating your home and changing the look of your house”



“Antique furniture help offset the sharpness in modern furniture. Even if it’s just one piece, it can transform the look of your entire room. Approach with caution and confidence because if you’re nervous, it shows in your composition”



I was a classic case of love at first sight. Nine years ago I fled the flight and raw from London’s harrowing city life, and Wendy Smith set her eyes on a two-storey heritage shophouse located in one of Singapore’s prime locations. “I walked past the house one night – it had been empty for five years with no kitchen nor did it have a bathroom – and I told my husband that it was the one!” she recounted of that evening. Today, together with their frisky pups, the couple is ready to call Singapore home as they have purchased two restored shophouses off East Coast Road (they are currently renting). This fashion designer turned interior decorator holds a deep affection for these vestiges of the older Singapore – a sentiment that can almost be described as maternal: “It’s such a shame that so many of them are getting knocked down. That’s why I’m quite keen on buying these conservation houses because at least it feels like I can protect them”.

Perhaps this explains her love for antique and period pieces that she tastefully places around the house. Wendy’s favourite is a retro swivel office chair from the 1920s that she bought from Logran’s at Pasir Panjang. Originally clad in leather that has been battered with age, Wendy had the chair re-upholstered in a dark fabric that she purchased from South Africa. The chair is placed next to another piece that she treasures – a giant urn she bought at a shop along Dempsey Road. “I’ve always wanted one since I was a little girl and I found one at a store that was closing down. I had my name on it”, she said with a mischievous smile.



"It's awful to live in a house that does not feel like it belongs to you because then it becomes like a museum or shop. Your house needs to echo some of your personality"



The pairing of a Romanesque urn next to a funky animal print is just one example that reflects the style of the lady of the house – unusual yet complementary, like irregularly shaped pieces magically fit as a whole. "I don't like a design that uses or repeats a theme because I think that becomes repetitive and bland. I like a fusion of designs". In the living room alone, a high Baroque-style sofa is placed under a large painting of African origin. On the opposite wall, nude sketches (by the lady herself) decorate the whitewashed walls and, next to them, two urns and two warthog skulls sit on an Asian-style, ornately carved console table.

The house is a mesh of cultures and a blend of periods; a treasure trove where you never know quite what to expect in all the rooms, the element of style and grandeur is maintained in every wall or nook, there is a good balance of masculine and femininity. Smith explained, "Our home is like an accumulation of our personality and lifestyle". She gestured at various art pieces around the room and added, "Many are pieces that I have collected from our travels. This home is like a reflection of the lives we lead".

BEDROOM MAGIC: A FOUR POSTER BED FROM ITALY IS THE FOCUS OF THE BEDROOM. IN THE CORNER, AN OLD WOODEN BIRDCAGE SERVES AS A COSY HIDEOUT FOR HER TV.



Whether it's the map murals that were lovingly handpicked and displayed in the dining area, or a computer-enhanced picture of Rembrandt their affectionate King Charles Cavalier spaniel, the couple discusses the décor of their home "at length (and) always". According to Wendy, her husband Nishan played just as big a part in the aesthetics of their home. "Men are just as adventurous as women when it comes to interiors...sometimes they find it hard to verbalise what they want and maybe that is why they have the label of 'boring' or 'unadventurous' tagged on them". When we stepped into her boudoir, she took the chance to illustrate her point by showing off some of her husband's favourite shirts (all from Etro and Paul Smith). "Does it look like my husband is a man afraid of colour? No!" she laughed and cheekily showed me one last item from their shared white antique closet – a pair of purple suede loafers.

MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM: "I LOVE TAKING BATHS – MY BATHROOM IS LIKE THE GARDEN OF EDEN AND IT IS MY PERSONAL PARADISE – A CLAWFOOT BATHTUB SITS AMONGST SMOOTH WIDE PEBBLES. FAIRY FIGURINES PLAY HIDE AND SEEK BEHIND CLAY VASES AND FLOWER WREATHS WHILE TALL WHITE CANDLES ON WROUGHT METAL CANDLE HOLDERS CREATE THE PERFECT AMBIENCE FOR A RELAXING BATH."

