

SIMPLE MANTRA

LESS IS MORE FOR THIS APARTMENT
IN SURIA STONOR. THE OWNERS SAY
IT IS THE LOOK OF STEALTH WEALTH

Located within the prestigious KLCC enclave, one would expect an apartment which pulls out the stops in terms of glitz and glamour but, instead, the owners opted for a subtle appeal which is less ostentatious flamboyance and more quiet elegance. The expatriate owners who are of cosmopolitan provenance were enticed by the idea of the apartment as a retirement home under the MM2H (Malaysia My Second Home) programme after they were introduced to the property at a road show in Hong Kong. And they liked the city enough after spending a weekend in KL to take the plunge.

The couple received the keys to their apartment while they were still living in Hong Kong in August 2008. And the lady owner Min Ji appointed architect Kiwa Matsushita who had attended high school with her in the US to design the interiors. Kiwa had done some impressive institutional buildings through Maki Associates and DP Architects but was pregnant at the time so she could not travel out of Tokyo. So it was left to Min Ji to hire a local contractor. Armed with Kiwa's drawings, she flew to KL once a month to supervise the contractors.

"Funny thing is, we did the whole project over Skype. Kiwa was in Tokyo and I was in HK. The contractor had to take pictures of the completed works and post them on Google Pictures as the project progressed," she reminisces. Everything went smoothly between Kiwa and Min Ji but not so with the contractor who would go quiet whenever things went awry. So Min Ji ended up flying in more often than scheduled, and the budget grew to triple the initial estimate. But the couple finally moved in on February 2009.

Amid the sea of white, the line of sight is drawn irresistibly to Min Ji's mysterious portrait of her husband



NO FRILLS YET UTTERLY LUXE,
THE TRICK IS CONTRASTING
TEXTURES IN A CLASSIC
MONOCHROMATIC PALETTE



STRETCHED HORIZONTALLY
RATHER THAN VERTICALLY,
THE LIVING AND DINING AREAS
ARE A CRISP COMPOSITION OF
LOW SLUNG FURNITURE

Every square inch of the three-bedroom, apartment is meticulously designed. "We wanted to make functionality into an art form. The proportions and details are supposed to be the surprising elements," explains Min Ji. This is why the skirting along the edges of the wall rises up to a height of three metres; concealing closets for the CD cabinets and even a wine fridge. These expanses of white stretch as far as the eye can see. Min Ji explains that white was chosen to be the non-colour so as to accentuate the proportions and textures.

"If you think of black as a combination of all the colours of the rainbow, I feel that white is the combination of all shades. For example, when the light changes throughout the day, the white surface reflects that mood of the day like an artist's canvas," she says.



Min Ji admits however that white was an unusual choice because she normally hates it. "If not done right, it can look very cheap. But what can be more chic than the white piano in the living room even if it's a bit of a cliché," she says pointing to the piano finish which is echoed in the cabinetry, shiny marble floor and kitchen surfaces.

Harmonious colours and luxurious materials lull the eye and please the senses but it is the interesting shapes and surprising touches like the glass mosaic bar, which keep the interior interesting

Adding a bit of bling to the immaculate backdrop are the swatches of walls covered with shimmering glass mosaics that spring surprises in the dry kitchen counter, the powder rooms, and the master bathroom. "For the bathrooms, we wanted something entirely different and startling. Especially when you close the door, you would not imagine the outside world would all be white," she enthuses. Since the master bath is only separated by the glass sliding door, the tiles also work to separate the zones and give the feeling of a more enclosed area. The mosaics also transform the unadorned column by the entrance into something unique. "We chose iridescence mosaics so that the bar would look luminous at night," she concludes.

FLAIR

Min Ji filled the apartment with modern 20th century design classics like Barcelona chairs, an Arco lamp and an Eames lounger. She didn't wait till the contractor put in the finishing touches as she has a very keen sense of space and visualisation skills. "This is not the first home I had to decorate. I had lots of practice. I always love the same thing - classic chic. And it's always about the harmony of the furniture, fixtures, and everything else."

A graduate of the Parsons School of Design, Min Ji's artistic bent is abundantly manifested throughout the apartment. She painted the arresting contemporary artworks herself after six months of staying in the apartment. "I actually do this in all the homes we own. When we get the keys, we do most of the fittings. Then we spend more time in it to bring out the beauty of each apartment. For us, our home is our temple or museum. We want to make every square inch into something unique and special," she expounds.

As fate would have it, after spending only a year in KL, the couple has upped sticks to Singapore. The property has been put on the market fully furnished and has been listed under Zerin Properties and even appeared in the New York Times. No doubt it's just a matter of time before someone who appreciates Min Ji's simplified forms falls in love with the place. Min Ji puts it best: "In modern society, people do not aspire to flaunt their wealth by over-decorating their home with glitzy objects and chandeliers. In other words, this is how many rich people live today." **R**



SHADES OF CHOCOLATE, CARAMEL AND VANILLA IN CONTRASTING TEXTURES MAKE THE DELICIOUSLY COSY BEDROOM GOOD ENOUGH TO EAT