

Article : The Real Deal

Photography Tan Jian Xiong Text Ninart Lui

Ever returned home from your weekend Bali getaway only to immediately wish you could be transported back to those tranquil surroundings you left merely hours ago? Well, we did too - which explains the burgeoning trend of Balinese-themed decor, which taps into the discerning homeowner's desire to create a hideaway reminiscent of the charming villas found in the tropical Indonesian island of Bali.



Above: From intricate hand-carved railing to meticulously sourced furnishings, the surprising details carried out marks this showhouse unique above the rest.

For at least one enterprising individual, this passion for Indonesian-inspired architecture and interior design has turned into a lucrative business. Brian Kow is the founder of Nic & Wes Builders Pte Ltd, a small outfit specialising in the transformation of old, decrepit accommodation into modern yet stylish Balinese-themed homes. He is also part of the dynamic duo that owns dhotshop, a home furnishings store in Siglap whose biggest draw is its affordably-priced yet authentic Balinese furniture (the other half of the dynamic duo being Brian's lovely wife, Jude).



Upon entering the house, one's visuals are immediately cued to the middle partition which segregates the living area from the dining area on the first floor. Brian and his capable team had knocked down a part of the original structure to build an airwell in the middle that opened up at the top to allow an abundance of sunlight to stream in, resulting an airy, well-lit effect throughout the entire floor. As the weather may be uncooperative at times, opaque, automatic shutters had been installed as well that can be activated at the first hint of rain. A large, dramatic hand-textured wall frames the airwell, which ends in a tranquil and soothing water feature at the bottom, where the constant trickling of water had been fine-tuned so that it relaxes the aural senses but does not overwhelm. The cosy little courtyard area comprising of the airwell and water feature segregates the living area from the dining area through a slightly raised deck, which results in split levels and creates an interesting and unexpected break in the flow of vision.

Even the most undiscerning viewer will quickly observe that it is the unexpected but pleasantly surprising painstaking eye for detail that marks this showhouse as unique from the rest. Meticulously sourced from Indonesia, the furnishings carry out the Balinese theme of the place. Whether it's the handcrafted carvings that double up as intricate showpieces, the beautiful and bold paintings that pepper the rooms, the woody furniture where weary homeowners can sink their tired bodies in and fall straight into a idyllic reverie, the old-fashioned handles that adorn the collapsible screen door leading to the bathroom on the first floor, it's easy to tell the sheer amount of pride and passion that goes into ensuring that every nook and cranny of the house is perfect. Striking a balance between rustic Balinese charm and the sleek, modern lines favored by city dwellers, the house is a harmonious conglomerate of various influences pulled together to create a pleasing, livable whole.



IDEAS WE LOVE.
SIGHT We love the quirky attention to detail that permeates the house. In the bathrooms alone, bamboo ladders double up as towel racks, specially-imported soap dishes mask generic soap dispensers, and even earthenware has been creatively converted into a sink for the outdoor bathroom by the dynamic duo. Elsewhere, intricate carving and the liberal use of candles and flowers to jazz up the pristine sheets and linens of the bedrooms create an unusual, otherworldly effect.



IDEAS WE LOVE.
SPACE Glass partitions and the knocking down of original walls create an unobstructed line of vision, while cleverly-



IDEAS WE LOVE.
SENSE Interesting contrasts between the timber woods and the stones predominant in the furnishings create many conversational topics and are



placed partitions allow a sense of privacy. With the airy surroundings, the place can afford to be cooled by fans alone instead of incurring hefty bills for air-conditioning which is usually a must for most houses.



genuinely authentic when it comes to recreating that resort feel. Intricate hand textured walls, as well as meticulously-carved tiles that are distributed all over and serve as ornate showpieces add to the overall charm of the place.



Lest you may be lulled into thinking the magic stops here, the intricate hand-carved railing to the stairway leading upstairs immediately promises you otherwise. The second floor houses the bedrooms of the house, with the master bedroom set slightly apart from the rest, creating a well-deserved sense of privacy for the homeowners who need some space away from their kids - yet are safe in the assurance that they are literally a stone's throw away. The master bedroom is a lush affair, with the resort theme starkly marking out a sanctuary for the lucky couple. The luxurious master bedroom bathroom is truly exceptional - with a rainforest shower head attached next to a custom-cast stone bathtub primed for indulgent Sunday afternoon soaks. This looks out into the airwell, which may be seen from the other side of the floor through a small balcony in one of the other bedrooms as well.

Again, it may be easy to get caught up in the ultra-comfortable bedrooms as well - but why stop here when the top floor beckons with both its indoor and outdoor entertainment and relaxation facilities primed for both intimate tete-a-tetes and large, social gatherings alike. Leading out into a sizeable open-air expanse, the top deck of the restored showhouse easily holds a dining area, complete with dining table and a bbq pit. Friends and family alike have an option of either milling about outdoors in al fresco style, or gathering in the more intimate indoors lounge, which holds its own with airy, well-lit surroundings coupled with cosy furnishings which makes it perfect for a lazy evening of drinks and dining.



IDEAS WE LOVE.

SHOWER

Carrying on with the painstaking eye for detail theme in the house, the shower heads are truly exceptional - each one completely different yet tying in with the entire resort theme of the place. For example, the master bedroom bathroom holds a rainforest shower head whereas the outdoor bathroom has an earthy shower head hewn from lava stone.



IDEAS WE LOVE.

SOUND

Music fills the house, enabled by the construction of a false ceiling that allows easy installing of wires to transport music to every corner of the house - perfect for entertaining purposes. This is especially great for HDB owners who need not invest in a hefty-priced surround sound system.

IDEAS WE LOVE.

SUN

We love how natural sunlight floods the house with the ingenious construction of the airwell and the bathroom - minimal lighting involved.

With an abundance of Balinese-themed houses on the market, it is nevertheless difficult to find something close to authentic as such offers are more likely to be watered-down interpretations of the real things, either because of the perceived expenses involved or the lack of adequate time to focus on the level of detail required to achieve that degree of authenticity. Yet true Balinese charm may be captured in the little things - as this lovingly-restored property has shown, all you need is passion and pride - with that, even the seemingly unimaginable may prove achievable.

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**A completed project by
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