



Three's not a crowd

With three generations living under the same roof, this three-storey home ensconced in Bukit Timah is proof that differing tastes and preference can come together cohesively, discovers LYDIANNE YAP

Photography EDWARD HENDRICKS
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A mirror on the ceiling of the garage opens up the space, creating the illusion of height. The indoor area doubles as an extension of the living room to accommodate spillover guests during large family gatherings

Opposite page: In the living room, folding glass panels open to reveal an indoor garage, where Mr Yong parks one of his supercars. A large aquarium dominates the side of the living room that leads into the dry kitchen



You know you've stepped into the home of a petrolhead when the shuttered main gate slides open to reveal cars... and more cars. An expanse of asphalt stretches in front of the family porch where one normally expects a garden patch, and the entire space (that can apparently fit up to 15 or 16 cars) is peppered with everything from high-powered supercars to family-friendly SUVs.

"Actually, it did use to be a garden," reveals homeowner Mr Yong, with a chuckle. "But when we started to redo the house three years ago, I insisted on the garden being pushed back for more parking space," he adds, pointing out that his passion for cars made it a necessity — and the fact that 10 people live under this roof. However, noting his parents' fondness for nature, the elder of two sons could not remove the garden completely and has it running around the side and back of the home instead.

Compromise, it appears, is the main theme running throughout this house. It is essential — owing to the sheer number of people living in it — yet terribly difficult to achieve. "It was a very big challenge doing up this place and putting everyone's needs and wants together," says his wife, Mrs Yong, a design enthusiast who undertook the project herself. "It was like mission impossible," she says with a laugh. Which may explain why, even after three long years of renovation, the

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Yong house is still not complete. When we meet, the pool in the backyard is still being fitted (owing to unfavourable weather conditions over the past few months), although the family had moved back in late last year.

Having served as the Yong family home for 38 years, the house was completely gutted and rebuilt from the ground up in 2013. There were also new additions to the family tree and the Yongs thought it best to revamp the entire house to accommodate the next generation. Now, the home is segmented into distinct areas for its occupants. While the first floor is for common use, the second houses Mr Yong's parents, as well as his own family unit (consisting of Mrs Yong and their two children). The third caters to Mr Yong's younger brother and his wife. "Interestingly, the decor

scheme we used for each floor gets warmer as it goes higher," says Mrs Yong, noting that it wasn't particularly her intention at first. "And the top level — the roof — is literally the warmest due to the solar panels," she adds in jest. The many inhabitants means the house is only partially powered by solar energy.

While the first floor may seem like any other airy common area at first, walking further into the living room reveals a set of folding glass doors that opens up to a garage of sorts. One of Mr Yong's cars is usually parked there at any one point in time. "My husband basically told the architect he wanted his

Half of the Yong's master suite is devoted to boys toys, from gaming consoles to prized collectible figurines



“At the end of the day...it is best to build something that everyone can grow into”



car parked inside the house. And this is the result,” Mrs Yong says. Besides lending a strong focal point to the living room (who wouldn’t notice a gleaming red Ferrari?), having an indoor garage is only practical. According to Mr Yong, the delicate paintwork of these vehicles tend to get damaged under direct sunlight in the long run.

To integrate this parking space into the living area and unify the aesthetic, Mrs Yong made sure to add red accents. This includes bar stools and cabinetry in the dry kitchen, which she jokingly describes as the “security post” of the home. While she initially opposed the idea of a dry kitchen, stating that there was no need for one, Mrs Yong relented and had one installed on account of her daughter’s baking hobby.

“Surprisingly, this is now the gathering place of the family, instead of the living or dining room,” says the mother of two. “My husband comes home and sits here for a drink; my kids look for me here when they get home; my in-laws lounge around

and watch while my daughter bakes,” she says.

A glass door separates this space from the wet kitchen, where the more intensive cooking takes place. Inside, two different sets of stoves have been installed to accommodate the large family. “Previously, there weren’t enough stoves to go around,” says Mrs Yong. While one is of the traditional gas variety, the other is powered by electric induction. Her rationale for this is practical: Induction stoves do not use an open flame, hence safer for boiling soups over prolonged periods. However, the gas stove is still essential for fry-ups, as it gives the food a very different flavour.

Kitchens and their purposes are very important to the Yongs. So much so that there are kitchenettes on the second and third storeys too — each catering to the occupants of the respective floor. “We didn’t have this so it was quite inconvenient to have to go all the way downstairs just to get a drink,” explains Mrs Yong. “This set-up is much better for the kids as well.” The



landing of the second floor opens into the study and kitchenette. The former is also where her children have tuition.

The star on the second level, is of course, the Yongs’ master bedroom. If the huge swivelling television panel in the centre of the room doesn’t capture attention, then the toy collectibles encased in a glass display on the far side of the wall will. Describing her husband as a “man of many interests”, Mrs Yong explains that the room was designed with his various pursuits in mind. While half the space is allocated to the bed and other furnishings, the other is taken up by a huge round table that looks as if straight out of a sci-fi movie set. White and sleek with strong architectural curves, it is usually littered with Mr Yong’s “toys”, including game consoles, computers, cameras and fine mechanical watches. The concept of the table, Mrs Yong shares, started out as a joke. “I was telling [the architect] that my husband has so much stuff, I should probably get him a round table and sit him in the middle. Something like placing him in the centre of a donut. That way he can have all his things around him,” she recalls with a laugh. After the words left her lips, however, she began to think that it wasn’t a bad idea at all.

Besides his penchant for electronic gadgets, Mr Yong is also an avid toy collector — as evidenced by his expansive wall of toy collectibles. This is, however, only a small portion of what he owns. The rest are in the basement, reveals Mrs Yong. “This family has a lot of stuff,” she says wryly. Hence, maximising storage space was of utmost importance for her. “I think I literally made full use of the space available, from floor to

The main entrance to the home comprises a series of glass panels that open into the garden and car park. Cream furniture helps balance the strong red hues in the indoor garage and dry kitchen

Opposite page: A swivelling TV panel demarcates the rest and play areas in the master bedroom

ceiling,” she says with a laugh.

Located to the side is a walk-in wardrobe they both share, and a bathroom clad entirely in travertine — Mrs Yong’s favourite finish. “I was inspired by the hotels and resorts we visited on our travels,” she elucidates. The master bathrooms in the house are all distinctly different, based on the tastes and preferences of users. Only the bathrooms in the children’s rooms and common areas are kept neutral.

Glass doors at the end of the room swing open to a balcony that runs across to her children’s room. “This allows me to keep an eye on them,” she says. “I can walk over anytime.” Her parents-in-law occupy the room on the other end of the second floor, which because of their passion for nature, offers a view of the garden and swimming pool.

Home to the younger Yong son and his wife, the third floor is warm and cosy albeit with minimal fittings for now. Apart from the main living area and master bedroom, the other two rooms are still being worked on. Mrs Yong explains that the level was designed with the possibility of expanding the family unit. “At the end of the day, my parents-in-law would like the whole family to stay together, so it is best to build something that everyone can grow into,” she says.

RESIDENCE

Clockwise from top right: The monochrome palette of the dining room offers a balanced contrast against the bright hues in the dry kitchen; A koi pond and water feature sit just outside the living room for a touch of tranquility; To cater to his nature-loving parents, a garden runs along the side and back of the house

