

HOMES

Inside Sheng Siong co-founder Lim Hock Leng's 33,700 sq ft family home

by GRACE MA 



Inspired by Chinese courtyard houses, the Singapore businessman built a multigenerational home that embraces family, heritage and nature.

When entrepreneur Lim Hock Leng was looking for a home for his multigenerational family, he wanted one that embraced nature and history. The Sheng Siong co-founder viewed over 20 houses, but it was only when he stood in the century-old conserved colonial bungalow of his current 33,700 sq ft property did he feel a sense of affinity.

“When I saw the property, there was only an old building that took up a small space,” said Lim, referring to the bungalow. “But the land was huge. I went up to the second floor and looked at the view. It just felt so comfortable.”



The architects preserved the green character of the site by transforming the new bungalow extension into a series of green terraces. (Photo: Threesixzero Productions)

WATCH> FOR THIS MULTIGENERATIONAL FAMILY, HOME IS AN OVAL-SHAPED GOOD CLASS BUNGALOW

A consultation with a fengshui master also confirmed his decision: He was assured that the site, which was shaped like a treasure bowl, was a good place to build a house.

So Lim approached Tay Yan Ling and Pan Yi Cheng, principals from Ta.Le Architects and Type0 Architecture, respectively, to design a new extension to blend in with the existing bungalow.



The colonial bungalow is nearly a century old, and has conservation status. (Photo: Threesixzero Productions)

They proposed preserving the green character of the site and transforming the new bungalow extension into a series of green terraces.

Pan said, “The entire idea was for the new extension to disappear into the landscape. Rather than it being changed, it has been reinforced, especially with the interior design.”

Inspired by Chinese courtyard houses, the Singapore businessman built a multigenerational home that embraces family, heritage and nature. Take a house tour in this video.

WATCH> LIKE AN ART GALLERY: A SINGAPORE HOME THAT EVEN HAS ITS OWN POTTERY STUDIO

Pan describes the style of the project as “contemporaneous”, where the new extension, conserved bungalow and their natural environment blend seamlessly together at the same time.

Similar colours, textures and materials were used to create a relationship between the new building and the old. The paint layers covering the second floor of the conserved building were ground down to reveal the beautiful red tones of the original brick layer. In the lounge area on the ground floor, new grilles were designed in a fan shape to match the original floral-patterned ones. Antique finishings were added and the roof was restored to its former glory.



In the lounge area on the ground floor, new grilles were designed in a fan shape to match the original floral-patterned ones. (Photo: Threesixzero Productions)



The roof was restored to its former glory. (Photo: Threesixzero Productions)

He explained, “We took cues from the colonial architecture of the heritage building to give the same flavour to this design within the living space.”

Heritage also abounds in the new extension. Lim was taken by the courtyard houses he visited during his purchasing trips to China, and asked the architects to build a modern version of the traditional quadrangle-style residence known as *siheyuan*.



Lim asked the architects to build a modern version of the traditional Chinese quadrangle-style residence known as siheyuan. (Photo: Threesixzero Productions)



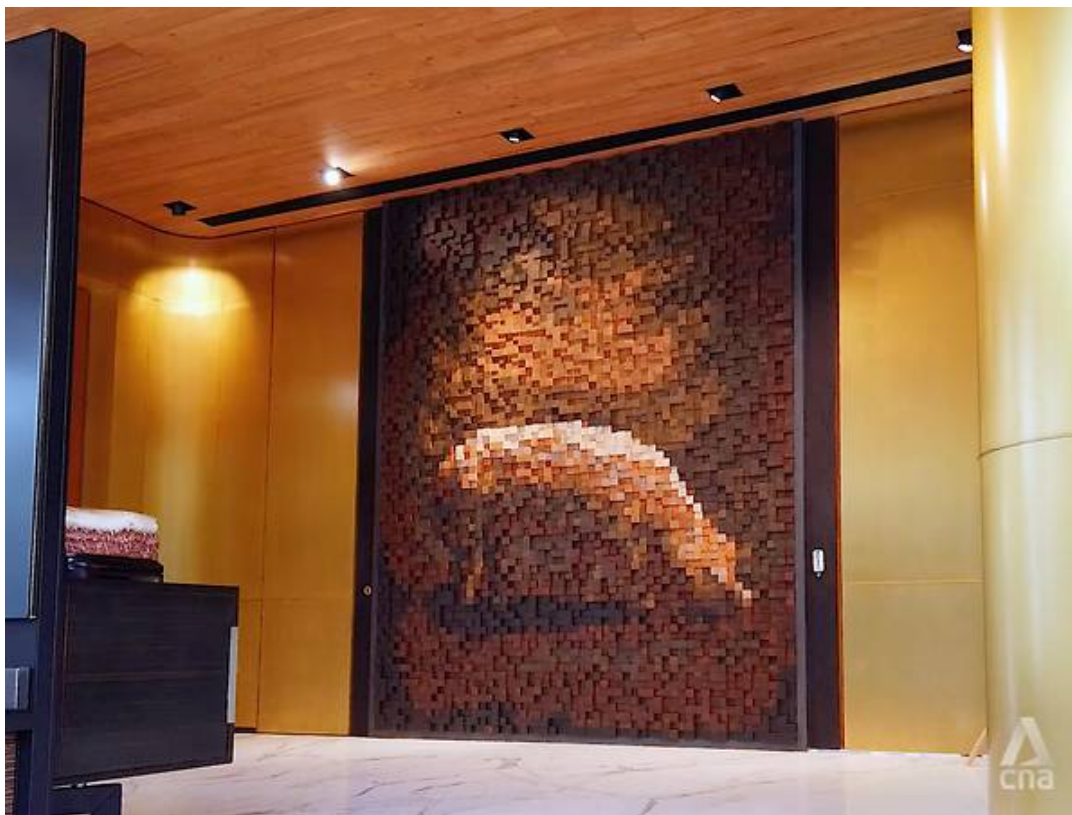
The family's main living area. (Photo: Threesixzero Productions)

The house has two courtyards punctuated by air wells, of which one is the main family gathering area. There are quarters for Lim's children and parents, each designed to their individual styles and needs while serving as standalone apartments with separate living and private areas. Everyone has their privacy but the entire family comes together for meals at the main dining hall.



There are quarters for Lim's children and parents, each designed to their individual styles and needs while serving as standalone apartments with separate living and private areas. (Photo: Threesixzero Productions)

The design and fittings were made to pay homage to Lim's familial and cultural heritage. The handles on the foyer door form the family name "Lin" in Mandarin, and there is an art relief using nearly 4,500 blocks of timber in eight different shades to commemorate the family's humble background in pig farming.

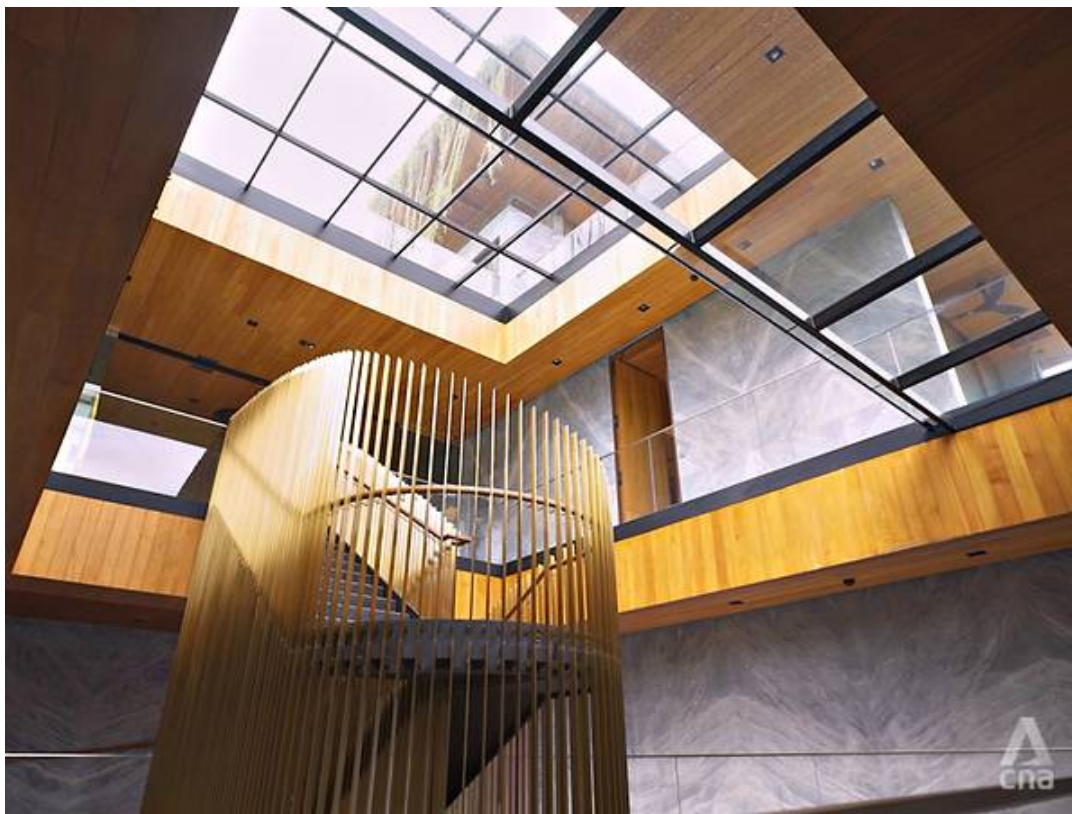


There is an art relief using nearly 4,500 blocks of timber in eight different shades to commemorate the family's humble background in pig farming. (Photo: Threesixzero Productions)

Lim's love for nature and avid interest in stones is also reflected in the house decor. There is a prevalence of materials like elm, timber and teak. A statement light installation resembling myriad stalactites hangs in the main living room. At the water courtyard is one of the world's largest functional art installations – a spiral staircase comprising 139 brass-plated strips installed in sequence.



At the water courtyard is a spiral staircase comprising 139 brass-plated strips installed in sequence. (Photo: Threesixzero Productions)



The staircase is one of the world's largest functional art installations. (Photo: Threesixzero Productions)

In the master bedroom overlooking the expansive grounds behind the house, a granite with a bluish iridescent sheen is used as a feature element for some of the walls.

In the ensuite bathroom is a striking bookmatched marble feature wall with a symmetrical pattern of two hearts and a diamond. It is meaningful to his wife, said Lim, as it connotes a Chinese idiom of two persons having mutual rapport with each other.



In the master bathroom is a striking bookmatched marble feature wall with a symmetrical pattern of two hearts and a diamond. (Photo: Threesixzero Productions)

In this house designed to bring the family together in harmony and a shared sense of their heritage, the Lims have found fulfilment.

Lim said, “Heritage is important and so is history. This is part of our Chinese culture that has been passed down. The siheyuan is meant to have different generations living together so that we can take care of one another.”