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New life for an empty space

A mix of grand, antique and modern features gives this Singapore apartment a completely original look

Stark walls and a concrete floor – walking into a new premises can be a daunting experience. Where do you start?

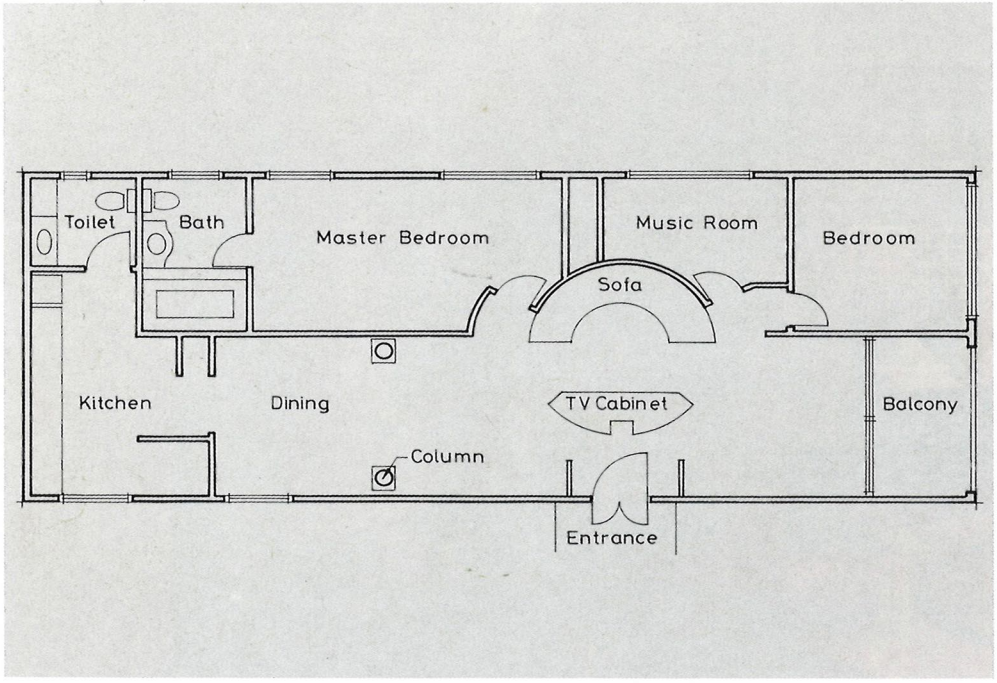
Interior designer Ben Teo was not intimidated by the empty shell of his new Bishan Rd apartment. To him, the bare space represented an opportunity to create a highly individual interior scheme.

"I wanted a fresh look for the apartment that didn't follow a definite theme," he says. "It had to be comfortable to live in and have interesting design features."

A mixture of ethnic, antique, high-tech and custom-made furnishings give the interior an eclectic look.

"My collection of artifacts also bring colour into the rooms and complement the overall interior architecture of the apartment," says Ben Teo.

Above, and right: This 140m² Singapore apartment has a central flooring feature in three types of marble. A TV cabinet and overhead lighting pelmet were custom-made to match the curves of the floor design. The division of spaces in the apartment is achieved by different flooring materials and ceiling heights.



Top: The master bedroom headboard and bedside tables are made in bird's eye maple with black lacquer trims. The headboard has a two-tone wavy design. Owner and interior designer Ben Teo upholstered the armchair to match the ethnic patterns of the bedcover. Red and turquoise green cushions provide bright colour accents.

Above: The central circular design brings a unique shape and form to the rectangular-shaped apartment.

Facing page: Both the dining room floor and ceiling feature subtle square patterning. The wall light and pendant light are from Italy. The gilded Buddha is from Thailand. The dining room table has a glass top and a black marble octagon pyramid base to complement the marble floorstrip.

At 140m^2, the apartment is an average size, but partition walls made the living areas look small.

"The entrance hallway was very elongated and had no depth. So I had the non-structural partitions removed to create an open, more flowing space," says Ben Teo.

Apart from the dining room, the walls and ceilings were painted milky white to provide a "neat and clean cut" neutral background.

Different flooring effects and ceiling heights are used to demarcate the different spaces in the apartment.

Polished teak floorboards give the foyer and living area a warm and welcoming look. This is contrasted with a circular-shaped marble floor in the centre of the room. The colours are Cafe Rosita (pinkish brown) and Rosso Perlino (peach) with black marble borders.

The air-conditioning and lighting bulkheads in the living area were constructed to follow the shape of the marble floor. The sofa and custom-made TV cabinet also match the circular curves of the floor design.

An archway with two columns

and a wide marble floorstrip separates the living and dining rooms. The teak columns have a Grecian rope design with elaborately gilded pieces. They sit on black marble pedestals.

The dining room has a square and diagonal floorboard pattern inset with square black marble corner pieces. The ceiling's pyramid shape enhances the symmetrical design of the room.

A custom-made cherrywood buffet counter and storage unit sits along the length of one wall. The rich timber tones are complemented by dark turquoise green walls. The sliding glass doors to the kitchen provide extra light without affecting the ambience of the room.

Soft halogen downlights, tall pot plants and frosted glass dividers help to the give the open plan apartment an intimate feel.

The statues on top of the TV cabinet welcome visitors from the entrance, while a glass panel provides TV watchers with some partitioning.

Glass doors would have looked too commercial for the balcony, so lattice sliding screens which still allow full visibility were installed.

Location: Bishan Rd, Singapore
Interior designer: Ben Teo (IIDA Interior Design Pte Ltd, Singapore)
Flooring: Cafe Rosita, Rosso Perlino and black marble; polished teak floorboards
Paint: ICI
Black leather and chrome armchair and chaise lounge: Abraxas
Dining table and leather dining chairs: Avanti
Master bedroom:
Carpet: Goodrich
Armchair: Habitat
Bedlinen: Sheridan
Antique lamps, mirror and chest: Kim Long Sing
Lighting: Halogens from Lightcraft

Photography by Bernard Koh