

The sliding door at Living area opens into the Courtyard ensconced within exposed brickwalls.

The Courtyard House with an Attitude

The gentrification of a 1980's townhouse into a contemporary, lofty abode with a Courtyard and natural daylight.

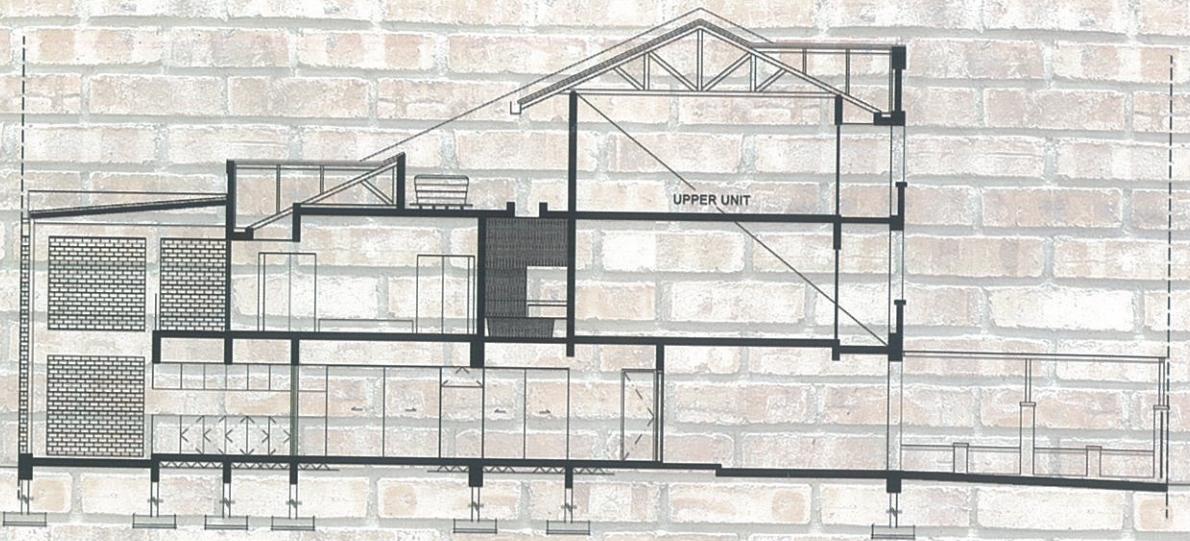
Architect & interior designer **DEXTER KOH DESIGN ARCHITECT** info by **DEXTER KOH DESIGN ARCHITECT**
additional text by **TONG CHIN THING** photography by **H. LIN HO**

A 1980's townhouse located in the flourishing suburb of Sri Hartamas, SH18 begets an unassuming facade, which belies the spaces within. Dexter Koh Design Architect is the architect and interior designer of this 1,800 sq ft lower-unit that occupies the entire ground level and rear half of the first floor. Originally, the blueprint comprises designated and partitioned areas for living, dining, kitchen and bedrooms, resulting in rooms of small proportions.

The current owner acquired the house in 2010. The house, though structurally sound, was almost a quarter century old and in dire need of gentrification in the wiring and plumbing departments.

This precipitates the idea of a new layout to provide for the needs of the owners.

On the ground level, with most of the walls eliminated, leaving only a single wall to separate the open wet kitchen from the living area, this forms a contiguous L-shaped space for living area at the rear overlooking the back garden, and the dining area on the left flanking the dry kitchen and island counter on the right at the front portion.





A perspective view of the Living overlooking the Dining, where pops of colour denote different areas.





The dining table, an heirloom centrepiece that comprises four conjoined rosewood tables, functioning as a working desk on one end and a dining table on the other.

Upon entry a salvaged coffee-shop marble top table becomes a vestibule centrepiece and console, strategically blocking a structural column. A small powder room is discreetly located to the right of the extra-wide timber door, while a shoe cupboard disguised as a Chinese cabinet fits on the left.

Beyond the staircase an heirloom 3-door Straits Chinese Malacca brown and gold glass cabinet flanks the wall, taking pride of place in the dining area. The dining table is another heirloom piece, a Straits Chinese 'tok panjang' consisting of four conjoined rosewood tables. The tok panjang functions as a working desk on one end, and dining table on the other, but can otherwise seat up to twelve during dinner parties. Modern red polypropylene Sugar Chairs inject a pop of colour and contrast.

At the living area an opium bed is set centrally with modern sofa and TV console placed on its sides. The opium bed doubles as additional sleep furniture when required.



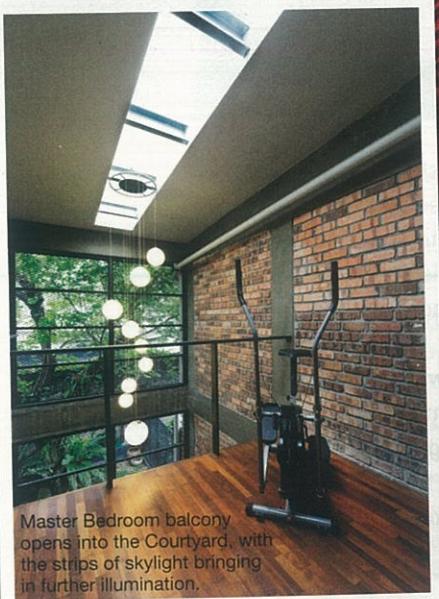
The open dining and dry kitchen with a minimalist concrete counter and minimal accoutrements on the table top.

The dry and wet kitchens form a continuous space when the glass sliding doors are opened up, thereby increasing worktop space when the need arises. Mirrored sliding panels conceal the dry kitchen pantry, hiding clutter usually found on countertops and provides an illusion of additional space for the 22-feet wide townhouse. The island counter is used variably for food preparation as well as bar-height seating with vintage bar stools.

Beyond the Wet Kitchen, a small, double-volume Courtyard is laid with brickwork on the floor and walls, the expanded metal screens affording a picture-frame view of the Garden with a matured, heavily foliated ficus tree giving shade and trapping dust from the highway beyond. The Courtyard provides much-needed light and ventilation to the house - the Kitchen and Living on the ground floor, and the two bedrooms above - all open to the Courtyard.

On the upper level the 'Dream of the Red Chamber' inspired Master Bedroom houses more of the owners' antique furniture collection, with a pair of gold-leaf decorated black lacquer Elmwood cabinets used as wardrobes, and a Fujian chest-of-drawers as TV console. Full-height sliding doors open into a deep internal balcony which overlooks the Courtyard. A strip of skylight brings further illumination, a cluster of hanging pendant globes replacing the sun at dusk.

Inspired by the quixotic "Dream of the Red Chamber", the Master Bedroom is swathed mostly in crimson with antique and local furniture.







The Library, a utilitarian space made fun with the pop of imperial yellow on the wall-length bookcase, grounded by the no-nonsense Chinese scholar's table.



Bright and airy Guest Room with eclectic furnishings; the altar tables juxtaposes the modern bed and Scandinavian armchairs.

Beside the Master Bedroom the Library is furnished with a Chinese scholar's table, flanked by a wall-length bookcase in imperial yellow, housing the bibliophile owner's extensive collection of hard-cover tomes of culture, arts and history.

Beyond the Library, a frosted glass door leads into the Guest Room of almost equal proportions to the Master Bedroom. An antique altar table rests between the strip windows while antique tea tables flank the bed as side tables. The bedroom is replete with glass shower and water closet cubicles and basin at the side for convenience of guests.

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Guest Room with glass shower and water closet cubicles evoke a sensual space similar to five-star hotel rooms.

