

Artist in Residence

Inspired by the mid-century creations of Charles and Ray Eames, this vibrant home serves as an illustrator's creative space and sanctuary

By Karen Tee. Photography by Frank Pinckers





Clockwise from top left: A yellow concrete kitchen counter is among the unexpected flourishes in this home; the teal cabinetry in the living area is paired with accent pieces and art in contrasting colours; the pink terracotta bathroom is a playful space that features a work by British artist David Shrigley; this clock is among the thrift market finds selected for the home

Previous spread
The airy abode's neutral base is enlivened by bright hues

It was a playlist that started it all. To spark French architect Yann Follain's design inspiration for a young homeowner's abode, she shared with him a mix of her favourite retro pop tunes. Follain, who is the managing director and head of design of multidisciplinary studio WY-TO Singapore, was given the creative freedom to transform what was previously an "introverted" two-storey apartment into a generous and flexible space that would function as the owner's work atelier, a space for hosting and entertaining as well as a peaceful retreat for rest and relaxation.

The result is a 1,937sqft apartment bursting with colour, completed in seven months. Its vibrant features include a teal-hued display shelf that spans the entire open-concept first floor, a yellow concrete kitchen counter and a pink bathroom. Like a well-composed pop song, each element stands out on its own but co-exists harmoniously as a whole.

"This highly composed design was strongly influenced by American designers Charles and Ray Eames," says Follain. "Everything is based on grids, proportions, ergonomics, textures and colours. Every aspect relied on the precision of the other in order to present itself as an ensemble in the space." The apartment also pays homage to the owner's twin passions of art and architecture: she works as an illustrator and is also a trained architect with a soft spot for modern architecture.



Clockwise from top left: Green is the dominant accent colour in the second storey; an ingenious structure wraps around the bathrooms, cabinetry, master suite and workshop areas; Yann Follain, managing director and head of design of WY-TO Singapore; the use of turquoise subway tiles in this bathroom perpetuates the home's retro-influenced look and feel



MID-CENTURY MOOD

Stepping in, one's attention is immediately captured by an impressive display shelf that spans the length of the apartment. A unified expanse comprising the kitchen, dining room and living room was created by removing the existing partition walls to achieve the owner's goal of creating an "endless perception of space".

"As you move along, there is a design rhythm; a sort of kinetic effect with the convergence of vertical elements and the horizontal lines that are portrayed in a Mondrian-esque sort of composition," says Follain, citing the influence of Dutch painter Piet Mondrian's striking colour-blocked works on the design of the apartment.

Besides offering an artistic display of the owner's memorabilia from her extensive travels, the shelving unit also has practical functions, including concealing the air-conditioning unit and providing storage for kitchen appliances. With the breaking down of walls, the home's cross-ventilation and airflow are also greatly enhanced so as to reduce reliance

on air-conditioning, which was an important consideration for the eco-conscious owner.

At the heart of the ground floor is a yellow concrete kitchen island, facilitating the owner's ability to entertain and cook while still being connected to her loved ones. The design language continues here by mimicking the organic curves of a natural rock. "This creates contrast with the orderly lines (of the display shelf)," Follain explains.

Contractor Just Build, which WY-TO frequently collaborates with, even worked with different colour pigments to achieve a bespoke effect that also symbolises the owner's heritage. "The counter is made of concrete with a shade of yellow inspired by the colour of spices used in curry; a reflection of the owner's roots," he adds.

Populating the other spaces is a tasteful selection of vintage and designer furnishings. For instance, a vintage orange armchair and a wall clock acquired at a garage sale act as quirky counterpoints to designer pieces including a white Vitra La Chaise seat by Charles and Ray Eames, a Second Charm



This page: A gallery wall jazzes up the owner's workspace, where she keeps her art supplies and other creative tools well organised in sleek white cabinets

Opposite page: A fold-out bed can be extracted from the green cabinetry for visiting guests or stored within to allow for an uncluttered look

custom dining table as well as a mix of dining chairs from Commune, Second Charm and Vitra.

Visitors are in for another surprise when they step into the guest bathroom, which is bathed in pink and features a surrealist portrait by British artist David Shrigley. While the client was not “into the colour pink”, Follain reveals, he convinced her to use multiple shades of this hue in the form of tiles for a more natural look. “This gives the overall impression of a well-used terracotta colour scheme.”

ALL IN ONE

Upstairs, an ingenious integrated structure in a shade of verdant green—to bring a sense of the lush outdoors into the dwelling—wraps around all the technical spaces on the floor so they can be revealed or concealed at will. “It stands in the middle like a monolith and functions like a Swiss army knife, with each door opening to serve a different purpose,” explains Follain.

These spaces include the master bedroom, a workspace, two bathrooms, wardrobes, storage and even a fold-out bed. The aim was

to create a sense of continuity among the spaces for a variety of uses while offering the option for privacy when needed.

True to the owner's eclectic style, her workspace features a gallery wall showcasing an intriguing mix of works by international and local artists. Punctuating this stylish tableau, an iconic Eames Elephant adds a touch of whimsy and is paired with a table from Ikea.

The fern-like parquet flooring adds to the indoor-outdoor living scheme that the owner loves. “A combination of the Point de Hongrie chevron and ladder motif commonly seen in historical French buildings, its simplicity and uniqueness of colour ties the entire look together,” says Follain.

With a focus on sustainability, the contractor also carefully coordinated the layout for every plank of wood to avoid wastage due to trims and recuts. Just like the modern architectural greats, each element in this welcoming home has been carefully thought through, and it shows. Says the designer: “Everything is perfectly organised, right down to the most minute detail.”



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