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A Dash of Daring

Text & Images / Michael Paul



There's an old French maxim that goes, *Le luxe est une affaire d'argent. L'élégance est une question d'éducation.* This succinctly sums up the mantra of Florence Lim, Philippines-born interior designer, art collector, boutique owner and all-round style guru. Lim's refined home in Singapore, set in a lush location of hanging gardens and hundred-year-old heritage trees, is the very essence of elegance itself. Intriguing and exuberant as the owner, the apartment is layered with tactile fabrics and textures, and embellished with classic and contemporary art.

Lim discovered the apartment through a random invitation. 'A good friend who now lives below suggested I take a look at the flat, and it was love at first sight,' she recalls. 'I'd been looking for a few months but was shown cramped places that were in buildings with no personality or character.' The building, dating from the 1980s, is famously the first in Singapore to have vertical landscaping with wraparound terraces on every level that flourish with cascading plants.

The expansive 335-square-metre space Lim shares with her Italian husband, two teenage sons and a mischievous Shar Pei, who intermittently takes to chewing expensive furnishings, is both home as well as a gallery for her extensive art collection. Hence, a largely white palette prevails. 'My mother always lived in an all-white house,' says Lim. 'She felt that heavy, dark colonial furniture looked oppressive in the heat of the Philippines. So I came to love white too — it's pure, peaceful and immaculate.' In keeping with this aesthetic, Lim has not only painted the walls white, but has introduced larger pieces of furniture and selected fabrics in white as well.

Previous page: In addition to an uninterrupted view of the Singapore skyline, the living room of designer Florence Lim's apartment showcases artwork by Tracey Emin. The gold silk carpet by Fort Street Studio and Yves Klein coffee table are flanked by a selection of classic chairs and sofas by Christian Liaigre, Garouste and Bonetti, Jean-Michel Frank and Federico Munari

Trophy pieces in Lim's art collection range from a striking stainless steel sculpture by British artist Sir Anish Kapoor to a Tracey Emin neon light installation and provocative nude artwork in the living space, and a Damien Hirst in her son's bedroom. 'One of my favourite pieces — a red Yayoi Kusama artwork that hangs in the dining area — has become a dinner party talking point,' says Lim. Equally, the *I Missed You* glass sculpture lying on the floor by Korean artist Do Ho Suh never fails to invite comment and stimulate discussion. And, just so that no one accuses Lim of taking art too seriously, there is the silkscreen in the entry hall by Tsang Kin-Wah titled *Fucking Art*. 'A real conversation stopper,' she laughs.

One of the most pleasing aspects of Lim's home, apart from its pared-back palette, is the natural flow between the living space and the outdoor balcony area, thanks to floor-to-ceiling windows that open up entirely. A clever use of natural, organic fabrics and light wood outdoor furniture emphasises the airy, expansive feel, and Lim adores the wide, uninterrupted views provided across leafy parkland to the iconic rooftop of the Marina Bay Sands. 'The light just seems to shimmer.'

With its array of artworks, personal treasures and classic designer furniture, Lim's home remains timeless in every sense. As the owner of Edit Lifestyle, a stylish beach clothing and homewares boutique in Singapore, Lim is well aware of fads and gimmicks that come and go, and elegance that never goes out of style. As Ralph Lauren once said, 'Style is very personal. It has nothing to do with fashion. Fashion is over quickly. Style is forever.'

This page: A seascape by photographer David Parker sits above a Francis Sultana banquette in the hallway leading to the master bedroom



Top: A gold Yves Klein coffee table displays several treasures including a Tang horse from Xi'an, China. Behind the classic Federico Munari comma sofa is an intricate floral ceramic mirror by British artist Barnaby Barford

Bottom: A pair of Koala chairs from Garouste and Bonetti flank a gold Philippe Hiquily guéridon, while a provocative nude by Tracey Emin adds embellishment to the carefully chosen colour palette





Anne Appleby's triptych *Autumn* adds colour behind a classic David Gill sofa. In the foreground sits a 1960s marble-topped side table with gold legs