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**THAILAND**

Issue 54 MARCH 2009

Thailand 150THB/Hong Kong 50HKD/Singapore 10SGD



## What's in?

Design for the times



**Saving  
Phuket's  
heritage**



**Ever  
evolving  
abode**



**Technology  
meets  
design**



**IAW:  
Defining  
style**





'We 'invented' a curtain in which one side was red in colour and the other side a mirror giving two different moods depending on how we felt,' says Virginia Lung of One Plus Partnership Limited, describing her own Hong Kong home.

## EVERYTHING HAS TO BE MULTI-FUNCTIONAL IN ORDER TO MAXIMIZE EXPENSIVE SPACE.

Minimalism may be out in Bangkok, but European concepts are very much in, evident by the number of projects mixing old world finery with modern twists.

"This is partially because European style defines luxury and wealth," says Angsumalin. "It has the look and feel of a five-star hotel but is comfortable like a home should be...that's why it's very popular in the high-end market right now."

We asked yoo's Humphries if this is a global trend, or are local designers simply looking to get away from that cookie cutter "Thai-style" concept?

"Every culture wants to differentiate its offering from the competitors, so attempting to mix European and Asian cultures is one way of achieving this," she says. "Thailand has had the recent heritage of the Sukothai and the Aman resorts to draw inspiration from, so a departure from this is refreshing but not uniquely Thai. Our client's brief for a project in Moscow City is to be a mixture of European and Asian cultures and the project is entitled 'Eurasia' to recognise this."

Greenwood acknowledges the trend of combining cultures and periods of time in indeed popular at the moment, but says it's been going on for quite a while.

"Whether or not this originated in Europe is debatable," he says. "Marrying contemporary design with older artifacts and referencing local vernacular has been an approach in Asia for some time."

There are two other concepts that are pretty much guaranteed to stay in fashion: space-saving and eco-friendliness.

Space is an issue that affects home owners in most of the world's global cities, from Bangkok to New York. Unless you're in a financial position to pick up a spacious penthouse, chances are you're going to want to make the most of your unit's area.

Furniture designers have clued into this and are creating some pretty impressive products featuring clever storage concepts. Humphries says "creative furniture settings, scale of pieces and colour choices" are other keys to maximizing small spaces, while Angsumalin points to "smart spatial planning" and says home owners should "minimize the

## MINIMALISM MAY BE OUT IN BANGKOK, BUT EUROPEAN CONCEPTS ARE VERY MUCH IN.



Bangkok-based firm PIA mixed contemporary and classic pieces to create a timeless elegant interior in Major Development's Royce condominium development.

unnecessary area" while "maximizing space by utilizing unused space".

As for what developers can do to save valuable space, Greenwood says "creating an efficient footprint for towers so that condominiums may be planned to minimize corridor space from lift lobbies" is important, while inside the units combining the powder room with a dual access ensuite bathroom is useful. Again he points to open plan living, which he says saves space by minimizing cellular living (smaller rooms and corridors).

In Hong Kong, where space truly is at a premium, designers are forced to be ultra-innovative to maximize area. Virginia Lung is director of Hong Kong interior design firm One Plus Partnership Limited, which recently secured the Best of the Year Project Design Public Space at the INTERIOR DESIGN Best of the Year Awards 2008 in New York for its Gemdale Mellon Town, a mixed-use apartment complex in Shenzhen, China.

"When designing the interior of an urban condominium in Hong Kong, the use of space is vital," she says. "Everything has to be multi-functional in order to maximize expensive space in Hong Kong. When it comes to the furniture selection, furniture should allow more than one combination so to create multi-moods under different circumstances. One example is my previous home. We 'invented' a curtain in which one side was red in colour and the other side a mirror giving two different moods depending on how we felt."

The environment has also become a key concern in Hong Kong due to rising pollution levels, making eco-friendly concepts an essential part of most new projects.

"Green living" to me is minimizing wastage," says Lung. "I use a lot of durable materials in my design concepts. Also I like to take old items and reuse them by painting them, for example. I try to avoid wastage in my design."

Humphries too notes that environmentally-conscious planning is a key part of Yoo's designs, regardless of where the project is based.

"We try to bring the British standard of lighting levels and technology and energy conservation into our global projects, plus specifying where possible products and appliances where conservation technology is key," she says, pointing to Miele induction hobs or Hansgrohe shower heads. "In terms of trying to reach out to a lifestyle that wants to >>

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## ECO-FRIENDLY CONCEPTS ARE AN ESSENTIAL PART OF MOST NEW PROJECTS.



be 'green living', at our project in the Costwolds, Uk, - The Lakes - we are offering 'Eco Packs' that clients can choose to combine with their properties."

Bangkok, though lacking the strict environmental laws found in London or Sydney, has also climbed aboard the eco-friendly band wagon.

"Many residential buildings are now designed to be environmentally friendly and feature energy saving technology," says Angsumalin. "I usually select and utilize recyclable, energy-saving material for my projects as well as plan the lay-out to get natural light and natural ventilation as much as possible."

For an up-to-the-minute look at what's hot in decor, The DecoratingDiva.com is perhaps one of the best sources going. This decorating blog is extremely popular in the US, and covers the latest trends in design, colour, decor and healthy home living, as well as reviews of a variety of home decorating products.

For instance, their list of the top 10 interior design trends for 2009 confirms much of what the above designers noted. These include an increase in "eclectic styling," which involves mixing periods and styles, as well as societal responsibility and eco-awareness in decor and furniture purchases. But this doesn't mean you have to sacrifice luxury.

"Add silk-like eco-bedding to your organic linens vocabulary, as sumptuous, silken luxury bedding makes a strong debut in the eco-bedding category," says the blog. "Couture flair in decorative pillows," is also on the rise, "highlighted by gorgeous pillows dressed in high fashion details."

But most importantly, The Diva says one's home is indeed a sanctuary and deserves to be decorated as such - particularly in these trying times. It recommends "creating a home environment, even if it's only one room that comforts and offers peace and serenity in [these] tumultuous economic and geo-political environments by embracing simple, understated luxury and serene colours inspired by the earth's oceans, beaches, deserts and forests."

With the ongoing political and economic woes in Thailand that continue to add stress to the lives of Bangkok's urbanites, this is perhaps the best interior design advice of all. ■

The region's top interior designers are breathing fresh life into cultural icons with modern designs. One Plus Partnership's award-winning lobby in the Gemdale Melon Town in Shenzhen, China incorporated clusters of towering metal rods sprouting resident mailboxes at varying heights like a thicket of branching bamboo - a traditional Chinese symbol. The entire area was saturated in a lime, including the ceiling of the lobby and mailboxes.