



The original bungalow which stood on Margoliouth Road was no stunner. The architects had the option of tearing down the building; instead, they chose to work with it, though that decision was to become what Liu describes as the biggest design challenge of the project. A champion for sustainable solutions, the firm's strategy was to optimise the existing two-storey structure while extending the house sideways.

The architects organised the floor area into a "series of pavilions", positive and negative containers of varying proportions. The positive volumes would house the various domestic functions (bedrooms, kitchens, family rooms) while the negative spaces would delineate the courtyard or outdoor rooms.

Describing the owners as "dream clients", d.lab's design for the house on Margoliouth Road took shape with few calls for redesign by the owners. They were not disappointed.

The place the family now call home is a residential gem where natural elements of water, wind, wood and greenery gently mingle with the interior's stylishly modern furnishings. The heat of the glaring Singapore sun is subtly filtered out through the use of high performance glass and the engineering of airflow which reduce any greenhouse effect, while flooding the halls with a softer light that illuminates the house's best features, including a stunning "chandelier" of glass ball fittings hung from the living hall's luxuriously-high ceilings.

Questioning the traditional model of viewing a house as an "object that sits on a landscape", the architects contend that tropical architecture allows for alternative strategies when dealing with internal and external spaces. On the ground level, the interior and exterior spaces flow without boundaries, affording a delicious sense of spaciousness. A garden court pavilion at the centre of the house takes the

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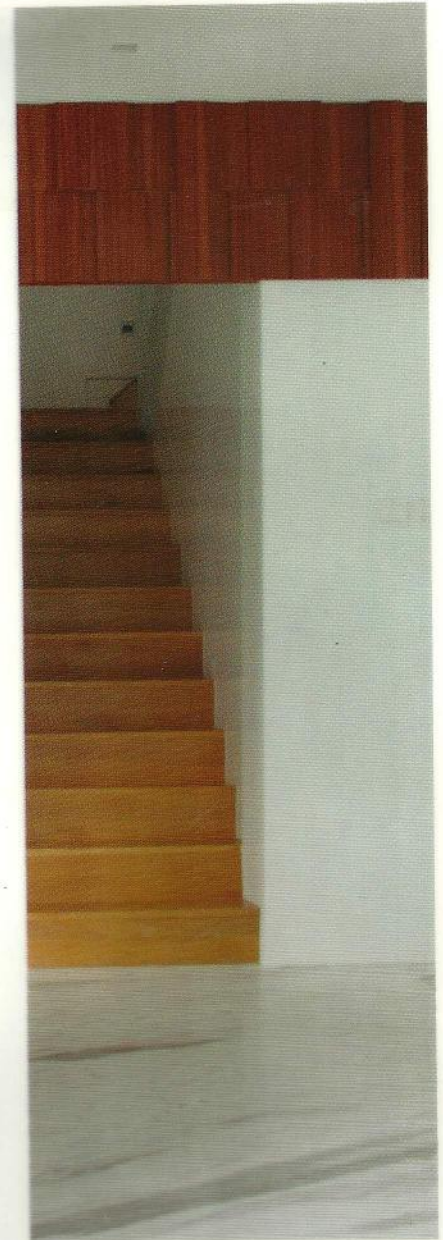




staircase (traditionally thought of as an interior feature) into the great outdoors, functioning as a shortcut to the master bedroom.

Natural elements pervade. A row of newly planted hedges lined across the entrance wall will at their maximum height of 2.4 metres provide natural screening to the house's wide and welcoming entrance. The pool resembles a natural pond: square mosaic tiles installed at the bottom turn the shade of the pool into an unusual green patina. Light reflects off the pool, forming shimmering shadows on the ceiling above the wooden deck. A water feature in the living room reflects the mid-day sun onto the interior surfaces. In the background, the dining area, open kitchen and "garden court" pavilion offer a calming backdrop of domestic living and interaction with nature.

Running along the western end of the hall is a showpiece wall, perhaps the house's most dramatic feature. "This is almost like a pattern, a coded pattern that repeats itself," explains Liu about the design of the wall by his associate, Dennis Ng. The woodwork is made up of basic modular units which are expanded into a complex sequence. The firm's interest in mathematical morphology and natural structures in design compelled them to explore the idea of "adaptivity" in their design. The wall reveals its genius: a door opens up to a carpark; another panel reveals the "central nerve system of



the house" where the music, lighting and air-conditioning is controlled; another opens to rows of Jimmy Choo high heels; and the final door is the entrance of the entertainment room.

Come nightfall, one wonders what dramatic transformations occur in a house so open to the illuminating effect of natural light? The "light pavilion" on the eastern end of the house has perhaps exceeded the initial expectations of the owners when they first requested for a house full of light. When the interior room is lit, the exterior of the light pavilion gives off a soft, diffused glow, like a light box. Below, the light from the glass ball fittings fall onto the pool, forming multiple moons. It is against this refined setting where the champagne and conversations flow through the night, while the children sleep soundly, above, in their beds. ■