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## Wall House

A HUSHED AND UNDERSTATED ABODE FROM A THREE-WAY COLLABORATION AMONG FARM, STUDIO TERRE AND LOCUS ASSOCIATES



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# CRAFT AND CONTROL

Text by Luo Jingmei  
Photography by  
Frenchie Cristogatin

Architect Sim Boon Yang's home is a fine balance of both the rational and the artistic.



NATURAL SCREEN:  
Sim hung the bamboo  
in two layers for a  
natural, organic effect

**THERE'S A TENDENCY TO READ AN** architect's house in two ways. One is to see it in the light of the design philosophy he applies to his work – the abode of an architect is, after all, analogous to a physical manifesto – and the other would be to try to unearth the workings of the man beyond his profession. I had the privilege of doing both on a visit to the home of *Sim Boon Yang*, the co-founder and principal of local practice *Eco.id Architects*, of award winning hospitality projects such as *Naumi Singapore* and *The Metropolitan* in Bangkok.

Completed more than a year ago, Sim's house is located in a verdant neighbourhood along Upper Thomson Road. A crisp stack of concrete cubes with an eye-catching bamboo curtain, it stands out as an abstract riff against its single-storey, terracotta-roofed neighbours, although its lush landscape sits it well within the site.

"I built it in as few elemental steps as possible," says Sim of the design. On plan, this simplicity is reflected as a rectangle divided into four bays width-wise as the organisational guide. On the exterior, the stratum reflects the clear delineation of programmes within: a basement (or rather, the first storey) with the car porch, a workshop and a wine cellar, elevated common spaces, bedrooms, studio from bottom to top.

Likewise, the material palette is governed by restraint. Off-form concrete for the shell, dark-stained oak for the floor, bamboo screens, and travertine and black Shanxi stone for the surfaces are the few materials throughout the house. "I don't use a lot of materials [at one time] in my projects. I'm a modernist. I like to build the bones of a project with absolute clarity and simplicity and then add in the tactile layers," Sim says. "The choices are also very logical."

The rawness of the concrete, he explains, was a natural choice as a neutral backdrop for his vast collection of Asian art and artefacts (tribal canoe paddles stand sentry at the staircase; old northern Thai temple eave supports curl above the bar counter). The dark-stained wood floors, while balancing the cold concrete, also provide visual comfort against the harsh tropical light.



**SPACE**  
Home

The bamboo screen, fitted with hooks and hung "like a shower curtain" also ticks many boxes. First of all, it satiated Sim's hands-on predilections. "I wanted to D-I-Y part of the house myself," elaborates Sim, a self-confessed "tinkerer" who sourced the bamboo from a plantation in Java while on a work trip. After having it treated with boric acid to prevent insect infestation, he installed it himself together with his two sons. It is now a privacy and weather shield against sun and rain, its simplicity and natural beauty tied in with the house's palette. Moreover, it is light enough for the occupants to move by themselves and replace when necessary.

After living in the house for a while, Sim discovered the bamboo curtain's other charms. Like a giant wind chime, low, melodic timbre registers can be heard when gentle breezes blow – and their noisy clanging before a storm signals for the occupants to close the windows.

"It's a facade that actually moves and interacts with the climate. After a storm, they rearrange themselves. I think that kind of movement is an abstract replication of what nature does. Already the house's framing is very architectural and rigid, so you need these semi-chaotic layers," says Sim. Allowing for the

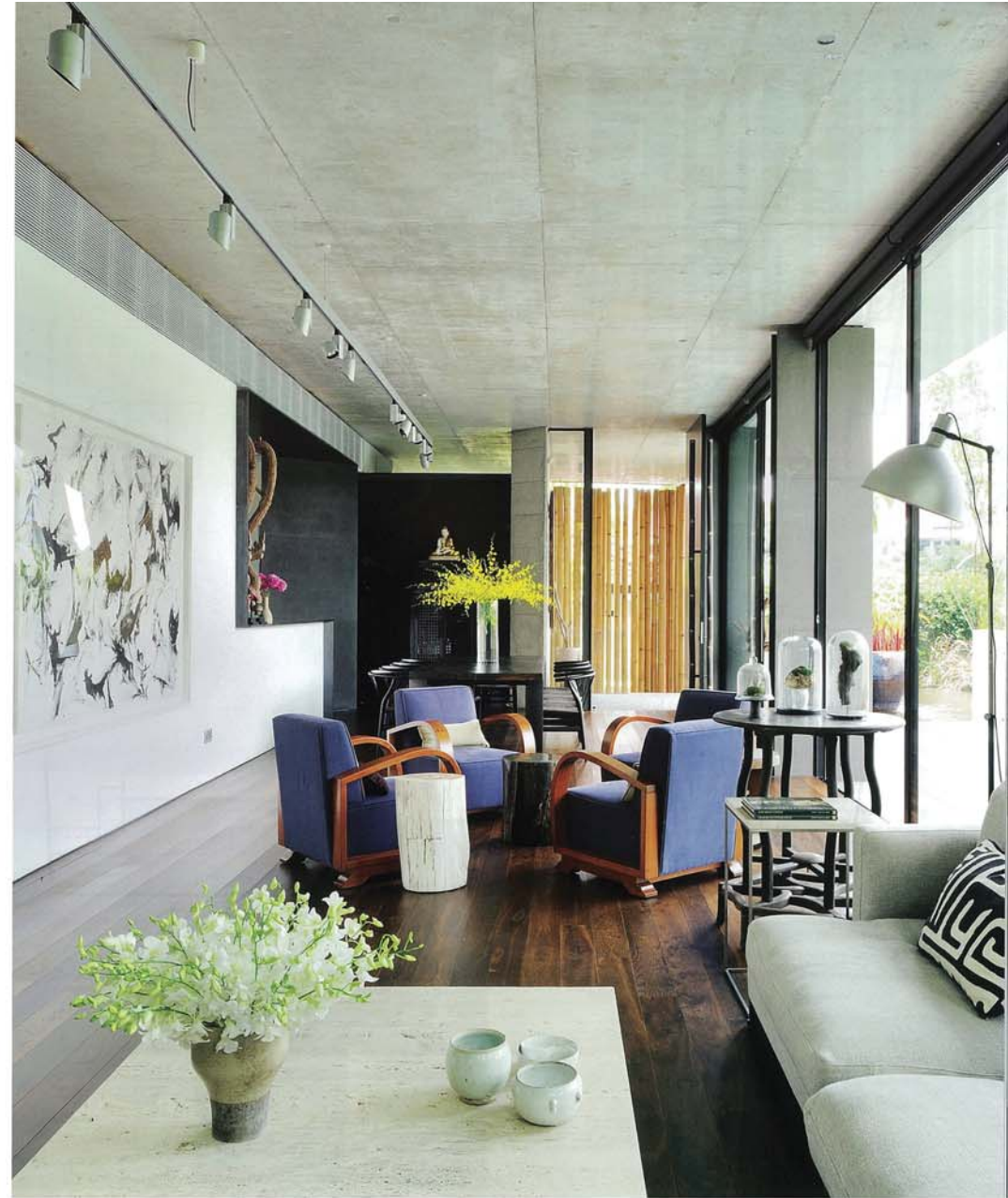


↑ **TOUCH POINTS:**  
Bamboo is used in other areas such as door handles



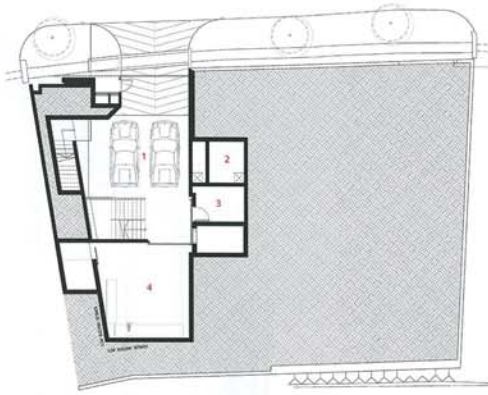
↑ **SUBTLE SIGNS:**  
A chamfered wall in black slate gestures the way into the kitchen

← **CURATING MOVEMENT:**  
A pond creates a contemplative pause at the entrance of the house

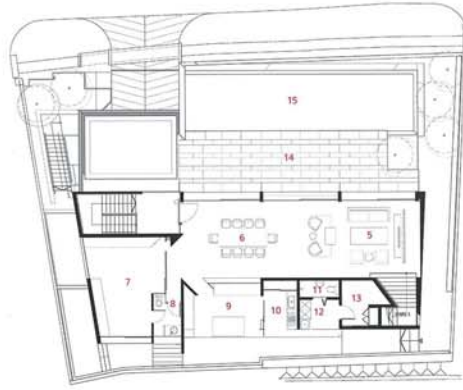




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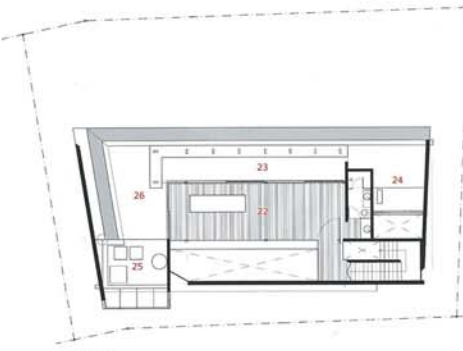
Basement Plan



First Floor Plan



Second Floor Plan



Attic Plan

- |                  |                    |                            |                         |
|------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Car Porch      | 8 Powder Room      | 15 Swimming Pool           | 22 Study                |
| 2 Balancing Tank | 9 Kitchen          | 16 Master Suite            | 23 Roof Terrace Roof    |
| 3 Pump Room      | 10 Wet Kitchen     | 17 Master Walk-in Wardrobe | 24 Terrace With Planter |
| 4 Store/Workshop | 11 WC              | 18 Master Bath             | 25 M&E Space            |
| 5 Living Room    | 12 Laundry         | 19 Double-volume Corridor  | 26 Landscape Area       |
| 6 Dining Room    | 13 Maid's Room     | 20 Bedroom                 |                         |
| 7 Family Area    | 14 Outdoor Terrace | 21 Bathroom                |                         |



↑ LOFTY LIGHT:  
The bedroom level  
sees a light-filled  
corridor-gallery

→ LOCAL ACCENT:  
A painting by  
Singaporean artist  
Justin Lim graces the  
staircase landing



↑ MULTI-TEXTURED:  
Bamboo, travertine, and a  
counter of old lychee wood  
in the master bathroom

vicissitudes of daily living, this house is not just a pristine shell.

It is also, as Sim lets on, his "playlab" where he experiments with his many fascinations. The workshop in the basement, originally designed as a car workshop "because I like to restore old cars", is now where he makes other objects to add to the house. Dotting the home are moss sculptures resembling miniature landscapes, made by the "botanist at heart". As one traverses through the home, Sim's collection of aged furniture (benches form a fallen Tembusu tree) serve as spatial anchors, as do his aged art and architecture artefacts.

"I like the patina and profundity of old objects," he explains. Pointing to the boat paddles, he expounds, "A usable object like a paddle takes on a very emotive form when it's designed to do a job well. Its layer of artisanal touch, which I find very hard to design, takes it beyond simply being a day-to-day object."

Throughout, Sim's attachment to nature is also apparent. Cue the nursery of plants framing the kitchen wall and lush gardens. He points out of the window beyond the swimming pool. "It was an important decision not to build a front wall. It not only feels spacious because of the elevated site, once the trees [on the public pavement] mature, they become my 'borrowed landscape'."

Aside from plants, there are other ways the house is 'green'.

**SPACE**  
Home



← **LIGHT TOUCHES:**  
The concrete wall in the master bedroom is rendered in light at specific times of the day

The walls on the east-west-facing facades are kept opaque to minimise heat gain, and the open layout allows for winds to pass through the entire house, “ensuring climatic comfort”. Other ecological features include a water-harvesting system and solar water-heaters.

Like the finely crafted objects he collects, Sim eschews the complicated elements of today’s shock-effect architecture manoeuvres. Instead, within the reticent framework, he unfolds surprises along the way: in an uplifting, double-volume courtyard at the top of the staircase, a little bamboo door knob at the powder room (that Sim made himself, of course), a leitmotif of played edges applied to areas such as the staircase beginning and the kitchen portal “to ease a junction, to highlight a sort of access”, and carefully framed views adroitly executed with a curatorial eye.

The typology of Sim’s house might not be altogether radical – the crisp, boxy language is reminiscent of Brazilian architect Marcio Kogan’s houses – but it is graced with an elegant contextual sensibility and laced with the architect’s enigmatic personality. ♦

Look out for more on Sim Boon Yang in *Cubes Extras* at [indesignlive.asia](http://indesignlive.asia)

**BAMBOO CURTAIN HOUSE**

**Architecture Firm** Eco.id Architects Pte Ltd  
**Building/ Construction Company** Renown Builders

**C&S Engineer** PTS Consultants  
**Quantity Surveyor** WS Surveyorship Pte Ltd  
**Landscape Contractor** Nyee Phoe Flower Garden  
**Swimming Pool Specialist and Supplier** Aquatic Technology Pte Ltd

**Time to Complete** 15 months  
**Total Floor Area** 418sqm

**Eco.id Architects Pte Ltd**  
(65) 6337 5119 [ecoid.com](http://ecoid.com)

**Furniture** At Entrance, Bench Custom-Made from Salvaged Shop House Cross Beams. At Pool Side, Chair Custom-Made from Galvanised Mild Steel Frame with Sunbrella Fabric Seat. Side Table is Custom Petrified Wood Stump. In Living Room, Sofa and Coffee Table with

Travertine Top on Stainless Steel Skeleton Frame is Custom-Made, Round Display table is Chinese Tea Table in Black Wood from 19th Century. In Dining Room, Dining Table Custom-Made with Dark-Stained Wood on Mild Steel Frame with Splay Corner Legs. In Studio, Study Table Custom-Made with Salvaged Shophouse Planks on Stainless Steel Frame, Vintage Mid-Century Chairs from Private Collection. In Master Bedroom, Pardini Console from A+D Surfaces. In Hallway and Studio, Blue Dot Shelf Shelves from Pomelo.

**Lighting** In Kitchen, Recessed Lighting from Million Lighting. In Living Room, Standing Lamps is Vintage Photographers Studio Lamp. In Studio, Artemide Track Lights from Million Lighting. In Master Bedroom, Artemide Tolomeo Table Lamp from Million Lighting. In Living Room, Floating Track Light from ERCO Lighting.

**Finishes** Roofing is Powder-Coated Aluminium

Standing Seam Roof. Generally Throughout, Off-Form Concrete by Renown Builders. Main Gate Custom-Made with Chengai Planks on Mild Steel Frame by Renown Builders. Façade Bamboo is 120mm-Diameter Suspended from Stainless Steel Rail, from Bamboo Plantation in Java. Generally Throughout, Junker Smoked Oak Solid Timber Planks by Prospec Singapore. At Entrance, Reflecting Pool is Concrete with Galvanised Steel Sides. Pool Tiles from Ceramica 28. In Kitchen, Counter Custom-Made with Carrara Marble Top and Mild Steel Frame with Splayed Corner Legs. Flooring is Granite in Flamed-Brushed Finish. In Powder Room, Cantilevered Vanity is Concrete Clad in Hone-Finished Shanxi Black Granite. In Living Room, AC Grille is Powder-Coated Aluminium. In Master Bathroom, Vanity Counter Custom-Made with Old Lychee Wood Plank on Trestle Custom-Made in Bali, Flooring and Wall Silver Travertine from Earth Arts. Staircase Chengal Timber Handrail by Renown Builders. In Master

Bedroom, Bay Window Seating Frame is Powder-Coated Cladding on Steel Frame with Integrated Roller Blinds.

**Fixed and Fitted** Generally Throughout, Doors and Windows by Modern Building Materials, Motorised Roller Blinds from Rolashades Singapore, ACMV System from Skymac. In Master Bathroom, TOTO WC from W. Atelier, Sanitary Fittings from Hansgrohe, Bathtub from Apaiser. Bedroom Wardrobes and Pardini Kitchen System from A+D Surfaces.

**Art** At Entrance, Tibetan Door with Tiger Motif Wall Art from Private Collection. In Living Room, ‘Mekong Rocks’ Chinese Ink on Korean Rice Paper Painting by Henry Chen Ke Zhan. In Hallway, Kyoto Edo Period Lion Head Timber Carving from Private Collection. At Stairs, ‘The Wall Series 3’ Acrylic on Canvas Artwork by Justin Lim.

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