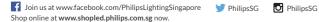


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HAFELE



Issue 06 - September 2014

CELEBRATE YOUR **NEW HOME**



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LET US CELEBRATE

Getting a new home is always a joyous occasion. There is, of course, the pressure of getting your dream home done up within budget as well as buying all the furniture pieces/accessories to fit your theme. But after all that is over, it's time to celebrate with your friends and family! And what better way to do that than with a house-warming party?

We know how nerve-racking it can get, so we sourced out a **few** ways to have a stress-free house-warming party (p10). Want a non-fussy option to decorate your walls and wow your guests? Then don't forget to check out the marvellous **collection of art prints and paintings** that we have assembled to tickle your artsy fancy (p28). Not much of a art fan? Why not consider mirrors instead? Far from being just a shiny surface to reflect your beautiful/handsome self, mirrors can make or break your home's décor so go on and flip the pages to **our exclusive feature on mirrors** (p24) before splurging on that gorgeous piece you saw in the shop.

Whew! Just a few more months to the end of the year! How has 2014 been treating you so far? Have you fulfilled any of your personal milestones yet? Well, no need to fret just yet if you didn't manage to cross out your bucket list. As they like to say these days, keep calm and carry on! After all you only live once, so live in the moment and enjoy every moment you can.

Editor,



DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY ABOUT OUR MAGAZINE?

Want to recommend a little-known shop that you frequently visit for your home decorating needs? We'd love to hear from you! Email your thoughts to editorial@renonation.sg. Who knows? We might love your letters so much that we'll feature them in the next issue!



PUBLISHER

Offsprings Group Pte Ltd

MANAGING DIRECTOR

Kenneth Tan

EDITORIAL

For editorial matters (editorial@renonation.sg)

EDITOR

Lilian Wu

ADVERTISING & MARKETING

For advertising enquiries (mag@renonation.sg)

CREATIVE DESIGNER

Sophia Basuni

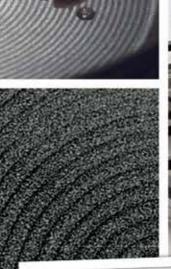
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Ek'e Teo, Kenneth Tan

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How to Have a Stress-Free House-Warming Party

Now that your home has been done up, it's time to celebrate this wonderful occasion with your family and friends! But any party, no matter how small, is bound to result in plenty of cleaning before and after the event-leaving you and your family physically drained and completely unable to do anything else for the rest of the day. To help you get through this day, we come up with 5 effortless ways to celebrate your new home without the tiring routine! By Lilian Wu



DECIDE ON THE PARTY TYPE

Before you begin planning, decide how you want your party to be like. Here are a few common styles:



OPEN HOUSE

You invite everyone from your colleagues to your neighbours to celebrate the new phase in your life. Most of the time will be spent mingling with your guests and they will most likely not stay long at the party. House tours will probably be the main activity on the card that day.





Great for people who don't want to go into the fussy details of planning a party and prefer to spend time with their closest friends and family. House tours are carried out, of course, but most of the time will be spent catching up with the guests. At such parties, finger food is the most convenient but you can always hold a BBQ if you have the space for it.

FORMAL LUNCH



If you prefer something a little more formal like a sit-down dinner, then a formal party may be the option. It will be wise to keep the guest list small though, so you don't overstress yourself on the food preparation and house cleaning. Otherwise, a pot-luck menu may be the better



- »The purpose for inviting people over is to show off your home! If you have rooms that are not fully decorated yet or still have boxes lying around, no worries. Simply close the doors to the rooms where you're not comfortable revealing to your guests and hang a small sign saying things like "work in progress". Such signs are non-intrusive and may even elicit some good natured laughs.
- »Not all of your guests will arrive on time though, so be prepared to conduct several house tours during the party. Keep it brief and limit to a few talking points such as that interesting piece of artwork you got on your honeymoon in your master bedroom. Be sure to have someone wait at the door to greet your guests though, so they won't feel lost upon arriving at your place.

MANAGE YOUR GUEST LIST

In this digital age, it's commonplace to invite people via online means. If you're planning to hold a large party, what better way to keep track of your guest list and RSVPs than with one of the many available e-tools? Aside from Microsoft Excel the spreadsheet programme, you can explore one of the following options as well:

> FACEBOOK **EVENTS**

Great for people who have lots of friends on this popular social media; you can set up an events page and invite your friends to indicate their interest in attending the party. The page even comes with a map and directions so your guests won't be lost on their way to your home. It's not fanciful, but it gets the job done.

CELEBRATIONS

hassle for you or not all of your friends are on Facebook, you can always sign up for an account on Celebrations.com. Here, you can send e-invites to a recipient list up to 75 people for free. There are plenty of invite designs to choose from too, and you can even set up options such as a pot-luck list,

If Microsoft Excel proves to be too much of a

registry and even a pie chart to show how many people are attending!

GOOGLE **FORMS**

Another free alternative is setting up a Google Form and allow it to collect the responses from your guests on Google Drive. It's a hassle-free way of gathering your friends' responses, but lacks the many useful add-ons that Celebrations.com has.



»These are just 3 of the many tools available out there, free or otherwise. But no matter what option you choose, do remember to include a map or your guests could get lost on their way to your place! Don't think you can manage large crowds of people flooding your home? Then maybe you can consider planning several small parties to cater to different groups of people. This will ensure that your guests will get a more intimate (and hopefully more memorable) experience without feeling like they're being ignored by you when you're really trying your best to mingle with everyone! Another plus point is that you'll be able to relax with your friends instead of rushing all over the place.





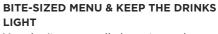
CHILDPROOF YOUR PARTY

If your invitees are bringing their children along, then take steps to keep them occupied instead of leaving them to run rampant all over your home. You can't be around all the time to keep an eye on them, and you really don't want to ruin your expensive furniture or glassware before you even get to enjoy them!



» You can either assign someone (like your eldest child or an experienced family member) as the official babysitter at the party, where they can look after the children and organise some activities to keep the children occupied. For example, play a movie that will entertain them for a couple of hours or set up a children-only zone with some games and books.





You don't necessarily have to cook a complete meal for your guests. Do up a bite-sized menu where finger food is the main course and keep to white wine if possible. Accidents are likely to happen and red wine does stain your immaculate white carpeting or upholstery. Go for food that won't go bad or require special attention to keep warm/cool while the party is on. Great choices include pastries, chips and dips. This will not only cut down on the stress of having to prepare the food beforehand, it will also save you from having to do major washups after the entire event. In other words, keep things simple.



»Can't cook to save your life? Then maybe you can consider planning a pot-luck party where everyone brings (or buys) their favourite food to the party.





PREP YOUR HOME BEFOREHAND

- You wouldn't want your beloved antique vase to meet an untimely end at the hands of a clumsy guest (or excited child), so keep such fragile things away until the party is over. This is essential especially if space is limited and people are more likely to bump into
- Prepare sufficient seats for your guests! If they have to sit on the floor, make it comfy for them with cushions and poufs.
- Don't forget to stock up on necessities such as trash bags, napkins and beverages for your guests. Dedicate a spot (or two) for guests to throw their disposable dinnerware as well.
- Clean up your bathrooms and 'depersonalise' them by putting away the personal hygiene products and other items. Don't forget to keep sufficient rolls of toilet paper and a plunger handy too, just in case.
- Organise your refrigerator in case your friends want to help you put away leftovers or have to look in your refrigerator to get extra drinks. After all, a cluttered refrigerator won't leave a good impression!
- Make more ice to keep drinks cool on a hot day.
- Sometimes you might get guests that you don't know well enough, so keep your valuables out of sight and remember to log out of your computer before guests
- You might also want to check that your first aid box is well-stocked with items like painkillers and bandages so that you're prepared for any accidents.
- Prepare plastic containers for your quests to takeaway in case you ordered/made too much food.



»No matter what type of party you choose to throw for your friends, do remember to have fun! After all, it's to celebrate a new phase in your life so don't sweat the small stuff.

Do you have more tips for hosting a successful house-warming party? Do share with us on our Facebook fan page!



Time:

Venue:

10am to 1pm

Bosch Experience Centre 11 Bishan Street 21 Level 4, Singapore 573943 (Marymount MRT, Exit B, Bosch building)

Registration:

- 1. By invitation only
- 2. Tell us why you would like to attend this event and send it with your contact details to support@renonation.sg

For more information, please contact Bosch Experience Centre at 6356 1080 or RenoNation at 6225 3132.

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PART 1

From Nightmare to Dream Home

Homeowners: Ms Low and family

The Residence: Semi-detached house @ Sennett Road. 3 levels with basement and roof terrace

Total Floor Area: 6.350 saft **Renovation Period:** Ongoing

The Interior Designer: Louis Chia from ARCHéTYPE Pte Ltd



The last thing anyone want is for their home to turn into a disaster zone, but that is exactly what happened to Ms Low's semi-detached house located at Sennett Road. She had bought the house about 2 years ago, and wanted to give it a new look so she engaged an interior designer (ID) to handle the renovation. Unbeknownst to Ms Low, that would prove to be the beginning of a nightmarish experience. As she had to travel extensively due to the nature of her work, she was unable to be on-site often to check on the progress. Ms Low trusted that the ID would do a good job, however, because she had paid a substantial price for a professional after all.

Although the ID produced beautiful 3D drawings that impressed Ms Low, she had little experience in handling big residential projects and executing the renderings in a functional manner. Problems soon cropped up and led to delays that upset Ms Low's plans. The situation continued to go downhill until Ms Low decided that enough was enough and fired the ID before any more damage could be done. The project was then left untouched for over a year until Ms Low met her saviour in Louis Chia from Archétype Pte Ltd. By this time, the house had been reduced to a shadow of its former self and nature was starting to take over. Let's take a look at some of the problems that Louis has to deal with:







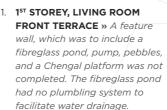












- 2. 1st STOREY, HELPER'S ROOM,
 BATHROOM » A water closet
 was planned to be placed directly
 in front of the bathroom entrance,
 which will obstruct entry.
- 3. 1st STOREY, HELPER'S ROOM, ROOF » The roof was not completed and this resulted in water leakage, causing the wood to rot after some time.
- 4. 2ND STOREY, MASTER BEDROOM
 WALK-IN WARDROBE » The
 open concept design of the
 bathroom and walk-in wardrobe
 will expose Ms Low's belongings in
 the closet to steam and moisture.



- 6. 2ND STOREY, SLIDING DOOR
 OUTSIDE EXTENDED WALL
 FROM MASTER BEDROOM » The
 extended walls from the master
 bedroom obstruct the existing
 sliding door in the family area,
 which makes it difficult to lock.
- 7. STAIRCASE » Cracks in the paint, which were caused by water leakage through an opening in the wall on the roof terrace on the other side. The opening was inadequately covered by plasterboard.
- 8. STAIRCASE » Poor quality &



exposure to water leakage from the roof terrace caused the stainless steel railings to rust.

- 9. 2ND STOREY, DAUGHTER'S BEDROOM, BALCONY » The balcony door is installed with the handle and hinges that are meant for a casement window.
- 10. 2ND STOREY, DAUGHTER'S
 BEDROOM » An ill-placed
 low gypsum board partition is
 installed in the middle of the
 room, obstructing the doors of
 the inbuilt wardrobe.
- 11. **THROUGHOUT THE HOUSE** » The teak parquet floors near sliding doors throughout the house have rotted, due to water seepage.
- 12. BATHROOM 1 » A design flaw in the placement of the glass divider behind the vanity; the small gap between the vanity top and glass panel will make it difficult to clean in future.











- 13. **BATHROOM 2** » 2 of the wall tiles are warped.
- 14. 3RD STOREY, PANTRY UNIT IN KTV ROOM » Wrong type of hinges are used for the tophung doors of the wall-mounted cabinets; such hinges are meant for side-hung doors instead.
- 15. ROOF TERRACE, KITCHEN
 WORKTOP » The drainage outlet
 at the kitchen worktop is poorly
 laid out and the concrete sink
 tiles are in the wrong colour.
- 6. ROOF TERRACE, FEATURE

 WALL » Due to the wrong
 installation method used and
 poor choice of materials, the tiles
 have dislodged from the feature
 wall in some parts. The Balau wall
 strips have warped as well.

The pictures are just but a fraction of the shoddy renovation the house had been subjected to and the stuff of every homeowner's ultimate nightmare. It was enough to make anyone view IDs with great suspicion, but luckily Ms Low was able to find a competent ID like Louis who has years of handling large residential projects under his belt.

It is a tricky project for sure, so don't forget to grab our next issue to follow how Louis turns the nightmarish renovation around!



TRENDSONTHEGO

4 Brilliant Benefits of Installing Concealed Cisterns

We explore why your bathroom deserves a life-changing transformation with Geberit's Concealed Cistern.

Most of us have what is commonly known as the floorstanding closed coupled toilet in our bathrooms. The closed coupled toilet is a type of toilet where the cistern itself is mounted directly on top of the toilet bowl, so that the toilet is one complete unit. Given that modern bathrooms today are smaller in size, this typical design takes up more space than it should and it poses a problem for proper cleaning.



HERE'S WHY YOU SHOULD SWITCH TO A CONCEALED CISTERN FROM GEBERIT INSTEAD:

1» ERGONOMIC DESIGN

Since the concealed cistern is mounted behind the wall and not in front, it presents a streamlined design that is both ergonomic and fashionable. Its wall-hung system also means that you can **effortlessly clean** the bathroom without having to navigate the labyrinth of pipes or toilet fixtures.

3» HAS A SOLUTION FOR EVERY BATHROOM SITUATION

No matter how tricky your bathroom layout is, Geberit always has a solution for any kind of situation thanks to the various concealed cistern versions and installation systems available today. Even corner installations or installations under sloping roofs won't be a problem.

2» DURABLE AND FLEXIBLE

Geberit's concealed cisterns are built with the Geberit system that can support weights up to 400 kg! Pretty amazing, especially when you consider the fact that it's based on a wall-hung system. It also comes with a wide variety of actuator plates to suit any bathroom design you may desire.

4» WIDE RANGE OF CONCEALED CISTERN PRODUCTS

With 50 years of experience in developing concealed cisterns under its belt, Geberit has an impressive collection of concealed cistern products. This includes Duofix, Geberit's latest concealed cistern offering to have adjustable height, effective acoustic insulation, painless installation and it is 100% recyclable.

Planning on upgrading your bathrooms and toilets? Why not look to Geberit for its responsible product designs, sustainable sanitation solutions, and sleek silhouettes that will impress your mother-in-law?

For more information on Geberit products, please refer to their website at www.geberit.com.sg.

Toilet Humour

Back in the olden days, the toilet was not the stuff of polite conversations. But thanks to plumbing advancements, this is where you show off the latest fixtures, much to the envy of your friends. By Lilian Wu

Of all mankind's inventions, the toilet has got to be one of the most ingenious ones. In fact, it's so important that November 19 is designated as World Toilet Day to raise awareness for the 2.5 billion people around the world who have to do without proper sanitation. The toilet is more than just a place to take care of business; it's also the sanitation centre where our hygiene needs are met. From boxes with a lid to the modern-day toilet with plumbing fixtures, the toilet has definitely come a long way since its holey beginnings.



RECYCLING HUMAN WASTE:

AGRICULTURAL COMPOST

Today's toilets are found in small rooms that are known as toilets, lavatories or bathrooms. You may have the privilege of indoor private bathrooms in your own home now, but such luxuries were only available to the wealthy back then. The not so lucky ones had to make do with outhouses (otherwise known as earth closets or privy), which is a small separate building that housed a pit toilet, removable container, or cesspits. The human waste was then regularly collected by the night soil men (or gong farmers in Tudor England), often people who were at the bottom of the hierarchy. The night soil was then taken to a collection point where it would be disposed in various ways or used as fertiliser.

But sanitation issues from using unprocessed human waste as fertilisers soon reared their smelly heads; it was a practice that risked spreading diseases via crops. This problem, however, can be avoided if you properly compost it. In fact, such compost provides a source of low-cost and nutrients-rich fertiliser for agriculture all over the world to this day.

DO YOU KNOW?

Singapore used to have a night soil system before World War 2, but following its independence and improvement in standard of living, this practice essentially became obsolete and was relegated to folk tales.

ROYAL FLUSH: ORIGINS OF THE FLUSH TOILET



The flush toilet or 'water closet' (WC) that we are familiar with today was invented by Sir John Harrington in 1596, which was installed in his manor in Kelston, England. Named the Ajax, it was even the subject of a political allegory ('A New Discourse of a Stale Subject, called the Metamorphosis of Ajax') that Sir John had written to covertly criticise the English monarchy. This ancestor of all flush toilets to come had a flush valve to release water from the tank and empty the bowl via a wash-down design.

But when it came to marketing the toilet to the masses, the credit had to go to Thomas Crapper—a plumber who founded Thomas Crapper & Co in London. He did it with so much success that manhole covers bearing his company's name in Westminster Abbey have become one of London's tourist attractions, albeit a small one.

In a flush toilet, water typically flows into the bowl from a tank and the toilet bowl itself can be mounted in 3 basic ways: pedestal, wall-mounted and squat toilet. The term 'water closet' describes the cistern that is used to hold the water required to flush the toilet bowl. Old fashioned toilets will typically see the cistern located high above the toilet bowl and connected by a long pipe. These days, however, the cistern is mounted directly on the toilet bowl and in some cases, concealed in the wall behind the toilet. Most toilet bowls are made of ceramic, but they can also be created from stainless steel or composite plastics too. Interesting, huh?

DO YOU KNOW?

Back in the olden days, ancient Romans had:

- A sewer goddess (Cloacina; invoked when sewers got blocked or backed up),
- The god of dung (Stercutius; popular with farmers while fertilising their fields with manure), and
- A toilet god (Crepitus; he was also the god of flatulence and was called upon when a person had diarrhoea or constipation)



WASH & CLEAN: PERSONAL HYGIENE IN THE TOILET

Another toilet fixture that has seen its fair share of development is the bidet (pronounced as bee-day), which is a type of sink that is used for the washing of the inner buttocks, anus, and genitalia. You might not know this, but bidet is the French word for 'pony'. The general idea was to straddle the bowl as you clean yourself, much like riding a pony. Before the 1900s, the bidet was pretty much confined to the bedroom with the chamberpot, but advancements in plumbing soon moved it to the toilet where it took on the appearance of a toilet with taps. Further developments then saw the bidet achieve greater heights by merging with the flush toilet. If you're a world traveller, you'd have come across these amazing inventions in countries like Japan and enjoyed the sheer comfort being cleaned without lifting a finger

Want one in your very own bathroom? Then you'll be happy to know that **Geberit** has **AquaClean Sela**, a shower toilet that looks like your usual WC, but works as a bidet too. All you have to do is press a button and you'll be gently cleaned with an oscillating water spray at body temperature. Cool, right?

< Image by Geberit South East Asia Pte Ltd



ON A ROLL: TOILET PAPER

To most of us, the toilet paper is an indispensable part of our sanitary lives. In fact, it can literally be a nightmare if the toilet roll were to run out. But do you know that official records of toilet paper usage dates all the way to the 6th century in ancient China? Back then, paper was not the only material used. The wealthy class also used more luxurious materials such as lace, wool, or hemp while the not-so-rich resorted to less elegant products like leaves, and snow.

Even today, toilet paper is not readily available in some parts of the world due to a few reasons. Some places consider using water a more hygienic practice (hence the use of the bidet, or hands) while others simply cannot afford the costs of toilet paper or the necessary plumbing fixtures. There are also countries like Taiwan where you can't throw toilet paper down the toilet because the toilet paper is not water soluble and may cause problems for the septic tank systems, so you have to discard it in the provided plastic bin. Such a practice might be a little jarring to foreigners who are used to flushing down the toilet paper, but isn't amazing how toilet cultures can differ so much across the world?

DO YOU KNOW?

- Not every country has a pedestal toilet. It's almost the de facto fixture in American toilets, but you're more likely to run into the squat toilet in the rural parts of the world. Toilets in underdeveloped places may even be just a hole in the ground!
- If there are no toilet paper to be seen (gasp!), then look out for a small bucket nearby that you can fill with water from a spigot. Use this to wash your unmentionables.
- In places throughout Europe, there are open-air urinals for the guys and are fairly popular due to their
 convenient locations. There is even a usable glass cube version created by artist Monica Bonvicini in
 London, which challenges people to use the toilet even though they can see the passers-by outside.
 People from outside can't see you due to the one-way mirrored glass of course, but imagine doing your
 business in such an environment!

Isn't interesting that toilets can make such a huge difference in our lives?

No doubt it's the least glamorous part of our home, but it has the most important job of all and that is to keep the environment properly sanitised.

■GEBERIT Simple yet impressive **Geberit Monolith Puro.** Suitable for floor standing WC ceramics, the sleek Know-how Geberit Monolith Puro design provides an instant from facelift and adds a touch of elegance to your ideal Switzerland bathroom. Geberit South East Asia Pte Ltd Tel: +65 6250 4011 Geberit Monolith Puro is available in all leading Geberit authorised sanitary showrooms.

Mirror Mirror on the Wall

While there are no lack of magic mirrors in Fantasy Land, we normal people have to make do with ordinary ones. Such mirrors won't verbally tell us how good we look, but they are more than just shiny accessories that you hang on the wall. Here are 4 ways why getting a suitable mirror will work magic for your home décor. By Lilian Wu



 O^{2}

A well-placed mirror invites

light into a dark corner and

makes your home look bigger.

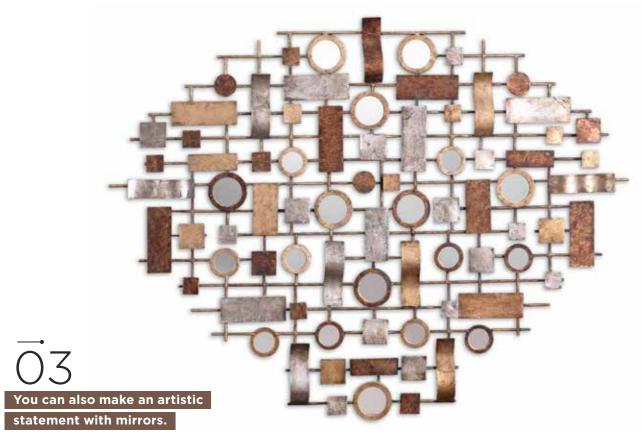
addition to your home. (Price: \$109)

able to bounce light rays around to make your home look brighter and more spacious. This works well for areas where softer lights are typically used, e.g. dining room. Likewise, horizontal mirrors make walls look longer while floor length mirrors draw the eyes upwards in an illusion of height. Avoid putting your mirrors so high up that you can't see your entire head or too low for the tallest member of your family to see their whole face. Looking for something colourful? Then a mirror like this Metal & Acrylic Framed Mirror

from Nook and Cranny Living will make a flamboyant

Having a reflective surface means that the mirror is





A singular mirror will do much to expand the space visually, but a collection of mirrors can be a great artistic statement as well. Some designers recommend using mirrors of a proportionate size that match the wall itself. For example, avoid using small mirrors on a large wall. You can, however, consider getting a few mirrors of different sizes and paint them in the same colour. Group them on the same wall for a quirky look. Or you might want to consider the **Cilento Mirror** from **Treasure Trove**, which is a combination of gorgeous metal details with numerous small accent mirrors. (**Price: \$525**)



04

Mirrors can add beauty to the home,

especially when it reflects the

beautiful scenery outside your home.

Do you have a view to die for? Then place a mirror where it can reflect the beautiful scenery into your home, like a second window. Since mirrors are said to double the impact of anything it reflects, a beautiful scenery reflected into your home with the help of mirrors like the Perching Birds from Treasure Trove will enhance its aesthetic value and increase the amount of good vibes. The same goes for wall art or your favourite colours on the adjacent wall. This also means that you should minimise clutter, dirty clothes etc. so they won't be captured by the mirror and double the psychological impact of messiness. (Price: \$675)





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Life as Art

They say that home is where the heart belongs, so what better way to liven it up than with the expression of human creativity and imagination in art? We love the classics and the depth that they can bring our home, but sometimes quirkiness can be fun too! By Lilian Wu

> Contrary to common misconceptions, Singaporean artists ARE and can be very creative. Just check out these lovely art prints from Naiise!



KUEH COMPENDIUM BY LEE XIN LI

Price: \$85 Size: Available in A1 or A2 sizes (frame not included)

FLOWER GOWNS-PHOTOGRAPHY PRINT BY LOVE, LIMZY

> Price: \$16 each Size: A4



Do you have a thing for cutsy art? Then you've come to the right place in 3 Little Picks where everything appeals to the little child living deep within our soul.



SUPERHEROES WHITE Price: \$13.80 each

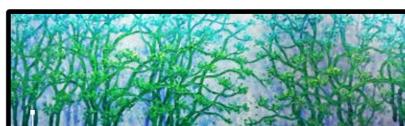
Size: 15cm(W) x 20cm(H)





Oil on Canvas with Black Varnish Solid Wood Frame Price: \$1,280

Size: 100cm(W) x 120cm(H)



COOL BREEZE

Oil on Canvas with Black Varnish Solid Wood Frame Price: \$1,880

Size: 200cm(W) x 80cm(H)



ALICE'S DREAM

Price: \$42.80

Size: 35cm(W) x 50cm(H)



TYPEWRITERS

Price: \$36.80 each Size: 30cm(W) x 30cm(H)



SEASON BLOSSOMS -YELLOW GOLD

Oil on Canvas with Walnut Varnish Solid Wood Frame Price: \$3,480

Size: 130cm(W) x 150cm(H)





REFLECTIONS
Price: \$900
Size: 100cm(W) x 100cm(H)

Carried Land





MARILYN MONROE (in 4 different colours and designs) Price: \$580 Size: 80cm(W) x 80cm(H)

Introduce a little pop culture into your home with these paintings from Merlin Frame Maker & Art Gallery, and watch your home décor move up the glamorous scale.



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Size: 100cm(W) x 100cm(H)



PEONY RED
Price: \$460
Size: 60cm(W) x 80cm(H)





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Killing You Softly

Do you know that household products such as air fresheners contain harmful substances that can damage your health in the long run? You might be surprised, but it's time to make a change for the sake of your family's health! The first step? Minimise the exposure to toxins by paying more attention to the products that you buy off the shelf. By Lilian Wu



Most of us want a clean home where the air has no obnoxious odours and every corner is dustfree. With so many types of cleaners out there, we're literally spoiled for choice. But before you happily buy your usual brand, take a few minutes to study its label. Does it contain toxic substances that should be a cause for concern? You wouldn't consciously use toxins on yourself nor would you expose your family to poisonous fumes so why would you be blasé about buying cleaners that could potentially harm your health in the long run? In fact there are products where if you mix them together, they produce toxic vapours that can be lethal e.g. bleach and ammonia.

Others release harmful substances such as VOCs and allergens into the air while some products contain the following chemicals that are commonly associated with harmful bodily effects like skin irritation and cancer risks:

PHTHALATES

- » Used to soften plastics so they would be less brittle and not crack when bent
- » May lead to reproductive problems, hormonal abnormalities, and birth defects
- » Found in home products such as air fresheners as well as items that are made from vinyl or PVC e.g. shower curtains

BENZENE

- » Used as a starting material to make other chemical products like plastics, rubbers, and detergents
- » Damages the immune system and causes cells like the bone marrow to produce insufficient red blood cells, which results in anaemia
- » People can also be exposed to benzene via cigarette and second-hand smoke

FORMALDEHYDE

- » As part of the normal metabolic process, it's produced by most living organisms in small quantities
- » Classified as a known human carcinogen (cancer-causing substance)
- » Used in many household products such as pressed-wood furniture (particlewood, fiberwood and plywood), as well as glue

Scary, isn't it? Other ingredients that you have keep a look out for include but are not limited to: Vanillin, Benzyl Acetate, and Ethyl Acetoacetate. Studies have also shown that housewives are found to have 55% more risk of developing cancer than women who work outside the home. The statistics are equally scary for children who come from cleaner homes; apparently they have nearly double the risk of developing asthma. But fear not! There are viable and more eco-friendly options that can be easily bought from supermarkets and the like.

AIR FRESHENERS AND DEODORISERS

Due to household activities such as cooking, your home may smell a little on the bad side. Most people will choose to use air fresheners, but breathing in too much of the scented air is not good for your health. It can even make asthma worse and affect reproductive development adversely. They also impede your sense of smell by releasing nerve-deadening agents or coating your nasal passages with chemicals. The ingredients on the label may just have 'fragrance' listed, but you never know what it refers to specifically or what types of chemicals it contains.

So play safe and follow one of the following options that are healthier

- » OPEN UP THE WINDOWS to let the fresh air in
- » CULTIVATE INDOOR PLANTS such as peace lily (avoid if you have cats) and Boston fern to neutralise the odours
- » HEAT A POT OF WATER AND PUT A FEW CITRUS PEELS (like orange or lemon) into it, the scent will gently drift to all parts of your
- » MIX A SPRAY BOTTLE OF WHITE VINEGAR (4 TEASPOONS) AND WATER (4 CUPS) for an instant but natural deodoriser
- » ADD A FEW DROPS OF YOUR FAVOURITE ESSENTIAL OIL TO WHITE VINEGAR, VODKA OR ALCOHOL to create an effective yet eco-friendly sanitiser or deodoriser, this mixture also makes a great household cleaner as well (do note that citrus essence oils can lighten or bleach furniture so use them with care)
- » USE BAKING SODA for neutralising acidic odours such as urine or vomit while white vinegar works wonderfully on alkaline odours such as the ones given out by human and animal solid waste
- » Another economical deodoriser alternative is the ACTIVATED CHARCOAL, which can be easily bought at aquariums



HOUSEHOLD CLEANERS

Like air fresheners and deodorisers, household cleaners contain a whole range of chemicals that make for effective cleaning but are not so good for our health in the long run. White vinegar, baking soda, and essential oils are all useful ingredients that you should utilise to the fullest, but here are other natural options you can consider:

- » Cornstarch: great as a window cleaner, furniture polisher, grease remover or shampoo for carpets and rugs
- » Salt: effective fabric softener and stain remover
- » Soap nuts: eco-friendly alternative for your laundry since it's basically the fruit of the Sapindus tree that grows in Nepal and India

INSECT REPELLENTS

Why subject your family members to toxic insect repellent fumes when you can simply turn to the more eco-friendly essential oils? For pests such as mosquitoes, essential oils can also act as a larvicidal (they kill larvae). Here is a rough guide on which essential oil to use for different types of pests:

- » Mosquitoes: Lemongrass, Lemon, Lavender, Peppermint, Thyme, Eucalyptus, Pine etc.
- » Mosquito larvae: Thyme or Peppermint
- » Cockroaches: Cypress or Peppermint
- » Bed bugs: Rosemary, Thyme, Eucalyptus, Lavender, Patchouli
- » Ants: Spearmint, Peppermint, Orange, Idaho

Essential oils don't just get rid of the pests naturally, they have a lovely scent that can serve as your very own aromatherapy too! But if you have an existing medical condition or are pregnant, do consult your doctor before using any essential oil. Oh, and be sure to use good quality essential oils in the therapeutic grade. Know of other eco-friendly methods to clean your home? We'll love to hear from you on our Facebook Fan Page!



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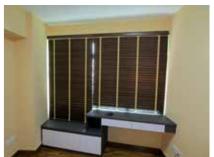
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3 Greener Ways to Combat Dengue

You've heard the news and you've seen the government campaigns in the media. Dengue can and will occur in any area where the residents are not vigilant enough about getting rid of mosquito breeding grounds, so it's important to take the necessary measures for the protection of your family.

We look at a few ways to get rid of the pests in an eco-friendly manner. By Lilian Wu

Dengue is no joke. According to the National Environment Agency (NEA), there have been over 14,000 cumulative cases since 1st January this year. There are fatal cases as well, such as the case of an 86-year-old man who died of dengue fever despite receiving blood transfusions and supportive therapy at Khoo Teck Puat Hospital. So really, it's no longer a matter of "ignore and it'll go away" or "it'll never happen to me because I don't live in a hotspot". We have to be wary of the dangers and pain that dengue will inflict on our family members if we're not vigilant.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE SO FAR

The government, for most part, has taken a tough stance against the dengue problem—adopting a multi-pronged approach to control the onslaught of dengue. Among the main focuses of its approach, is the preventive surveillance and active control via the removal of mosquito breeding grounds. This means routine outdoor thermal fogging by a pest control operator (PCO). However, there are concerns that this may not be eco-friendly because it pollutes the environment. On top of this, it creates pesticide resistance in the mosquitoes as well as kill the mosquitoes' natural predators.

Aside from the usual practices to eliminate the mosquitoes' breeding grounds, some residents have also resorted to using mosquito traps that emit carbon dioxide to lure mosquitoes to their death. Since carbon dioxide is known to cause global warming, this measure is not good for the environment in the long run. The constant use of insecticide/chemical sprays or burning of mosquito coils is not advisable either, since they compromise indoor air quality. So what are we to do against the pesky bugs? Here are some eco-friendly measures you can adopt at home.

» REAR GUPPIES

What better way to get rid of mosquitoes than with their natural predators? One great example is the guppy (Poecilia reticulata), which feeds on mosquito larvae and is a hardy fish that can survive in a variety of water conditions. In fact, it's a common practice for people in Thailand to keep large pots containing a few water plants and some guppies on their properties. Guppies are not only beautiful, they are also easy to care for so why not consider rearing a few guppies instead of using chemical means to keep the mosquito population down?

» USE MOSQUITO NETS

In the olden days when air-conditioning weren't that prevalent, mosquito nets made an effective barrier against invasive mosquitoes. It has had a long history of usage across the world so you know that it's something that definitely works. However, sleeping under the net does tend to be warmer as it reduces air flow to a certain extent so it's best to have the fan on at the same time.

» APPLY NATURAL INSECT REPELLENTS

To combat mosquito bites, NEA recommends the careful use of insect repellents. In Singapore, the 3 main repellent active ingredients registered are DEET, Hydroyethyl Isobutyl Piperidine Carboxylate, and Ethyl Butylacetylamino-propionate. But before you turn to a repellent that has one of the aforementioned ingredients, you might want to consider a more natural option instead. DEET, especially, has had studies noting its harmful effects on your health. We did a search and found several alternatives you can try out:



..CATNIP

Who knew that this herb is so powerful? Not only does it drive your cat into throes of ecstasy, it's a highly effective repellent against mosquitoes. In fact, research done at the lowa State University have also showed that the essential oil found in this herb is 10 times more effective than DEET. You can purchase catnip from pet stores or its seeds/plant from local nurseries.

..CITRONELLA

The essential oil that you can obtain from its leaves and stems will mask the smells that will normally attract mosquitoes to you. Look for the true varieties if you want a plant: Cymbopogon nardus or Citronella winterianus. It's often confused with the lemongrass, but they're not the same.



..LAVENDER

Its essential oil is an effective mosquito repellent, but do use essential oils with care if you have a medical condition or are pregnant. Consult your doctor before using.



Apparently it provides a mild protection against mosquito bites when you take it orally or apply it to your skin!

..NEEM

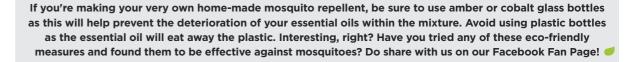
Some people believe that it makes a great mosquito repellent when you mix its essential oil with coconut oil.



There are evidence to suggest that the soybean mosquito repellent lasts longer than citronella-based ones. They're also much safer to use than DEET.

..EUCALYPTUS

Like Citronella, it's a natural repellent that is believed to confuse the mosquitoes' sense of smell.





Is the Property Market on the Road to Recovery?

Despite stronger sale figures and launch volume, prices for private residential properties have dipped.

Private home sales reached 2,665 units during Q2 2014, the highest quarterly figure since the total debt servicing ratio (TDSR) framework was introduced in June 2013, according to a recent report from Savills Singapore.

Notably, primary sales volume in the private residential market was at 1,744 units in the last quarter, while the figures for Q3 and Q4 2013 stood at 2,430 and 2,568 respectively.

"The sharp increase in transactions after prices moderated marginally point to a very price-elastic market, giving a clear signal that underlying demand is strong and allaying fears of a market meltdown," said Alan Cheong, Senior Director for Research & Consultancy at Savills Research.

On a monthly basis, sales surged by 58.8 percent to 762 units in April compared to the previous month. But by May, it nearly doubled to 1,488 units, a figure not

seen since the imposition of the TDSR.

In terms of launches, developers released 2,843 units in Q2 2014, a far cry from the 1,964 units unveiled during the first quarter of 2014. It also surpassed the 2,631 units seen in Q4 2013, but it's still short of the 3,313 recorded in the third quarter of last year.

"The turnaround is attributed to the 1,819 units launched in May, which made up 64 percent of the total number of units launched in Q2 2014. Coco Palms and Commonwealth Towers were the main contributors, accounting for more than half of the units launched in May," said the property consultancy.

Similarly, transaction volume in the secondary market has rebounded. Sales of second-hand homes rose to 1,453 units in Q2 2014 compared to 1,069 units in the previous quarter. However, it still dwarfs the 2,410 posted in Q2 2013.

In spite of the stronger sales and launch volume,



URA's price index for private residential properties across Singapore dipped by one percent in Q2 2014 versus the 1.3 percent fall in the previous quarter.

"Prices of non-landed private homes also fell across the island. The largest drop was seen in the CCR, registering a dip of 1.5 percent. In the RCR, prices weakened marginally by 0.4 percent while the decline in the OCR gathered momentum, falling by 0.9 percent."

Based on Savills' data, the average price of nonlanded homes in the luxury segment softened by 1.1 percent to \$\$2,330 psf in Q2 2014, representing its fifth consecutive quarterly decline.

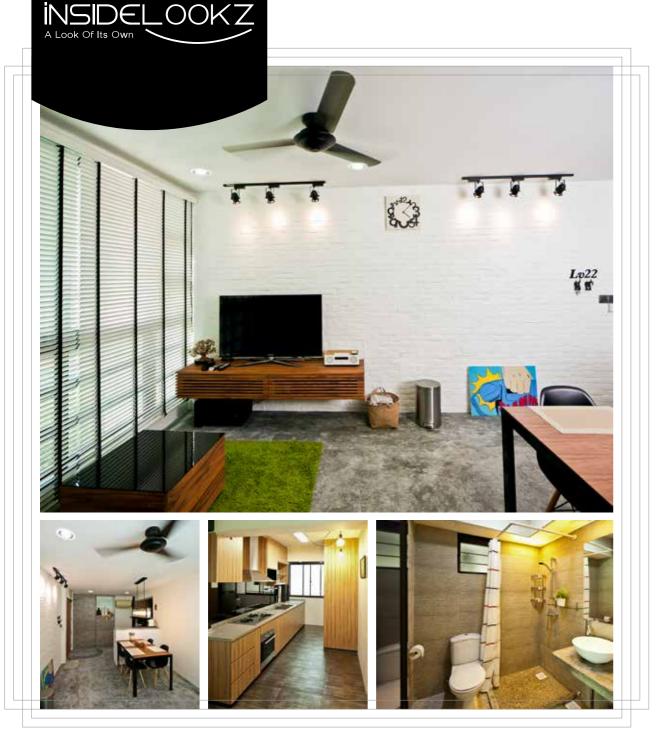
"Given that the cooling measures are here to stay, prices of bigger residential homes in the prime district are unlikely to pick up any time soon," it said.

In terms of upcoming supply, about 2,395 private homes and 1,520 ECs are expected to be rolled out under the Government Land Sales Programme for 2H 2014. The pipeline supply of private houses hit 83,633 units at the end of Q2 2014. Of this, 34,643 units remain unsold, while about 8,066 are due to be completed by year-end.

Moving forward, the outlook for the private housing market in 2H 2014 is expected to remain dismal if the property curbs, especially the TDSR, remain in their current form. Given the prevailing conditions and the price-sensitive home buyers, prices could slide further in the coming months or quarters.

Nonetheless, prices in the primary market and small-format homes segment could stay flat or even climb marginally.

Some projects in 2H 2014 may even see stellar demand. In fact, City Gate at Beach Road sold over 50 percent of its 150 units after it was launched in July. The 500-unit Highline Residences in Kim Tian Road is another highly anticipated project due to the absence of recent launches in its immediate vicinity.



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5 Common Defects in New HDB Flats You Should Know

If you're a first-time HDB owner, it can be pretty exciting to open the door to your home for the first time. But before you gleefully start your renovation, do remember to watch out for the defects that will inevitably be present in the flat. By Lilian Wu

No matter how well-built a property is, there will invariably be some small defects. Some are pretty serious and require immediate attention, but other defects like hairline wall cracks will not be easy to catch and may only surface a few months later. You might be anxious to get on with your renovation, but our recommendation is to look over your home carefully with a few simple tools. It might be tiring now, but imagine the inconveniences you have to go through in order to rectify the defects a few months down the road!

HDB also stipulated on their website that all new HDB flats are provided with a 1-year defects liability period (DLP), which is effective from the date of sale. This means that HDB will rectify defects in the flat as reported by the flat owner, but any defects resulting from the flat owner's renovation works or usage are not covered by the DLP. In other words, inspect your flat carefully and report any defects found within 7 days of receiving your keys or before starting your renovation.

PROBLEM 1

HOLLOW & UNEVEN FLOOR TILES

If you've opted for a flat where the cost of the floor tiles are factored into your total buying price, then you should make sure that they are in an acceptable condition before you start your renovations. We list out the likely problems and the tools to detect them:

- Coins or marbles: used to detect hollow floor tiles by tapping on them; a hollow sound usually indicates that the floor tile has hollow spots, a condition which may lead to tiles popping up in future
- Ruler: make sure your floor tiles are even by placing a ruler on them; if the edge of one tile appears to be higher than its neighbour's, then do take note. At the same time, check for any hairline cracks on the tiles.

PROBLEM 2

ELECTRICAL SOCKETS

Check that all electrical sockets are working with a simple plug-in LED light and make sure that none of the sockets are rusty, otherwise a report to HDB is warranted. This is only possible after you activate the utilities so don't forget to do so after you've collected your keys! The same goes for TV points i.e. the provided TV cable must be able to fit.



PROBLEM 3

CRACKED OR SLANTED WALLS

An insidious problem that may not surface in your initial checks, cracks in the wall can be an absolute eyesore. The good news is you can approach HDB to fill and paint over the cracks even after your renovation. One of our bloggers, PandaGirl, encountered this very problem and it was swiftly corrected by a representative from her estate's Building Service Centre (BSC). But if you spot the hairline cracks before your renovation, then make sure to indicate them clearly with masking tape and marker pens. In addition, have a Spirit Level handy to ensure that your walls and ceilings are not slanted. Oh, and watch out for leaking walls during wet weather.

PROBLEM 4

CLOGGED TOILETS & LEAKS

Sometimes rubbish or cement may be carelessly thrown into the toilets or down the drains. To make sure your pipes are not clogged or leaking, activate your utilities and run the water. This will also let you see if your taps and basins are functioning. Toilet bowls shouldn't come with cracks and must be able to flush as well.

PROBLEM 5

WINDOWS & DOORS

Next on the list are the windows and the doors in your home. Make sure they can open and close without any difficulty, have no rusty parts and are properly aligned within their respective frames. Among the keys that you received from HDB should also be a set of keys to your various bedroom doors (except the bomb shelter and bathrooms). Try these out to make sure the mechanisms are working as they should. Last but not least, check your windows on rainy days to ensure they do not leak.

Once you've found the defects, do remember to document them with a digital camera and highlight them with masking tape and markers. Having your own record is far more efficient than relying on your memory, especially when there are more than 10 defects in the flat. Another vital thing to remember is this: DO NOT give your house keys to the BSC personnel and buy a bicycle lock/padlock to lock your front gate instead.



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Quirky is Thy Name

Does your home lack a certain x-factor? Save it from the clutches of a humdrum existence and transform it by employing the use of a signature piece, preferably ones as unforgettable as these.

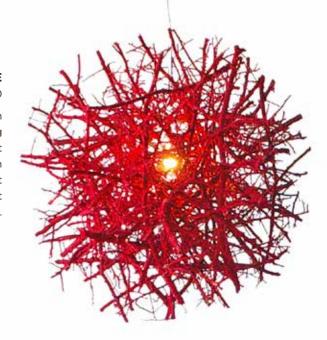
By Lilian Wu



HEDGEHOG BY GEOFFREY MANCE

from **Strangelets** | Price: \$3,400

For an explosion of wild style in your living room or other parts of your home, turn to the **Hedgehog** by **Geoffrey Mance.** A gorgeous chandelier that is made from an artful arrangement of hawthorn hedge and copper, this is an iconic piece that reminds one of the chaotic yet unified beauty that nature is well-known for.









SILK CESENDELLO FLOOR LAMP

From Vanilla Home | Price: upon request

An elegant structure that spirals in reminiscence of the Muslim turban, the **Silk Cesendello Floor Lamp** symbolises the style fusion of the Oriental-Renaissance themes that emerged in Venice back in the 15th century. Meticulously crafted by hand, this silk floor lamp will add a vital injection of ethnic beauty to any inner sanctum.



AXOR LAMPSHOWER BY NENDO From **Hansgrohe SE** Price: upon request Brought to you by the Japanese design studio Nendo, this creative fusion of light and water will give you a heightened sense of the sensual experience. This Axor LampShower has a wide-rimmed shower crest and warm ambient lighting so that time slows down in the bathroom, giving you the rare opportunity to truly relish the sensation of washing the toils of the workday away.



A Shining Beacon of Inspiration

You might not think much of the traditional candlestick, but it has faithfully illuminated homes for centuries. Although it has been relegated to an archaic fall-back tool in times of blackout today, the candlestick now has a new lease of life thanks to Benjamin Shine—an award-winning designer/artist who is known for ingenious works like the iconic depiction of President Barack Obama woven from an American flag and artful depictions of famous personalities with tulle. By Lilian Wu





For most people, being creative is to come up with new ideas. In Benjamin Shine's case, however, it's taking an existing idea and giving it a unique twirl so that it comes back with a renewed purpose and appearance. Take the Rekindle Candle for example; it's a candlestick holder that collects the melting wax to form a new candle. As the candle burns, the melted wax will then accumulate in the transparent stem (where a length of wick is centrally located) to form a new stick of candle and you get to use the candlestick again! Isn't it amazing how the idea of reusing a candle can be so simple yet no one has actually thought of it till now? It's not available for distribution yet, but the London-born designer/artist already has an impressive portfolio of artwork, installations, and products such as the limited-edition furniture piece 40 Winks—where Benjamin blurred the boundaries between "sitter" and "chair", and created an original yet functional chair.



Another furniture piece that we particularly love from Benjamin is the Box Lounger that was specially created for the BT Artbox Exhibition in London. The British phone booth is beautifully transformed into a comfy lounger with button-back red leather upholstery and light-up Telephone signs, paying homage to a well-loved British icon. It's available in a limited edition series of 3 in a variety of colours so do email studio@benjaminshine.com if you're keen to get a set for your home. In the meantime, we reach out to the London-born visionary and find out just what keeps his creativity burning bright.

» WHAT DOES DESIGN MEAN TO

An opportunity for expression, questioning, humour, service... essentially to put something worthwhile into the world and learn something by doing it.

» WHAT DO YOU THINK MAKES A QUALITY PIECE OF DESIGN?

The unexpected.

» WHO HAS BEEN YOUR **GREATEST INSPIRATION IN LIFE?** WHY IS THAT SO?

Stevie Wonder! He made an album called Innervisions—a description that creative people can especially relate to, but perhaps none more so than Stevie, who draws so much from it. Not only a genius and a risk taker, he's an artist who has also survived rather than imploding or becoming some sort of tragedy despite his great stardom.



» OF ALL YOUR DESIGNS, WHICH IS YOUR FAVOURITE AND WHY?

My tulle work means the most to me as it's been the result of a long journey! My children's product Cordz which I invented back in 2006 remains a favourite as it was one of my earliest ventures into product design and licensing, which taught me a lot.

» HOW DID YOU COME UP WITH THE IDEA FOR THE RENEWABLE CANDLE AND WHERE CAN WE **BUY IT?**

I was designing a number of lowcost/high innovation products, just trying to figure out some worthwhile alternatives that could be interesting to develop and I started to play around with some candle holder ideas. I had in my mind the visual of those candles which melt to leave huge mounds of wax and wondered if the wax could be captured to make a new candle. From there I started making some models to test it. Rekindle is not yet available to buy, but is currently being developed by a distributor and hopefully will be available soon. Details of its availability will be updated on my

If you love Benjamin's work as much as we do, then do head on to his website at www.BenjaminShine.com to check out his wide repertoire of designs!

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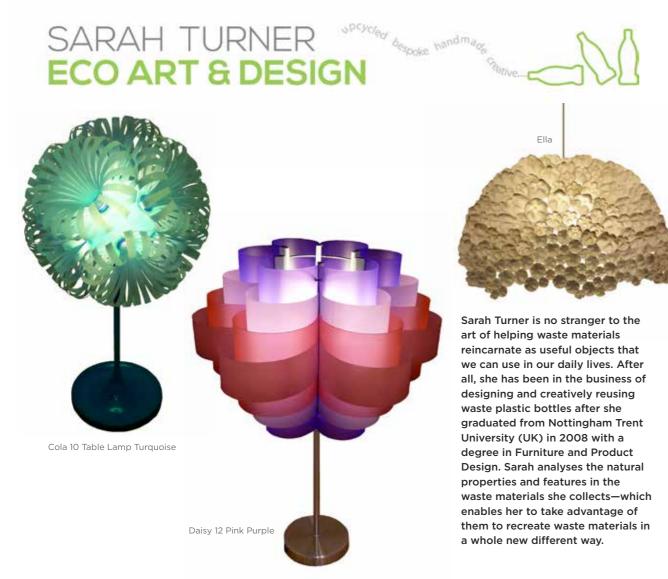
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Art Born from Nature

Most of us understand the need for recycling, reusing, and reducing waste in the bid to save the environment from deteriorating further. Turning waste materials such as plastic bottles into decorations is not a new concept, but being able to create stunning lighting fixtures that you can realistically use at home is something else entirely. We speak with Sarah Turner, an award-winning Eco artist and designer, who takes the 3Rs up another notch and gives us gorgeous light fixtures that will transform your home forever. By Lilian Wu





local cafes and households. Sarah then puts them through a long process of cleaning, sandblasting (to give the bottles an opaque look) and dyeing in eyecatching colours before she sculpts them with some pretty nifty cutting skills. The result? A collection of simply gorgeous high-end light fixtures that we at RenoNation would LOVE to grace our ceilings at home. After all, "...just because a product is made from rubbish, it doesn't mean it needs to look like it does!"

We're definitely in love with how luxurious the lamps look, despite their humble beginnings. The Ella especially strikes a chord with us because it reminds us of a whimsical umbrella! This particular lamp is handcrafted from the ends of different-sized plastic drink

bottles, which are then sandblasted to turn them a lovely white. Sarah then goes on to piece them together by hand and creates the final round shape. "The ends of plastic bottles are a gorgeous form," Sarah explained, "it's a shame you don't really get to see them. Ella really shows off this part of the waste material."









In case you think that the rest of the plastic bottle go to waste, fear not! Sarah believes in fully utilising the entire plastic bottle, even if it's not for the same lamp. The **Leftover Light** is a prime example because it's made from the waste polypropylene sheets from making other lamps such as Cola 10 and Flower Lights. The sheets are randomly tangled together to create a messy yet fun spherical form. But out of so many waste materials, why plastic bottles in particular?

"I chose plastic bottles as there are simply so many of them which are thrown away. My plastic bottle lights first started when I was at university studying for my design degree," Sarah recalled, "at the time I worked in a coffee shop and customers threw many bottles away there, so I decided this would be the material I would creatively reuse and set about trying to think of ideas to do so! I have experimented with other waste plastic and I have also tried using cans. I like to use any waste material really but I think plastic bottles will always be a favourite of

It's certainly laudable how Sarah managed to change what used to be relegated to the trash bin into something that looks professional and not home-made or recycled. "I take pride in the fact my products are totally transformed from the waste material they originate from. If they were recycled-looking or looked like something you could easily make at home, then people wouldn't want to buy them," said Sarah.

Love the idea of green decorations in the form of lighting fixtures that don't look like they were hastily put together at home? Then you should check out Sarah Turner's website at www.sarahturner.co.uk and place your order! Prices start from £49.



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Debunking the Sha Qi Myths

These days, people have become fearful of the Sha Qi bogey man. In fact, some people even go to the extent of being fearful about sharp objects of any kind within their home and outside of their home. Shelves are banned, cactus is forbidden and objects with pointy ends are relegated to the drawer.

This is simply not a practical way to live your life and certainly, not what Feng Shui is all about. So, once and for all, I am going debunk the Sha Qi myths by explaining the few types of Sha Qi that you should be concerned about and why you should be concerned about these types of Sha Qi.

At the same time, I want you to also remember one very important pointer when it comes to Feng Shui and that is the question of bias and prejudice. In Feng Shui, nothing is permanently good or permanently bad.

Similarly, something that is negative in one instance may not be negative in another. Even features in the environment that is most definitively Sha Qi do not necessarily exert a negative influence on the properties around them. It all depends on the circumstances and situation. When it comes to dealing with Sha Qi, always be practical. Ask yourself these questions:

- Is the object in question really Sha Qi?
- Is it of a size and proportion to affect my property?
- Is it far or near? Does it affect me or any of the residents in my home?
- How does it affect me or any of the residents in my home?

Sun Tzu once said, "know your enemy and know yourself and you will always be victorious". Understand what Sha Qi is and how it works and you will be able to deal with it accordingly. So, let's look at a few common "Sha Qi" bad guys in the Feng Shui world.





THE SHARP-ROOFED NEIGHBOUR

The corners of roofs can sometimes result in Qi being focused and angled at your property. Hence, a neighbour's sharp roof corner pointing at your house is certainly something you want to look for.

However, let's be practical. The only way you can entirely remove this possibility is if you are the only house on the street and that's practically impossible unless you live in a cowboy town.

So in what instances should your neighbour's sharp roof corner be a case for real concern?

If the sharp roof is not visible from the main door, then you are quite safe. If the

sharp roof is on the second floor, and your door is on the ground floor, then the sharp roof does not affect your property. If the sharp roof is located on a neighbouring house across the street and it is a fairly wide street, you don't really have a problem either.

In all these instances, the problem appears to be present but upon closer examination, is not at a proximity that is close enough to affect you. So something that seems scary, when qualified, turns out to be not so scary after all.

Sharpness is not always bad, especially if it's not pointing at you in the first place!

2



EVERYBODY KNOWS T-JUNCTION

The T-junction is often regarded as an unfavourable Feng Shui feature because it is "sharp". Many people usually avoid living near a T-junction because they have heard that it is bad. This is again, a misunderstanding of Feng Shui fundamentals.

In Feng Shui, we like Qi to meander. It should be peaceful and benevolent. Gentle curves, which make Qi move gently along, are preferred over a straight line—which fixes Qi, making it aggressive and volatile. Aggressive and volatile Qi is no longer Sheng Qi or positive Qi, it becomes Sha Qi or negative Qi. Remember how the goal of harnessing Sheng Qi and minimising Sha Qi is at the core and root of Feng Shui?

The reason a T-junction is considered an unfavourable feature to have near a house is due to the way Qi should and should not move or flow in Feng Shui. T-junctions are considered an unfavourable Feng Shui feature because it focuses the Qi, making it aggressive, fast-moving and causes it to crash into the property in a volatile manner.

But by itself, the T-junction is not bad per se. A T-junction is negative in certain instances only. For example, if it is a busy junction with lots of traffic, it is definitely a bigger problem than a quiet T-junction in a residential area where there is low and minimal traffic due to the relatively low number of cars using the junction.

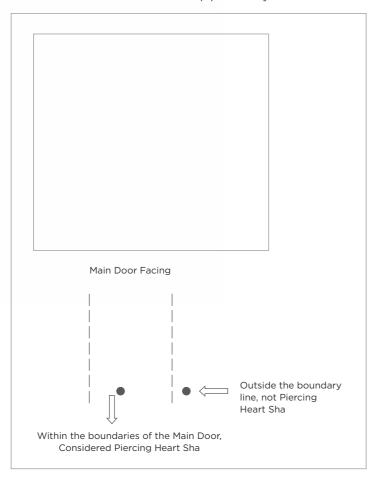
Similarly, a T-junction is a greater cause for concern if it is focused at the sector where the main door is located or crashes right into the main door—more so than if it is hitting another sector of your property. In fact, there could be some instances when a T-junction is a positive and not negative feature.

If the T-junction is located in a prosperous Qi direction and the Qi is flowing in the right direction according to certain formulas and calculations, it may even be ushering in positive Qi for the property and the occupants.

DON'T BE A LAMP POST

A lamp post directly in front of the main door is definitely a problem in Feng Shui; we call it the Piercing Heart Sha. Now, do not get needlessly upset and decide you need to remove the lamp post outside your house because you think you will have bad luck otherwise. It is only a case of Piercing Heart Sha if the lamp post (or pole of any kind) is right in front of your door.

How do you determine if it is right outside your door? From your main door, extend two imaginary lines out towards the road, as in the diagram. If the lamp post or the pole falls within the boundaries of these two lines, then you might have a problem. You then need to see how close this lamp post is to your main door.



If it is across the street, it's not that bad. But if it is, say, within 1 to 2 meters of your main door, then you have a problem. If it is outside the boundaries, then you don't have a problem with the Piercing Heart Sha.

The main door is one of the three important factors that a Feng Shui consultant will always examine. So when it comes to Sha Qi, it's important to always check to see if the main door is affected.





PESKY PYLONS

Many people, even those who are not into Feng Shui, will refuse to buy a house near a pylon. Now, the common fallacy is that pylons are a sharp object and thus constitute bad Feng Shui.

Like I have said earlier, sharpness is not the sole criteria to determining good or bad Feng Shui. Generally, pylons are not a favourable feature to have near your home but we cannot take it as a blanket rule that a pylon is always bad. So when does it pose a problem to have a pylon near your house?

First, if the pylon is very near your property—within immediate proximity (around 500m) of your house—then a pylon is a problem. Next, look at which sector it is located in. If it is in the East Sector, for example, then the pylon is affecting Zhen Gua.

The Zhen Gua trigram relates to the eldest son, among other things. If your family consists entirely of girls, then this pylon is not a major case for concern. See

how the sneeringly scary Sha Qi can turn out to be not so scary after all?

A Sha Qi feature like a pylon is only a cause for concern if the Gua of the sector tells you that someone in that house is likely to be affected by the negative feature in that sector. If someone who lives in the house is affected, then you have a problem.

If the Sha Qi affects a non-existent resident (like a family with only female children but no eldest son), then the problem is not major. Last but not least, pylons are regarded as a Fire element so if it is located in a sector that is suitable for a Fire element, the pylon is not dangerous or negative.

In Feng Shui, besides the forms in the environment and the dynamic nature of Qi, we must also consider the residents of the property or the people using the house. It's just like how there is a flu bug going around but you probably don't need to be scared because you have had the flu shot. Similarly if a type of Sha Qi is present but it doesn't affect any of the residents, it's not a big deal.

I hope that I have helped to slay a few Sha Qi demons and debunked some of the fear factors behind Sha Qi in my article. Remember, Feng Shui is not about paranoia. When you cease to be afraid, then Feng Shui can truly be harnessed and used to bring positive benefits to your life.

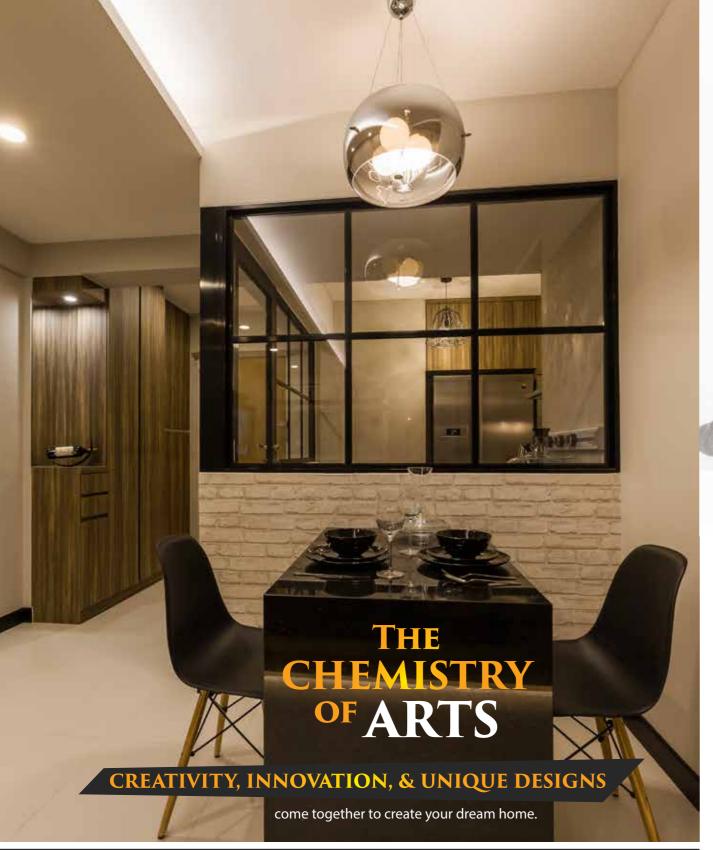
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