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residences

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Living the High Life

9 living styles redefined

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Living area.

Pared-Back Living

A cramped apartment was transformed into a cosy yet spacious interior for a couple who saw the need for a smaller and more practical living arrangement since their children had left the nest egg.

text by **ZOE LIEW** photography by **IDC** lead architect / director-in-charge **TINA LAU**
design team **ANGELINE CHAN, JUSTIN YEO**

As a young, growing city in East Malaysia, Kuching's high-rise residential scene is experiencing a boom. It is becoming rather common to see apartments popping up along the city's skyline which has been formerly dominated by low-rise buildings.

One of the reasons why there is a growing demand for apartment living is the need for some people to downsize to a more practical living arrangement. The clients are an energetic couple with two grown children living overseas. Since their children had left the nest egg, they realised that their bungalow was too large for the two of them. Wanting to visit their children more often, they were delighted when they saw the opportunity to relocate to a condominium that sat within their neighbourhood. The layout of the apartment suited them. It spanned 230 square metres of area with 3 bedrooms and attached bathrooms, a spacious living and dining area flooded with natural light. Nevertheless, they saw the need for some improvements and wanted to adapt the bones of the existing blank space for their tastes and lifestyles.

The couple approached Tina Lau from IDC Architects to design a simple, fuss-free home where they could unwind after a busy day. Both professionals, they emphasised the need for the space to be functional and practical. Since they were moving from a large house to an apartment, the architects were asked to look into the lack of storage space.

With these concerns in mind, the architects explored different ways of maximising the use of the existing spaces. The open plan of the living area was in fact a long space divided into 2 areas — a living room and a study that could double-up as an exercise area. This duality translated into the custom-designed TV bench which acts as a partition screen and a display shelf for knick-knacks and family photographs. Subtle lighting is used throughout the apartment to create a cosy and comfortable atmosphere. Many of the lights are concealed within the customised built-in furniture, casting an intimate, natural glow over the space.



Dining area facing the entrance.

Within the same area, the dining table sits in the middle of the room underneath a lowered ceiling with hidden light covers surrounding it which in turn resembles a floating lantern, thus marking the dining space as a defining point. A full-height joinery encompassing cupboards, sliding panels, mirrored surfaces and bench tops line the entire length of the wall adjacent to the dining table. As requested by the clients who often adjourn to their dining room for meals and tea, the team also created a dry kitchen in the form of this joinery unit. The full-height sliding panels conceal pantry shelves and storage for cutlery, plates and cups. Tom Dixon pendant lights are suspended above a low bench that separates the dining area from the hallway that leads to the bedrooms.

The main areas where the clients wanted the most change were the master bedroom and attached ensuite. The existing configuration restricted wardrobe space and the bed was positioned in an awkward location. The clients also wanted a private dressing area adjacent to the ensuite. The demand for more wardrobe space was significant. One challenge the architects faced was incorporating as much storage as was possible into the built-ins without making the space feel cramped. The entire layout of the master bedroom was changed. The wardrobe now lined the entire length of the wall where the bed was originally placed. The bed was moved to where the wardrobe was originally



Another view of the dining & living area.





The full-height sliding doors conceal the storage space for pantry items and breakfast items in the dining area.



When the doors are closed, the cupboards become a unit for display items and decorative accessories.



Tom Dixon pendant lights suspended from the ceiling help define and light certain spaces in a subtle way.

built. This arrangement resulted in a bedroom that was not only more spacious. It also provided additional wardrobe space and opportunities for more shelves and cabinets. The bed backdrop was designed as a single unit with cantilevered side tables and concealed cupboards. Soft furnishings from Acacia Fabrics were used to upholster the cushioned bed head and black-out curtains for the windows from Fabric Library were selected for the rest of the apartment.

The remodelling of the master ensuite and dressing area was radical. Walls were demolished to create openings for vast expanses of frameless glass which in turn rendered a seamless visual and spatial flow. Cabinets with mirrored surfaces and concealed lights above the marble-clad hand basin counter line the full length of the wall, establishing the illusion of spaciousness. New sanitary fittings from Kohler and Toto were selected for their elegant and minimalistic aesthetics.

In line with the minimalist theme, the architects kept to a simple monochromatic palette of whites, charcoals, greys and natural wood. Details such as recessed shadow-lines and finger-pulls were introduced in order to break the monotony of the customised built-in furniture. Together, the clean, minimalistic lines of the apartment and the simple, abstract composition of the built-in furniture reflect the 'less-is-more' philosophy which is aligned with the clients' request for a simpler, pared-back living arrangement. The result is a spacious, bright interior with cleverly concealed storage spaces tucked away in the built-in furniture which in turn help define the spaces. **hc.residences**



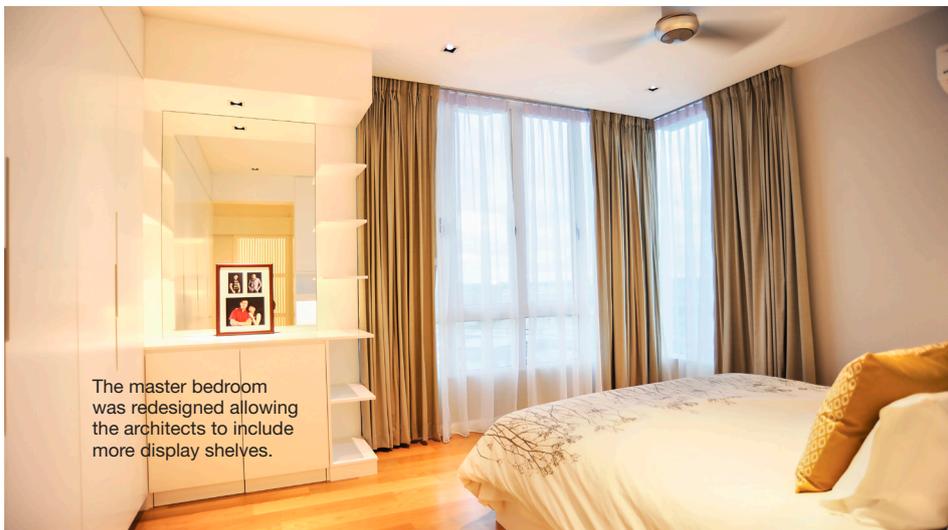
Moving from a double-storey bungalow to a 230 square metres sized apartment, the owners requested that ample storage be incorporated as much as possible into the design. In the master bedroom, concealed cupboards were built into the bed headboard design whilst maintaining clean, minimal lines.



The bedhead and frame with cantilevered side tables in the guest bedroom was also custom-built.



Study room.



The master bedroom was redesigned allowing the architects to include more display shelves.

The Master Ensuite was re-configured to include a larger shower area as well as a longer bench for the hand basin. Mirrored cupboards line the entire length of the wall to give the illusion of a larger, brighter space.



Mirrors give the illusion of a larger space in the master ensuite.