

Art and Soul

NATURE AND ART ARE BOTH REVEALED AND REVERED AT THIS CLASSICAL HOME IN TRANQUIL NASSIM, DISCOVERS JOSEPH LIM

IT IS HARD TO QUANTIFY bliss, but the intangible satisfaction from settling down and finding the right home comes close to that. James Skinner, a 45-year-old entrepreneur, was practically on cloud nine when he saw this property. “I heaved a deep sigh of relief as I had looked at 47 properties to finally arrive at this choice,” opines Skinner.

Skinner builds companies. His latest venture is working on a multimedia microblog called MobJet.com – think Twitter, but with photos, videos, audios, and no 140-character limitation. The affable and convivial Skinner, who is also an avid cyclist and marathoner, cites Singapore as “a great and safe country to cycle in.” From the big ironman races to arduous east-west cycling routes in Singapore, he has done them all.

For a man of varied interests – who also reads and speaks fluent Japanese and has lived in Japan for 22 years – spotting the right home came to him naturally. “Despite its slightly dated façade, with European architecture and balustrades, I instantly recognised it as an excellent location for a house, thanks to its enviable vistas of the sylvan surroundings,” shares Skinner.

Green Scheme

Stepping into the property, one will appreciate the lush environs and tranquillity it has to offer. In fact, these elements have also made it an attractive proposition for a pair of flameback woodpeckers who decided to create their nest here.

The 12-year-old house offers a sprawling 9,000 square feet of built-up space, featuring 31



FINE PRINT

In the mood for romance? A painting and chaise lounge play up the vibe



The Renaissance-style artworks of the renowned Polish painter piqued James Skinner's interest because they convey an air of romanticism

MIX IT UP
THIS PAGE FROM ABOVE

A touch of the Orient; a vintage floor lamp; a bona fide popcorn machine adds a whimsical touch

OPPOSITE PAGE

A long dining table is ringed by 10 chairs

rooms that include two maid rooms, two kitchens, a laundry room, living room, dining room, theatre, hallway, library, study, guest lounge, art room, and more. In its verdant compounds, there is also a large patio that looks out to a swimming pool with outdoor Jacuzzi, perfect for Skinner to take a dip when the mercury rises.

Go past the main door and one will stand in awe of the two sweeping staircases that ascend symmetrically to the second floor. This double-volume classical-style hallway with carrara marble flooring is just a prelude of the decorating theatrics the homeowner has to showcase. A large classical chandelier suspends in the middle

of these two stairs while a beautiful Hindu sculpture adds gravitas on the mid-way staircase landing. A 90-year-old Steinway & Sons Model-D grand piano that Skinner purchased on eBay dominates the base of the grand staircase. If the homeowner is in an ebullient mood, one might find him tinkling on the ivories to relax his mind.

Classicism Revisited

Skinner is unpretentious about his decorating style. The unabashed maximalist loves the era of classicism – of angels, chandeliers, rococo and damasks – so it is no surprise to find decorating elements that do their part in dazzling the eye

HOMES

Private
Lives



STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN

FROM TOP CLOCKWISE

James Skinner;
plush fabrics
exude comfort;
the sweeping
grand staircase
conveys
grandiosity

*A 90-year-old
Steinway & Sons
Model-D grand piano
dominates the base of
the grand staircase*

without overwhelming, and which don't detract from the scenic vistas.

"The biggest decorating challenge was to get the eclectic selection of furnishings to blend well together. I have wild purple velvet sofas, austere wood tables, Chinese and Tibetan antiques," quips Skinner. The resultant look is an abode that feels energised, thanks to the homeowner's tasteful culling of items from his extensive collection of antiques to come up with an unorthodox mix of classical elegance, Asian furniture and antiques and a medley of accoutrements that contribute to the eclectic vibe.

The home's ground floor has a library stacked with Japanese novels and a wooden ladder to



reach the upper shelves. But the self-confessed film buff cites his theatre room as his favourite. With state-of-the-art equipment, plush seating and dark curtains, this space makes for a real treat to enjoy Hollywood flicks when friends pop by. Movie posters decorate the walls and there's even a bona fide popcorn trolley machine, further adding a whimsical touch.

A unique dome ceiling in the dining area accommodates the 12-seater dining table, elegantly blended with a beguiling mix of Chinese furniture, Tibetan antiques, and an intriguing oil artwork by Oleg Zhivetin, a renowned Russian artist who combined cubism with icon art to depict a hallowed saint and winged angel in his own style.

James Skinner loves the era of classicism – of angels, chandeliers, rococo and damasks

Art Appreciation

There is a palpable sense of opulence when one steps into the master bedroom on the second floor. The decorating suspects are an Italian-made four-poster bed with a base that lights up, furry white rugs, classical lamps and Baroque side tables. It is not difficult to understand why Skinner has given the current contemporary furniture movement a wide berth, as it is too minimal in its concept.

Walking around the home, it's not hard to ignore the five, large original oil paintings by Tomasz Rut, a realisation that also underpins the homeowner's love for art. The Renaissance-style artworks of the renowned Polish painter piqued Skinner's interest because they convey an air of romanticism — think Lotharios, angels, heroic nudes, white horses and lasses with golden tresses. A favourite of the homeowner is the Ionica (The Angel) that presides in the living room with complementing furniture and accessories that connote a similar vibe.

Here is a home that is purposefully decorated by a house-proud resident, who sees the individuality of each piece in his collection, finds inspiration to put them together and make them work cohesively. ■

COSY SPACES

FROM TOP
The romantic
vibe of the
master bedroom;
Oriental touches
in the study

