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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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QUIET RESERVATION:
The reticent front of the main wing gives an indication of its interior



In The Quiet

A show of restraint defines this house by FARM, in collaboration with Locus Associates and Studio Terre.

Text by Rachel Lee-Leong
Photography by Edward Hendricks



UP UNTIL THIS POINT, MULTI-DISCIPLINARY DESIGN STUDIO FARM has mostly been associated with interior and architecture projects that are slightly rough around the edges. Often grounded in traditional local vernacular but interpreted for contemporary times, its projects usually lean towards the gritty and the untreated – if not completely then at least in part. Its latest project, though, reveals a yet-seen side of the design practice – one that is unexpectedly quiet and refined.

Tucked away in a tranquil neighbourhood in the east of Singapore, the *Wall House* sits on a sprawling piece of land that originally hosted an equally large family house. The family who

AUSTERITY DRIVE:
The solemn facade of the junior wing belies the bright and contemporary spaces within

PEEPOLES:
Cut-outs in the roof make way for both growing foliage and light



had rooted themselves here for years finally decided to reconstruct the house to better fit their living needs since the parents are now retired and the children all grown up.

The client wanted to build two separate residential blocks – the main one for the parents and the other for one of their children – to take full advantage of the 1,116sqm plot of land. These are seen from the street as two separate houses, similar in their reserved granite fronts, but not identical – the smaller block presents a more austere face with its full granite façade.

While first initiated because of living requirements, the breaking up of the house into separate masses was necessary in dealing with the sheer size of the land. Even within the main wing where space remains abundant, the same approach was adopted. Lead designer *Tiah Nan Chyuan* describes it as a combination of a two-storey block that holds all the spaces needed for day-to-day living (a living area and dry kitchen-cum-dining space below and a master suite occupying the entire second floor), and a single-storey entertainment block that consists of a library and formal dining area.

SCREENING ROOM:
The timber screens in the foyer are repeated as a motif throughout the main wing

SPARE STROKES:
The courtyard beside the library was designed with minimal gestures



PRIME POSITION:
The formal dining area is privy to view of the central courtyard

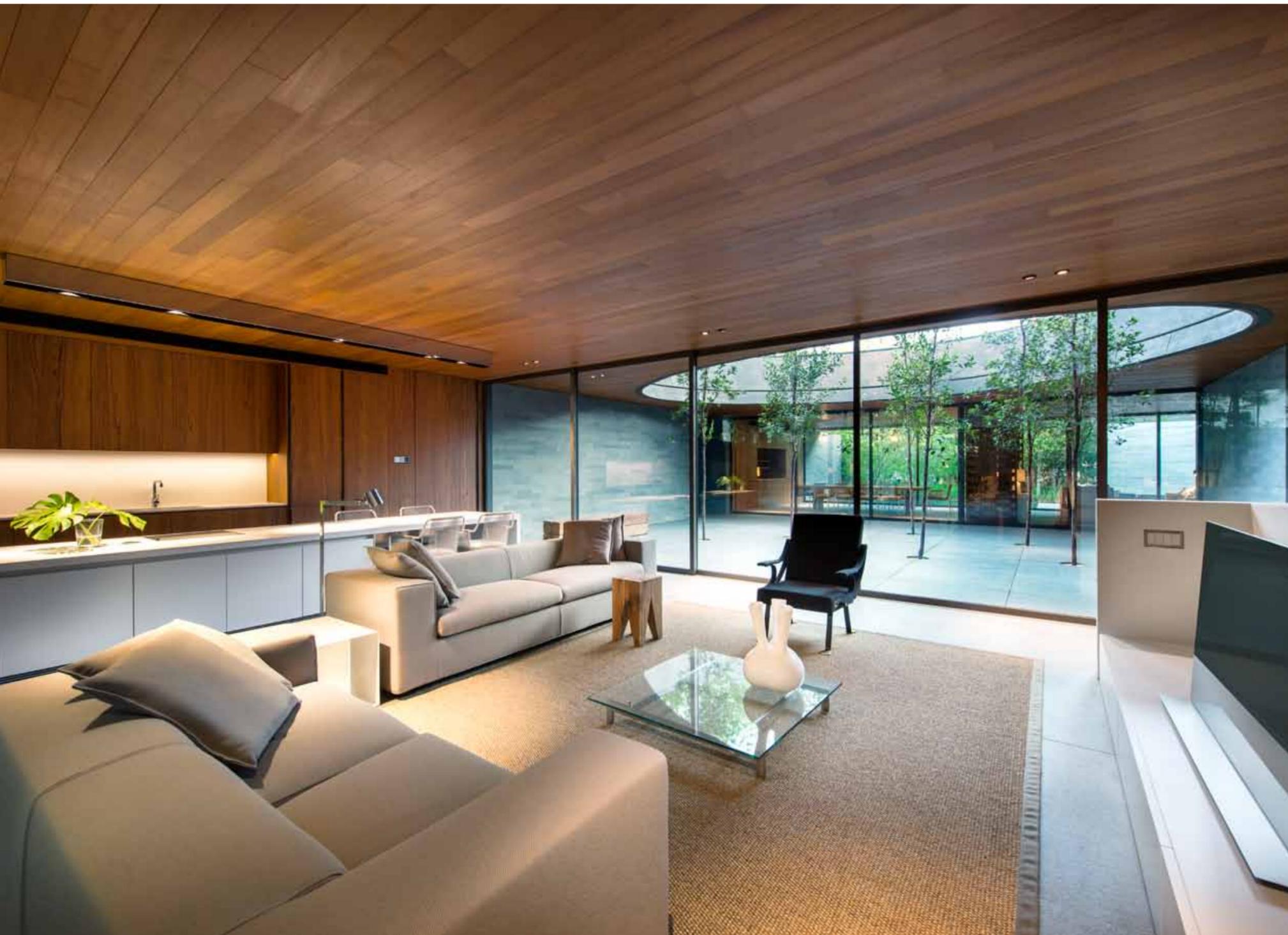
MUTUAL RELATIONS:
A strong interior-exterior dialogue governs the entertainment block and its adjacent courtyard

“THE LANDSCAPE DESIGN IS ABSTRACTED FROM THE DESIGN ETHOS OF CHINESE GARDENS”

Mediating between the two is the lynchpin of the project: a generous, open-to-sky courtyard. The first space one encounters upon entry, the courtyard calls for a moment’s pause. A large oculus above captures and frames a portion of the sky while six slender trees stand like elegant guardians of the space – one imagines how their dappled shadows might silently trace the day’s passage. The air is hushed and serene – “monastic” in the words of Tiah.

As effortless as it looks, the courtyard – and indeed, the rest of the house – is the result of a highly calibrated series of design decisions. “The slab supporting the roof garden above is supported by 17m-long post-tension beams. And everything – water pipes, drainage, etc – are sorted out in that landscape deck. That’s why this courtyard space looks so clean,” Tiah cites an example.





SEPARATION ORDERS:
The main living area
is separated from the
entertainment block by
the courtyard



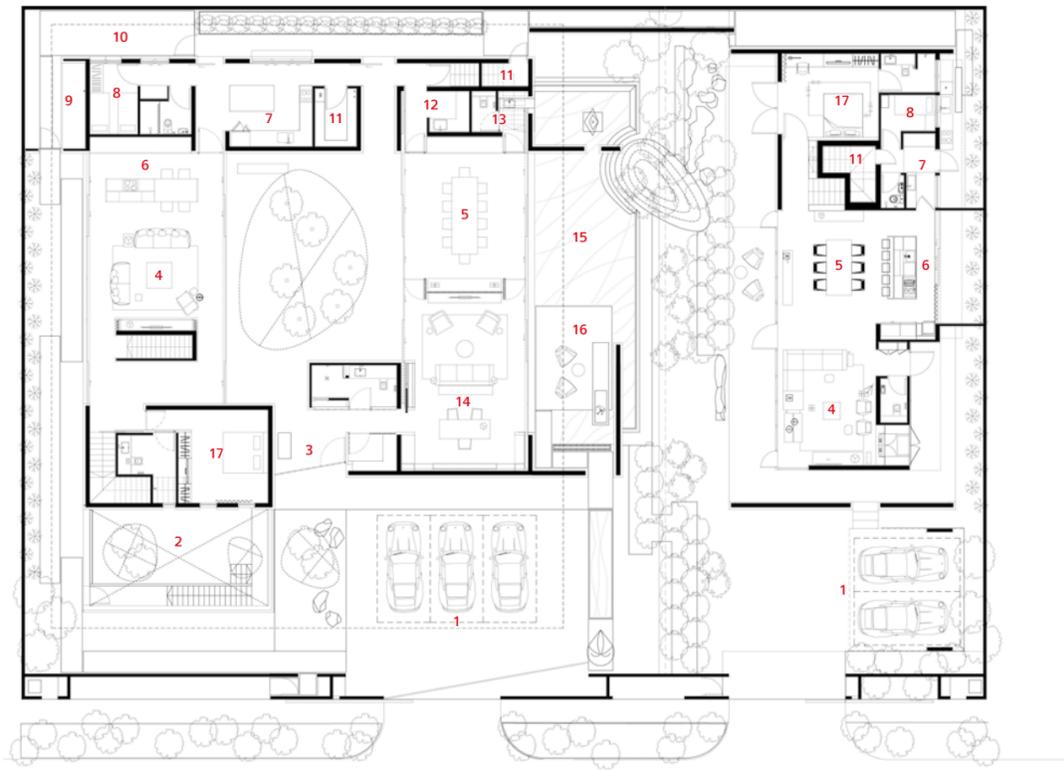
← SKYWARDS:
The staircase in the
main wing is accented
by a skylight

↓ VISUAL CONNECTION:
The master suite looks
across a roof terrace to
the junior wing

The column-less courtyard is a means to an end, where the interior-external experience is amplified. Naturally, landscaping was crucial. “The landscape design is abstracted from the design ethos of Chinese Gardens in generating borrowed landscapes with a need for visual relief and privacy,” says landscape architect *Jerome Lee* of *Locus Associates*. “The intent was to erase the boundary line between the two houses so that spatially, sight lines expand and spaces are layered repeatedly, culminating in a complex sense of spatial depth.”

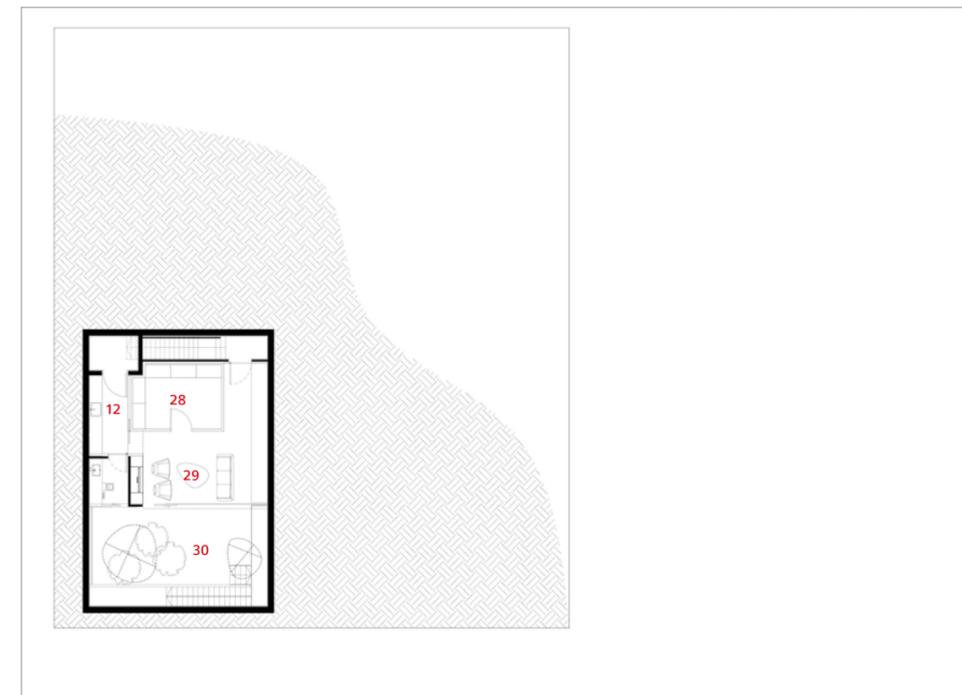
Throughout the house, the interior never really loses a sense of its surrounds – although this is sometimes expressed less explicitly at selected junctures in the house. The master suite in the main wing, for example, is set right alongside the aforementioned raised roof garden terrace. The spaces in the junior wing are privy to highly textured foliage that mainly serves as a screen between itself and the main block. Leave the door to a bathroom ajar and one is allowed a peek of greenery. And when a view outwards is not possible, a skylight – in bathrooms or the



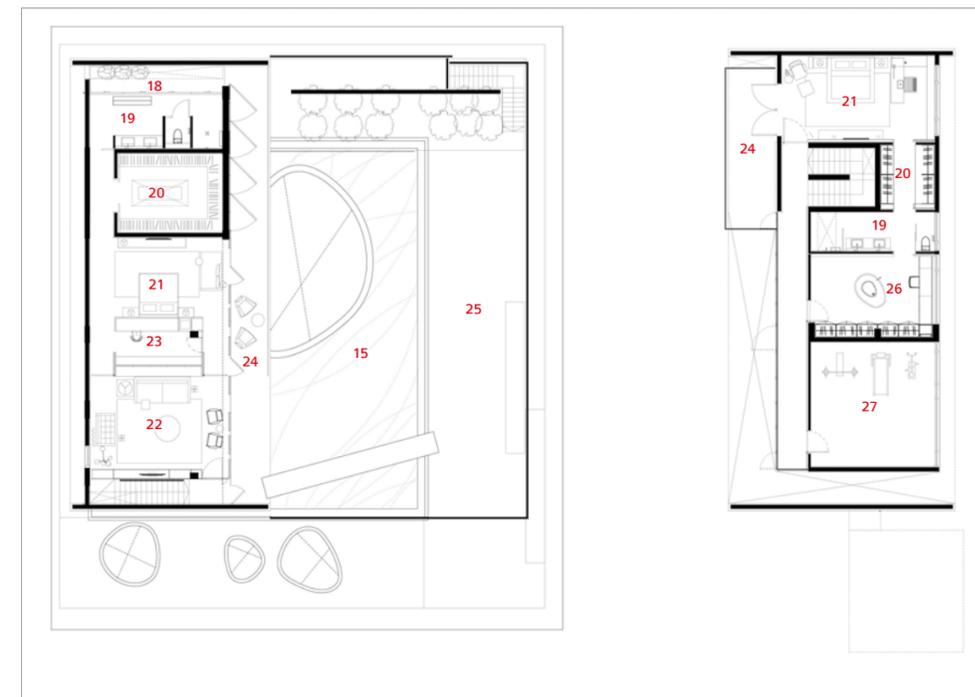


Ground Floor plan

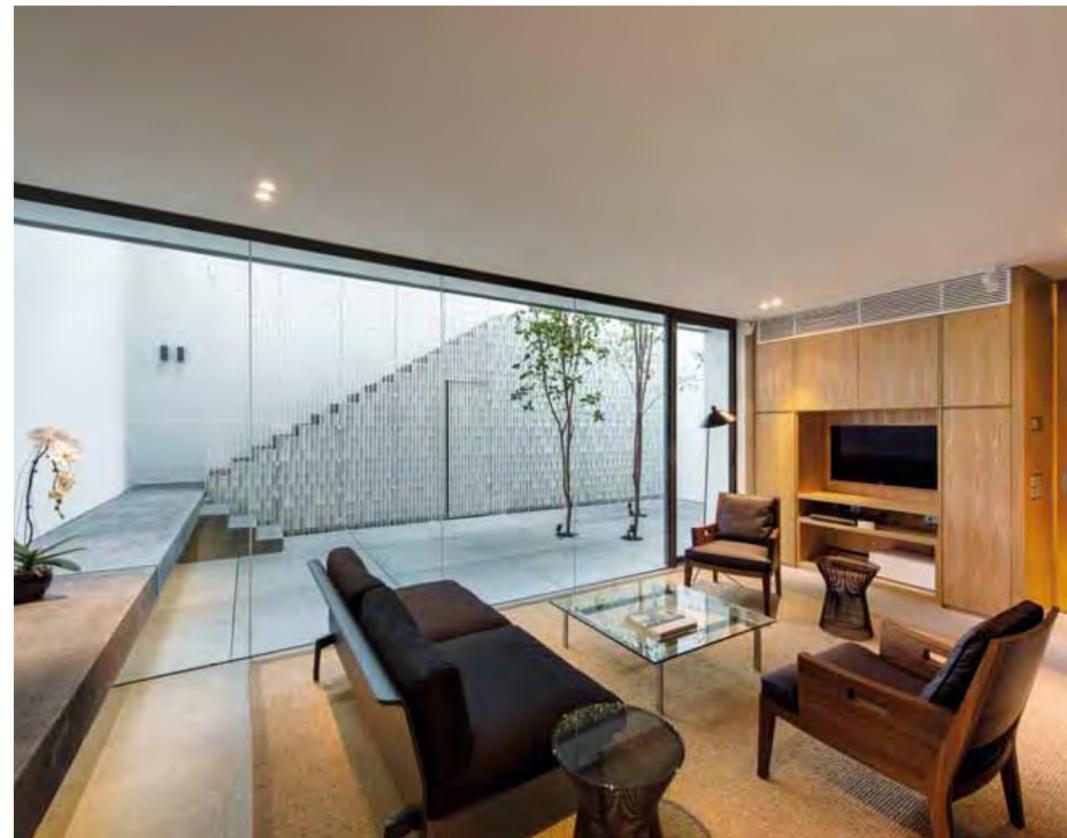
- 1 Car Porch
- 2 Sunken Courtyard
- 3 Foyer
- 4 Living Room
- 5 Dining Room
- 6 Dry Kitchen
- 7 Wet Kitchen
- 8 Utility
- 9 M&E
- 10 Yard
- 11 Store
- 12 Pantry
- 13 Powder Room
- 14 Library
- 15 Water Feature
- 16 Patio
- 17 Guest Room
- 18 Garden
- 19 Master Bathroom
- 20 Walk-in-wardrobe
- 21 Master Bedroom
- 22 Master Living
- 23 Study
- 24 Balcony
- 25 Landscape Deck
- 26 Tub Room
- 27 Gym
- 28 Wine Cellar
- 29 Entertainment Room
- 30 Basement Courtyard



Basement plan



Second Floor plan



“THROUGHOUT THE HOUSE,
THE INTERIOR NEVER REALLY LOSES
A SENSE OF ITS SURROUNDS.”

master suite’s walk-in wardrobe – offers a sense of the outdoors during the day. The client readily welcomed all these gestures.

“This project was interesting because the client has a good sense of space. It’s almost like you’re talking to an architect. For instance, it’s very hard to find bungalows using simple, inexpensive plaster and paint for their boundary walls, but he understood why – because everything behind it was already very textured. And he understood why we would prefer to push the boundary wall back to allow space to plant some trees along the pavement,” says Tiah.

In today’s property climate where a landed home is often seen as a vehicle for showing off, such sensibilities from the client are rare. Invariably, it went a long way in contributing to the overall restraint of the design. “He told us right from the start that he didn’t want too many elements, nothing too fussy,” says Tiah. “Pared down, but not boring,” adds *Terence Chan* of design firm *Studio Terre* who played a crucial role in creating the house’s impeccable interiors with his near-obsessive attitude towards detailing.

↑ **SOARING HEIGHTS:**
A dramatic double-volume passageway marks the entrance into the junior wing

← **OPEN COMPANION:**
A courtyard with its own private access accompanies the basement spaces



FRESH TAKES:
The junior suite sees materials applied in a lighter, younger manner



GREEN PEEKS:
The bathroom in the junior suits is just a corridor away from a verdant view



One of the strategies towards this end was the restriction to a five-material palette, agreed on by both the client and FARM. While not the easiest path to take for obvious reasons, Tiah shares that it was a decision that benefited the project: “Once we resolved the design of one corner with the contractor, every corner could be replicated. So we could really control the construction of details.”

The self-imposed restriction invariably pushed everyone involved in the design to stretch the potential of each material, thinking up permutations for how a material could be detailed or finished. The flooring alone took ages to resolve as they had wanted a flooring material that could be used both indoors and outdoors – “homogeneous tiles didn’t come in large enough formats; marble was too slippery for the outdoors”.

Granite finally took on the starring role in the project, cladding not just the floors, but also the walls, albeit saw-cut for a different finish. Teak plays the role of a warm counterpoint to the stone, and is used extensively as a dramatic ceiling finish and painstakingly detailed veneer screens. The rest of the palette is made up of white carpentry or paint, aluminium framing and a neutral fabric that might appear in individual spaces. All this is accented by tastefully appointed furniture and lighting fixtures.

Chan adds, “While the common palette allows the design to be read coherently, each house takes on its own distinct character

“EACH HOUSE TAKES ON ITS OWN DISTINCT CHARACTER WITH A DIFFERENT PROPORTION OF USAGE OF EACH MATERIAL.”



LIGHT WASH:
The shower stall in the junior suite is softly illuminated through a skylight





HIDE AWAY:
Soft landscaping was used as a means for privacy between the two wings

with a different proportion of usage of each material – the master wing is considerably warmer with the predominant use of natural teak, and the junior wing sports a younger, more contemporary feel with the matte white finish as its base material.”

“I think what was interesting is how the three of us – [FARM, Studio Terre and landscape architect Locus Associates] – worked together,” says Chan. As an example, he cites the formal library space where he detailed razor-thin, black, stainless steel-clad shelves to be inserted between granite bricks chosen by the architect. Beside this, a granite courtyard was designed by Locus Associates as a casual extension of the interior.

Understandably, work distribution wasn’t always so clear-cut as Chan says, “Some of the lines were quite grey, but it made a difference. If the lines are drawn too clearly, it would have been very difficult to create such a seamless experience.”

It would not be an overstatement to say that houses like this are far and few between in Singapore. Devoid of ostentation, the house goes down the more sophisticated path of restraint and reserve. The reward at the end of the road: a quiet, elegant home that plays out as a subservient foil to the lives of its owners. ♦

Look out for more on Farm in Cubes Extras at indesignlive.asia

WALL HOUSE

Architect KD Architects with FARM

Project team Kurjanto Slamet, Tiah Nan Chyuan, Lee Hui Lian

Builder Construct Pte Ltd

C&S Engineer DPC Consulting Engineers

Interior Designer Terre Pte Ltd, Design Centro Pte Ltd

Landscape Architect Locus Associates in collaboration with Base6

Lighting Consultant Sunlight Luminaire

Time to complete 24 months

Total floor area 1,116sqm

FARM (65) 6336 1706 farm.sg

Furniture In Formal Library, Cassina ‘Cab’ Chairs from Dream Interiors, Christian Liaigre ‘Aspre’ Lounge Chair and Christian Liaigre ‘Bronze’ Side Table from Chanintr Living and Custom Console and Study Desk by Terre. In Library Courtyard, Roda ‘Harp 359’ Armchairs from Volume Five, Kettal ‘Objects’ Side

Table from Upperroom. In Formal Dining, Custom Dining Table from Lava East & Co., Roda ‘Harp’ Armchairs from Volume 5. In Main Block, Living Area, Cappellini ‘Cuba’ Sofa from Dream Interiors, Living Divani ‘Metro2’ Coffee Table and Family Lounge ‘Fal060B.SX’ Side Table from P5, ‘E15 ST04 Backenzahn’ Side Table from P5. In Basement, Cassina ‘Sled Slim’ Sofa from Dream Interiors, Living Divani ‘Metro2’ Coffee Table from P5, Knoll ‘Platner’ Side Table from Dream Interiors. In Small Block Kitchen, Mater Dark Stained Hardwood Bar Stools from P5, MDF Italia ‘Tense’ Table from P5, Flexform ‘Soft Dream’ Sofa from Space Furniture, E15 ‘Raw’ Limited Edition Wooden Bench from P5.

Lighting Generally throughout, Viabizzuno downlights from Sunlight Luminaire. In Entrance Foyer, Michael Anastassiades ‘CFL’ Lights from P5. In Formal Library, Christian Liaigre ‘Etrier’ Table Lamp from Chanintr Living. In Formal Dining Area, Christian Liaigre ‘Dune’ Table Lamp from Chanintr Living, Serge Mouille ‘Plafonnier 3 Bras Noirs’ from P5. In Stairway,

Progetto Domestico ‘Lamp 604’ from P5. In Basement, Serge Mouille ‘Lappardaire Driot’ from P5. In Small Block Dining Area, Viabizzuno Light by Sunlight Luminaire, Yamigawa ‘Tofu’ Table Lamp Large from P5.

Finishes Burmese Teak from SLP Wood. Sandblasted Granite from Earthstone. Limited Edition Ipanema Rug from Space Furniture.

Fixed & Fitted Ironmongery from Dorma Far East. Kitchens from Bulthaup and Madison & Associates. Switches from Jung Asia. Boffi ‘Air’ fans from Xtra Design. Hansgrohe Kitchen Faucets, Gaggenau Kitchen Appliances, SubZero Wine Storage from Madison & Associates. CEA ‘Neutra’ Wall Mount Bathroom Faucet and Shower, Duravit ‘Vero’ Undercounter Washbasin, and Mastella ‘Vov’ Floorstanding Bathtub all from Wan Tai & Co. Tempered Laminated Glass with Fluorocarbon Aluminium Frame from LME. Televisions from Sony. VRV Air Conditioning System from Design Aire Engineering.

Chanintr Living (662) 655 0415 chanintrliving.com Design Aire Engineering daengineering.com Dorma Far East (65) 6268 7633 dorma.com.sg Dream Interiors (65) 6235 0220 dream-int.com Earthstone (65) 6281 6266 Lava East & Co. (65) 6288 7478 lavaeast.com LME (65) 6776 5811 Madison & Associates (65) 6733 1171 madison-asia.com P5 (65) 6337 0050 p5.com.sg SLP Wood (65) 6528 8006 Space Furniture (65) 6415 000 spacefurniture.com.sg Sunlight Luminaire (65) 6339 6086 sunlightluminaire.com Upperroom (65) 6336 3623 Volume Five (65) 6348 2508 volumefivehome.com Wan Tai & Co (65) 6546 5900 wantai.com Xtra Designs (65) 6336 0688 xtra.com.sg