

asian apartments

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apartments

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Editorial Coordination (in alphabetical order):
Anna Koor (Hong Kong, China)
Savinee Buranasilapin (Bangkok, Thailand)
Thomas Dannecker (Bangkok, Thailand)

Designers:
Chai-Yen Wong
Sharn Selina Lim

Sub-Editors/Writers:
Hwee-Chuin Ang
Narelle Yabuka

Art Director:
Jacinta Neoh

Photographer:
Kelley Cheng (unless otherwise stated)

Editorial Director:
Kelley Cheng

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Designed by Joey Ho (HK)
Photography by Kelley Cheng

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introduction

If you were to think of Asian living, it is likely that two images would spring to mind – one is the palette of centuries old Asian building techniques for housing, with, for example, a rich and multi-layered courtyard house in China containing a processional unfolding of spaces punctuated by gateways; a sparse, subtle and flexible house in Japan with an almost religious aesthetic; clusters of courtyard houses in India, or a Malay house, raised on stilts with an open plan, and designed to perfectly suit the tropical climate. You would probably think of local materials such as timber, bamboo and rattan, and the techniques that have evolved for both constructing and decorating with them. You might also think of Asian religions, cultural traditions and rituals, and their poetic effect on the design and use of the house.

On the other hand, if you think of Asian living, you might see an image of dense urbanity; a landscape of high-rise apartment blocks containing large populations living close together in small spaces, with fast-paced lifestyles and an adoption of Western habits and products. In this case you might think of cities such as Hong Kong, Tokyo or Singapore, whose voracious economies are based on industry rather than traditional modes of production and trade.

Arguably, this second model for living is the one that will take precedence into the future, as populations continue to migrate from the countryside to the city in search of work in industry. The changing lifestyles of today are also prompting a need for more units of accommodation in already dense cities; statistical studies show that in general, the number of occupants per single dwelling is dropping. There are several reasons for this: people are leaving the family home at a younger age, marrying later, having fewer children, divorcing more often, and living longer than ever before. The apartment offers small families and single occupants the convenience of a small living space, without the wastage of space that would occur in an under occupied house. In tropical areas, the air conditioner has had a major impact on building design, making apartment living a possibility in tropical regions, which previously relied on a high level of penetration of the building envelope. So it seems that the apartment is here to stay as an important form of domestic accommodation, not only in Asia, but the world over.

The Asian apartments presented in this book are exemplary of current trends in the design of apartments in Asia. Some of the apartments are imbued with a sense of the Asian building tradition – in both a tangible and intangible manner – expressing a real appreciation of the subtle experiential and perceptual occupation of space as well as physical aspects of Asian building traditions. These examples manage to draw inspiration from the past whilst embracing the future. Some of the apartments included in this book have achieved an Asian flavour with the careful inclusion of Asian furnishings and decorative elements. Others still are reflective of a universal design sensibility – rational, simple and functional – and are thereby representative of the new direction of informal modern living in Asian cities.

But all of these living spaces show great ideas for maximizing the potential of your own apartment. They will show you how to make the most of a small space, offering exciting solutions for layout, ideas for manipulating volume, treatment of surfaces, and the creation of focal points. These apartments show you how to be creative with light, colour, texture, art and decorative pieces, and they display exciting concepts for vestibules and corridors, living rooms, dining rooms, kitchens, bedrooms and bathrooms. Use these ideas to rise to the challenge of apartment living. Make your home a comfortable and inspirational backdrop for your modern lifestyle.

PROGRESSION

vestibules and corridors

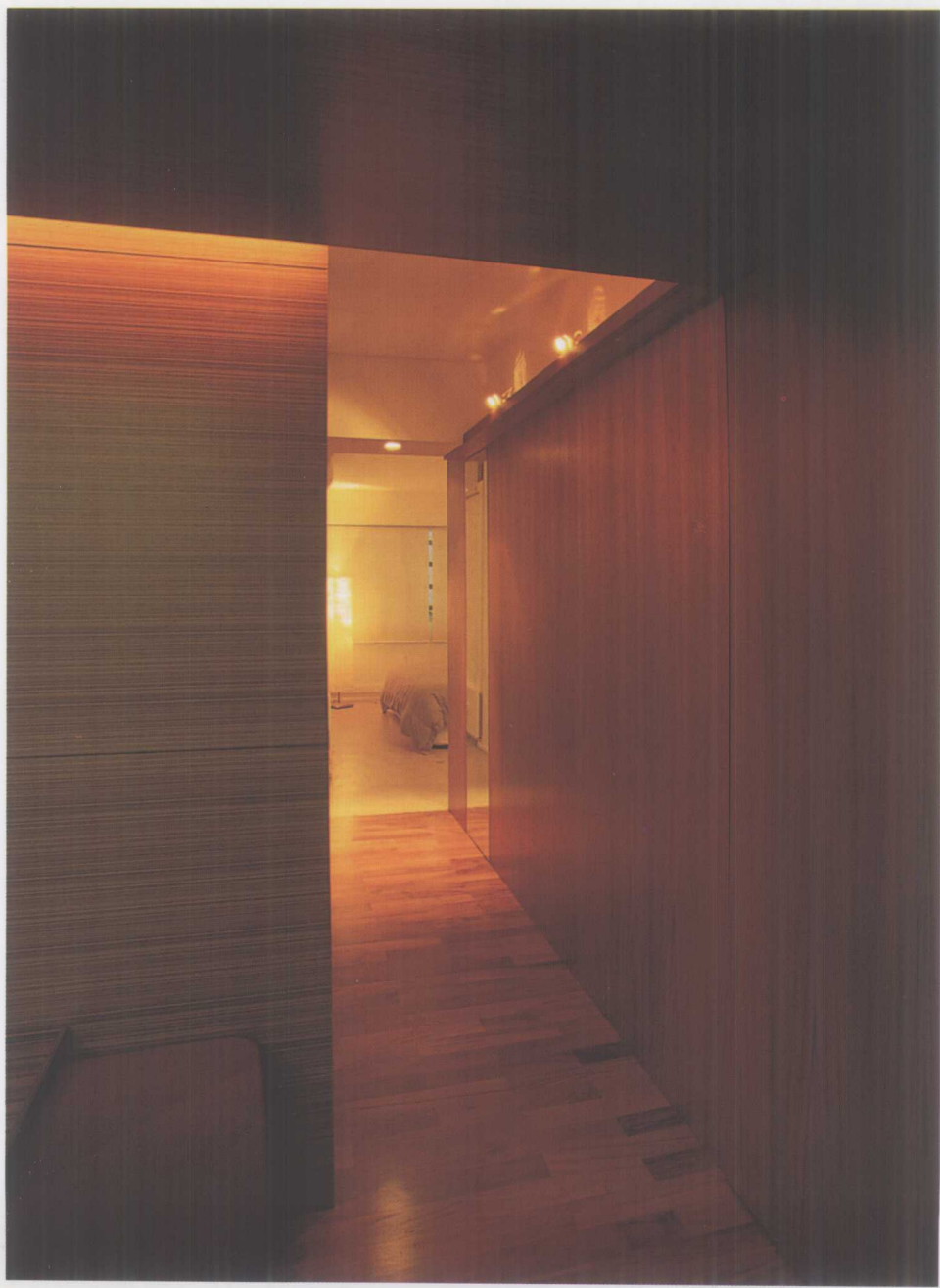
Much of traditional Asian domestic architecture is based on the concept of processional space - a subtle unfolding of the private realm as one progresses through the space of the house from the exterior world. As transitional, in-between realms, corridors typically address the sensory realm as well as perform the physical function of transporting the body.



Entry halls and corridors carry out an interesting double life. Whilst they welcome and carry you through space, transporting you from public zones to the innermost private areas of the home, they are really a non-place, being devoid of permanent occupation. Vestibules and corridors are spaces for movement. As such, they offer the opportunity for interesting architectural explorations to do with progression and theatrics.

The vestibules and corridors illustrated in this chapter show a variety of ways of dealing with the transitional zones of vestibules and corridors in apartments. Some very interesting solutions involve the employment of meandering passages and indirect lines of sight to create an unfolding process as one proceeds through the space. Such weaving and layering can prompt a real sense of anticipation of what lies ahead, and add life and intrigue to a space of singular function.

Dematerialisation of the walls to corridors by way of openings or the use of strip screens can also amplify the sense of progression and anticipation, as rooms become partially visible before the entry point is reached. Such visual penetration of rooms can create curious and engaging ambiguity between spaces. Puncturing internal walls also maximizes light and air flow, and can create attractive vistas through the apartment. In addition, there can be an interesting sculptural effect.



Powerful effects in vestibules and corridors can also be created by playing with light and volume. A high ceiling in a narrow space creates a sense of drama and can have the effect of promoting movement. External light can also be employed to great effect in these spaces, for example via a skylight in a penthouse apartment. A wash of natural light can bring life and animation to a corridor. Similarly, shadows can have animative effects; in this case, the corridor recedes into the background whilst the rooms that feed off it become punctuations. Clever use of artificial lighting, such as directing spotlights to the floor, can bring a sense of playfulness to corridors, which can become dramatic interludes between rooms.

Allowing visual access to a window at the end of the corridor, or placing a piece of artwork there will lead the eye through the space, and can create the illusion of a greater spatial depth. Similarly, a mirror can create false perception of spaciousness in a small area. Space can also be maximized by removing the wall to the corridor altogether where possible. In this case, lighting or differing floor treatment (or simply an absence of furniture) can create a subtle demarcation of the circulation space. It is best, of course, to use hard-wearing floor material in high traffic areas.



