

FORM

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Asia Talents The Next Wave of Design Honchos Rises **Sharing Space** K2LD Re-invents Familiar Archetypes **Home-Grown Hip** VVG Mines Local Cool for Global Appeal



LUXURY REVISITED

Homes bursting at the seams with stories, objects, memories, collectibles, ephemera and joy!



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SHOW AND TELL

Ministry of Design's Colin Seah outlines for MARC ALMAGRO the gains that can be derived from designing show galleries.





Designing a show unit is obviously different from designing an actual flat, but Colin Seah, design director of Singapore-based practice Ministry of Design (MOD), finds similarities in the two distinct exercises. “We create fictionalised personas for the ‘owners’ of the unit and design a narrative around them. This, of course, is similar to designing for an actual client; however, here, we are able to push the limits of design exploration further and to a purer extent. This is possible because we are able to take more liberties – after all, the fictional personas are our own creations.”

Although imagination makes possible the creation of such fictionalised units, time is always in short supply. “Developers are always in a great hurry; we always strive for innovation in all our designs and this, of course, requires time to explore new possibilities,” explains Colin. Despite this challenge, he acknowledges the support that their client UOL has been providing them. “We’ve had the bandwidth to do what we do best in MOD: to question, disturb and redefine.”

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Since 2011, MOD has built four show galleries for UOL’s new developments, beginning with the Vanke Triple V Gallery in Tianjin in 2011 and followed by another three in Singapore: Edge Gallery in 2012, Frame Gallery in 2013 and UOL Fractal Gallery this year. The practice has also designed show unit interiors for the one- and three-bedroom units in Duo in Singapore.

In each project, UOL handed MOD a fairly straightforward project brief: “Create a tool for a great buying experience, and communicate the lifestyle elements through space.” MOD, for its part, strives to turn the show galleries into a branding instrument that communicates the essence of UOL in a subtle and sophisticated manner.



More than just selling tools, show galleries must also reflect the DNA of the developer and communicate the essence of the project at hand. The assemblage of furniture and objects in a show unit tells an aspirational story targeted at homebuyers.



“As we prepared to work on the Edge Gallery,” Colin cites, “we persuaded UOL to avoid relying on billboards and to focus instead on the inherent brand value of an iconic architectural statement that will position the development in the market. We wanted them to consider employing form-making as a more relevant and sophisticated way of advertising.”

For Frame Gallery, designed for the Thompson 3 development, MOD highlighted the spirit of living in proximity to nature and the Macritchie Reservoir by orienting the show units towards the quiet and green portion of the site so that all rooms and balconies faced a frame of green.

For Fractal Gallery, designed for the 70 St. Patrick development, they created garden pockets within the show space to elicit delightful surprises. This echoes the master planning of the development, which creates similar pocket gardens and pools through clever orientation of the blocks.





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MOD cleverly manipulates the very structure of the show gallery to tell a story. How the unit might be seen from the outside and how the surroundings might appear from within the unit are achieved through careful master-planning of the structure in relation to the site. MOD creates a fictional family who will determine the look and feel of the interiors, from the way a chair is angled to the type of books that fill up the bookcase. Nothing in a showroom is left to chance.



“Architecturally, we also sought to explore qualities that relate to and extend beyond the actual development,” explains Colin. They saw Frame Gallery as an exercise in negotiating a difficult site and an existing treescape to create a gallery which had three ‘framed’ faces: the first is the highly visible show gallery as seen from the road, the second the entrance with the sheltering canopy, and the third the view of the green landscape beyond the show units viewed from within.

For the Fractal Gallery, MOD’s architectural aspiration was to create and capture spaces for the show gallery and units with a series of intersecting wall planes. The walls ‘spin’ outwards centrifugally from a central point where the model of the development is placed.

MOD has taken to consider the challenges of creating show galleries as perks and design opportunities. “We enjoy holistic design such that the show unit’s interiors are combined with the show gallery’s architecture. The greatest advantage is that architectural explorations for the show gallery capture three things: the spirit of the development, the branding of the client and an exciting architectural concept. 📺

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