

A Lofty Abode

A family of four's new home was designed with their individual lifestyles in mind, writes **ASTRA C ALEGRE**

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SEAMLESS SPACES
With no walls between them, the living room flows right into the dining room

THE FIRST THING you notice about the house is its absence of a gate. “The ‘no gate’ idea was the architect’s,” says the homeowner. “In the beginning, we were worried about security. However, knowing that we live in a gated community and seeing neighbours leave their gates open overnight, we acceded to having none.”

“But there’s the sign,” the architect, Carlo Calma remarks, pointing to the house number, which is part of a stunning sculpture that features the mailbox as well. “Everything is bespoke,” he says.

The *Exploding Sticks* sculpture at the main entrance serves as a bench as well as a lighting fixture. “It’s like an outdoor chandelier at night,” Calma explains. “I like the play of gravity as you enter the house and they all really look like they are floating in space.” The sculpture took six months to make.

They met Architect Calma through a common friend, the homeowner relates. “We wanted a young architect, someone who would understand our concept of a modern house. We knew what we wanted but could not articulate it fully. But Carlo ended up with a modern house with a ‘boutique hotel’ look. When he presented to us his ideas and the design concept, we immediately agreed to pursue them. Our requests were simple: streamlined, spacious, high ceilings, very bright, and airy. It was all infused into Carlo’s modern design.”

“The concept of the house is a Boolean house,” Calma explains. “It started off with a box, then I deducted the shape of the atrium and pool and created this void space



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in the centre. The rooms are lofts which look almost like Tetris boxes that are stuck together. Basically, there are three lofts, which are like different units in the house—the girl’s room, the boy’s room, and the master bedroom. There’s also a music room and a guest room. The public areas, such as the living and dining rooms, have a very open plan feel, bright, and airy.”



BESPOKE DETAILS

The dining room table and the *Exploding Sticks* sculpture (pictured left) were made by Carlo Calma specifically for this house



A UNIQUE CONCEPT
A functional and streamlined kitchen; (inset) a close look at the custom-made dining table; (opposite, clockwise from top left) The hallway leading to the girl's bedroom; the entertainment area for the boy's bedroom; an outdoor area where you can see both the second floor and first floor of the house; the entertainment area for the girl's bedroom

Calma really maximised the use of the square lot. "They said they wanted a sort of resort feel, but more boxy and no diagonal lines," Calma relates. "I made a concept that's specific to their needs and lifestyle." The daughter, who is in high school, loves fashion and is studying fashion design. "We made a ramp that made it seem like she's going to a fashion show," Calma relates. "Her room has sort of a catwalk." The father and son (who is currently studying in New York) both love music, so the boy's room and the master bedroom are

connected to the music room.
"The concept is like a live/work scenario, where you can entertain your guests downstairs, then upstairs, it's your bedroom," Calma explains. "I think it's something new to have lofts as a typology for living. It feels like it's a separate entity. It's like living in a house in a house."
The living room with the nearby pool area is where the family hangs out. "They like the sun and the water. It's part of their lifestyle," Calma says. "What is interesting in the pool is the Boolean part, which I deducted. When you go to the pool, you see the koi pond below the small clear glass window. It's like an interstitial viewing space between the indoor and outdoor. You get the feeling of wildlife. I wanted to have a continuation of the street by having a walkway as well as having the pond element and pool open to the street but still have privacy. The owners liked the idea to make it more open."
The huge glass windows are really about viewing and bringing in nature, as well as making the space bright and airy, Calma says. "The interiors are minimally





designed by Philip Starck but paired with Calma's own bespoke dining table. "I always want to personalise the house and not buy straight from the catalogue," he says, "so this dining table is quite special and limited only for this house. The dining table design is like a stack of stainless swooping lofted splines that is similar to a coil concept." The kitchen is from Poliform.

The furniture in the bedrooms are from Ligne Roset, B&B Italia, and Moroso. "I'm not particularly brand conscious when it comes to furniture; I look more into the integrity of the design and designer and what would fit in the space. The B&B round sofa that moves 360 degrees just fit the master bedroom loft and the big spiral staircase to heaven."

They have two favourite items in the house, the homeowner says. "The Circle Sofa recommended by Carlo is very big, unconventional, and can seat quite a number of people." The Circle Sofa perfectly fits Carlo's idea to have the living room be more like a public space and/or lobby rather than a traditional sala. The other is not really a specific piece of

decorated. There are a lot of strong pieces and accents already in the house. I don't like interiors that are over-stylised. Most of what I design has a function, but also with a bold design aesthetic.

"The planning part is very important," he continues. "When we were designing the house, we were already looking at the furniture so that they would fit the space, not the other way around. Some designers would probably make the house first then buy the furniture. You can have the standard scale of the sofa, but it would be a waste of space if later on, it does not fit. For me, you have to plan ahead and see if it will fit the space."

Upon entering the house you see a curved sofa by Walter Knoll designed by Ben Van Berkel of UN Studio. "I think they are the first to have this kind of sofa in Manila," Calma says. "They used this in the Mercedes-Benz Museum in Stuttgart. The connection of the concave and convex shapes of the sweeping sofa is really very sculptural. It was paired with a construction floor lamp by Moooi, one of my favourite and hip lighting company now."

The dining room chairs are Cassina



ROOMS OF THE MASTERS (From top) the stairs leading to the master lounge; dining room with a view of the pool; (opposite, from top) The master bedroom; the master bathroom



A SPARKLING GEM Large glass windows are prominent throughout the house; the *Exploding Sticks* sculpture light up at night; the main walkway as you enter the house

“Those who had come commented that the concept is not a ‘cookie cutter’ design,” said the homeowner

furniture, but the whole set used in the kitchen—the island, the cabinets, the seats, the refrigeration unit—is another favourite of ours. They just fit together.”

The first time they saw the finished house, they were very pleased, the homeowner relates. “But we were not surprised, as the actual house was very, very close to what was on the drawings and renders.” She has two favourite areas in the house—the living room and the kitchen. “The living room is very cosy with the huge sofa where guests are fond of sitting and relaxing. We have had several gatherings. The house blessing was one. Everyone admired the house in terms of how it maximises the allotted space, its airy feel because of the high ceiling, and the fluidity of the design wherein each room had its own character. Those who had come commented that the concept is not a



‘cookie-cutter’ design. My son hosted a party after his high-school ball a few months ago, and the younger generation mentioned that the house is like a big party lounge. Not sure if that’s a good thing though moving forward!”

She continues, “I wanted my kitchen to be very functional. I made sure that my selection of pantry, cabinets, drawers, and

working counters were all easily accessible. I opted for a centre island cooktop so that when I cook, my friends can join me and observe. In cooking, it is important that the kitchen area is very fluid, organised, and functional. Our open kitchen is one of the focal points of the house.” Meanwhile, her husband’s favourite area is the pool-courtyard area. “He likes to spend his mornings there sipping his coffee. In the evenings, sitting in this space and having a quick

drink is what relaxes him.”

“I’m quite happy with the final outcome as well as having a client who is easy to work with and trusts my judgement,” Calma says. “There are so many details in the house that make it unique. The house really transforms from day to night. Daytime, nature creeps into the house, and nighttime, it’s like a bright diamond.”

RADIANT AREAS
A general view of the house; (inset) The outdoor lounge at night