



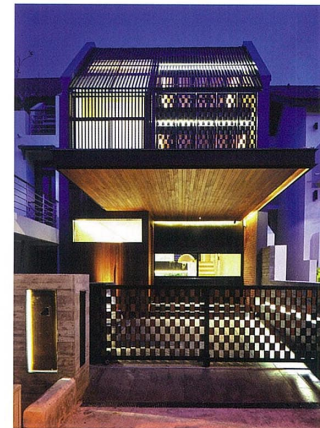
A LIVING SEED

BY CHRIS LOW | IMAGES COURTESY LAUD ARCHITECTS

This Chin Terrace house was 'a design exercise in making an intermediate terrace house look and feel like a much larger property, all within a modest budget. The house is flanked on both sides by parti walls with no opportunity for windows and daylight. Such plots usually end up with dark central areas...We embarked on the design process to explore ways of create daylighting and cross ventilation, and to create a space that would celebrate openness and enhance the ability to entertain large numbers in the small house.' (LAUD Architects) CHRIS LOW reviews the project.

'But seeds are invisible. They sleep deep in the heart of the earth's darkness, until someone among them is seized with the desire to awaken. Then this little seed will stretch itself and begin – timidly at first – to push a charming little sprig inoffensively upward toward the sun.' (The Little Prince by Antoine De Saint-Exupéry)

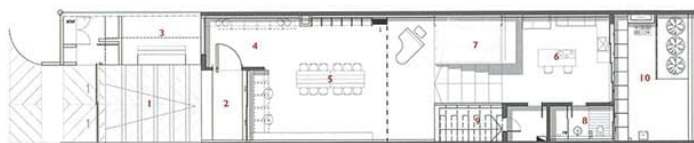
Much of the ideas of architecture begin quietly and unassumingly. Like thin wisps of smoke ideas circle the site questioning and discovering, slowly descending into the ground and solidifying into brick and mortar until the architecture is made. But even then, architecture as an idea is only complete in space and form, and not until it is used and put to tasks, then does it complete itself.



CHIN TERRACE HOUSE

LOCATION	4 CHIN TERRACE, SINGAPORE
GFA	418.04M ²
SITE AREA	241.50M ²
COMPLETION	2015
ARCHITECT	MELVIN H J TAN/LAUD ARCHITECTS
PROJECT TEAM	PICHAN VATANTOL CARINO CHERIE ANN ZABALA FREDIKORIN KRANGSITIDECH SPRINGVIEW ENTERPRISE
BUILDER	BURO ENGINEERS
STRUCTURAL ENGINEER	HPX CONSULTING ENGINEERS
M&E ENGINEER	CHOY & ASSOCIATES
QUANTITY SURVEYOR	

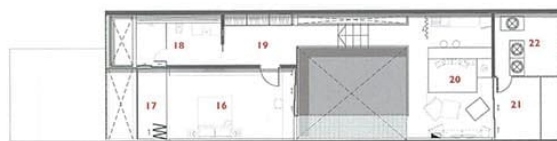




1ST STOREY PLAN



2ND STOREY PLAN



ATTIC PLAN

1. CAR PARK
2. PATIO
3. GREENERY
4. ENTRANCE FOYER
5. DINING
6. KITCHEN
7. REFLECTIVE POOL
8. POWDER ROOM
9. HOUSEHOLD SHELTER
10. BACKYARD

11. MASTER BEDROOM
12. MASTER BATH ROOM
13. WALK IN CLOSET
14. BALCONY
15. LIVING ROOM

16. BEDROOM 1
17. BALCONY 1
18. BATHROOM 1
19. WALK IN CLOSET
20. FAMILY ROOM
21. BALCONY 2
22. M&E AREA

The idea for Chin Terrace likely began even before the architect arrived on site. Having the luxury to live in a house for five years, the owners of Chin Terrace had already then began to form living habits and movements within the house. These personal and location specific movements within the house were then shared and architectural seeds for a new house took to soil.

very sizable open atrium

This terrace house has the luxury of minimal spatial requirements. Apart from the basic necessities of a typical residential living: kitchen and two bedrooms, there was little else to contend with.

Light became a living need and spatial idea. From this, a central atrium circulation space took shape. Considering the common inefficiencies of a terrace house, where light and cross ventilation became stumbling blocks for comfort, this central atrium is a single solution that answered all needs. Within a generous length of over 20 metres, the central atrium is larger than any internal courtyard found in most terrace





houses. The larger the atrium, the more well ventilated the interior of the spaces. Understanding the scale and 'multi-tasking' this light core is where the seedling of light begins to grow.

Functionally, the staircase that runs vertically through this two and a half-storey terrace house winds around the central atrium. Unlike a narrow single flight stair in a shophouse terrace, or a typical dog-leg stair that turns at every ten steps to achieve minimum loss of usable area, the staircase in Chin Terrace stretches out languidly, breaking down the physical task into bite-sized lengths. This breaks down the proportion of the stairs and at the same time, allows for different access levels to the spaces anchored at the two ends of the house. The stairs become bridge-like structures and as a result of a very sizable open atrium, it almost feels like the stairs at the edge of the house looking inwards, rather than a stair within a house.

Designed wider than needed, the stairs on at the start of the ground level are finished in alternate timber

and stone, accenting the intention to use the stair as part of the living room extension, serving as additional seats. These architectural gestures though not new, are less often found in houses, which relegate staircases to merely functional means.

With the solid volumes of spaces pushed to the two ends of the house, the central void becomes like a magnetic force field, similar to a black hole that people within the house gravitate to. The abundance of light and larger than double-volume space in the atrium completely decompresses the terrace house structure.

The rooms on either ends are designed in consideration to keep the atrium afloat. Large panels of walls that separate the rooms for the atrium are designed as movable panels. This way, at any one time, at least half the width of the rooms are allowed to be open and communicate with the staircase and the central atrium. The corresponding half of the room that forms the front and rear façade are also designed with large enough openings that maintain this sight line. When all

the openings are aligned, it appears as if there is no beginning nor end to the length of the house.

Considering the practicalities of living in a house designed to be truly lived in, where simple tasks of maintenance and keeping the house like a home and less like a show-piece, it does seem logical to keep the atrium enclosed, and not open to sky. Yet, there seems to be a part of the architecture that seems to form the mental illusion of a 'charming little sprig' venturing beyond physical boundaries of the atrium, the front and rear garden, reaching out towards the stars. The idea of light seems too well defined such that the ephemerality and lightness of light has been weighed down by logic and hard lines in the space.

Ideas are invisible seeds that grow into real spaces, which in turn, plant new seeds of imagination and wonder in us, as we stand and live inside these physical ideas. Chin Terrace is a 'young' house, which over time, will continue to grow and morph itself with the owners that live inside it. ➔