

# WELL PITCHED

BY LUO JINGMEI | IMAGES COURTESY LAUD ARCHITECTS  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MELVIN H J TAN

The Frankel Avenue House by LAUD Architects is a modern, abstract and well-conceived take on the archetypal pitched-roof building form





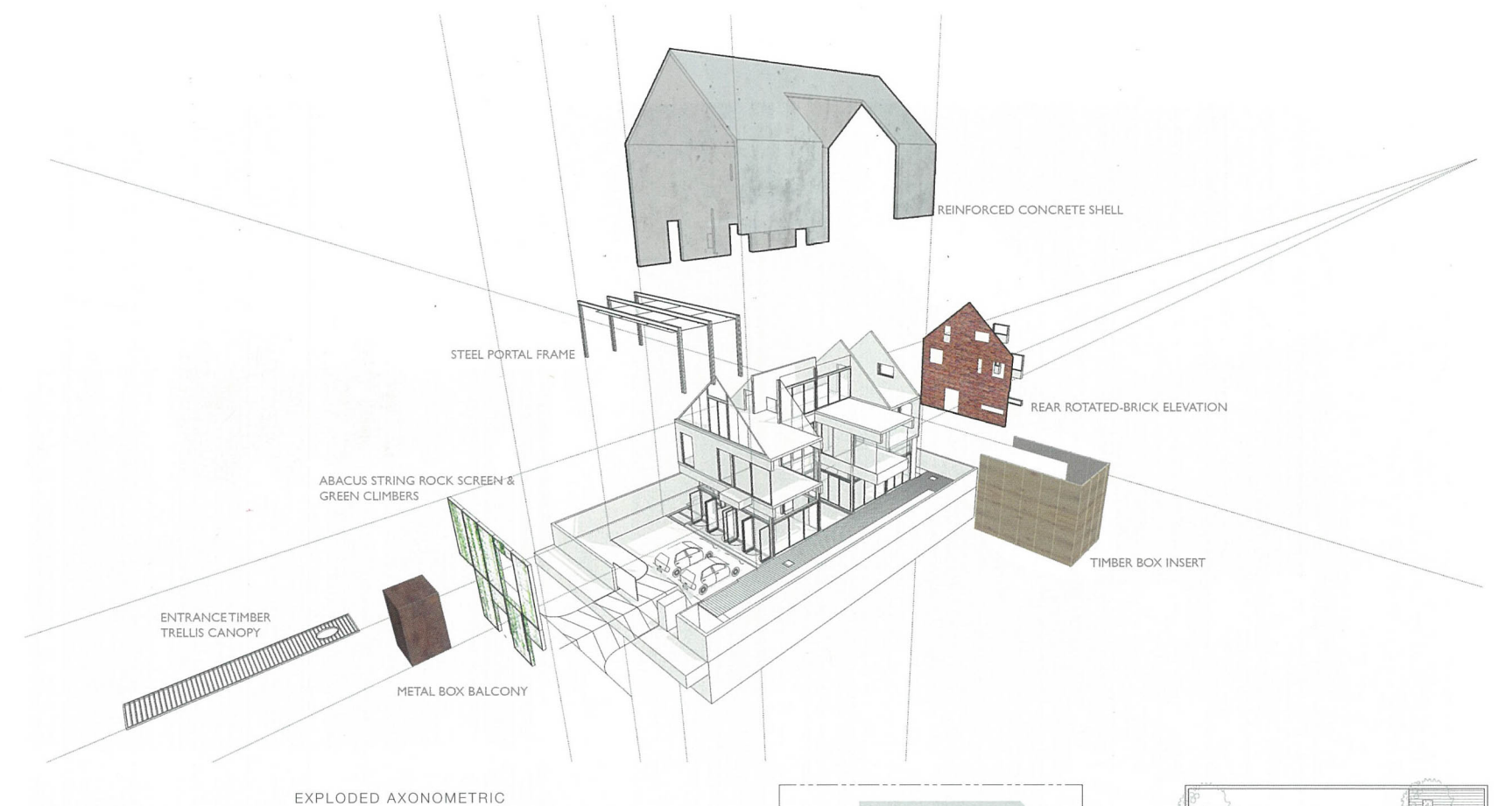


The primordial house form, with a clearly articulated pitched roof rendered in a singular material, and simple cut-out openings has been a popular parti used by architects in the last few years. Perhaps it is a backlash to the complexity of architectural gymnastics encouraged by the easy availability of advanced computer technology. Or maybe, a deviation from the too-common flat-roof, Bauhaus Modernist form. Whatever the reason, it has become a trend worldwide, as seen in many houses frequently published, not least Herzog and de Meuron's iconic VitraHaus in Weil am Rhein, Germany.

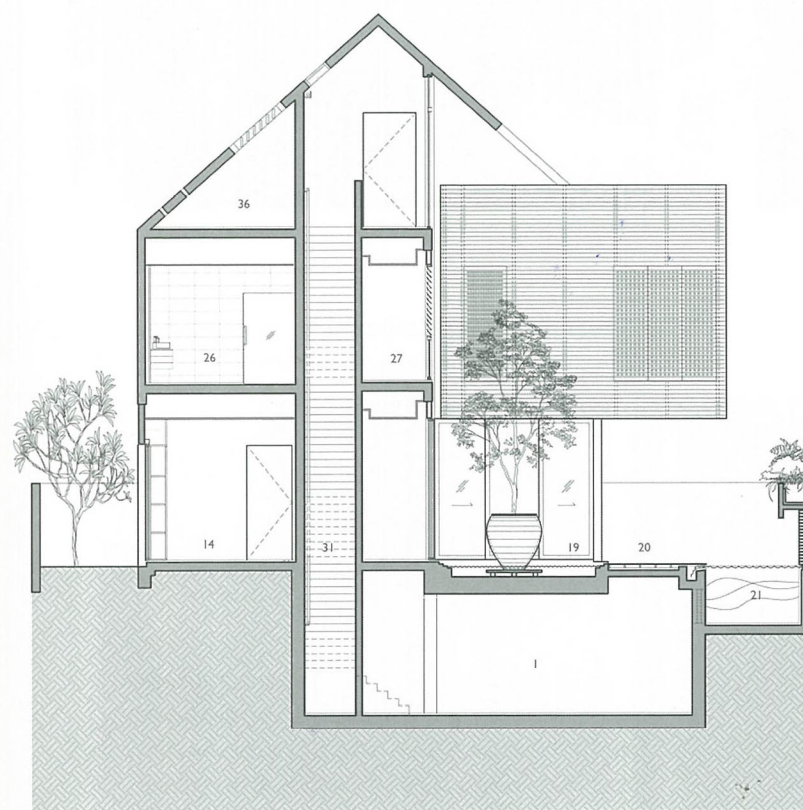
In Southeast Asia though, this form is highly relevant. For many centuries, traditional house forms has made use of the pitched roof, which is highly functional for draining away tropical storm water quickly. One architecture firm that has recently made use of this parti is Laud Architects. The Singapore-based firm, helmed by partners Lau Tse Kit Joseph, Ho tzu Yin, and Melvin H J Tan, is known mostly for its portfolio of religious buildings, but it also designs houses and other commercial typologies.

The project in question is the Frankel Avenue House. An aerial photograph shows the pitched roof as sitting quite at home in the residential neighbourhood of pitched roofs. The only difference is that the former is built from stark off-form concrete while the neighbours use primarily sienna-coloured terracotta roof tiles popular in the 80s and 90s.

The concrete shell is both aesthetical and functional, says the architect-in-charge, Melvin H J Tan. 'The idea is that we have this [concrete] sheath that runs through the whole house to form a very simple geometric form. The

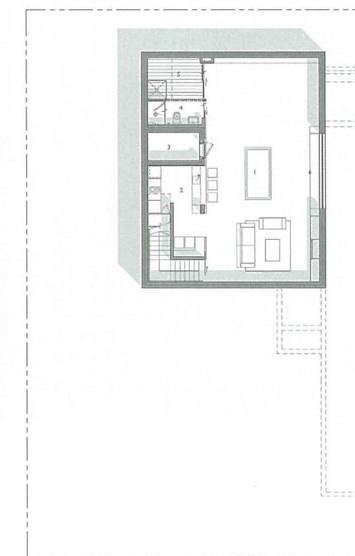


EXPLODED AXONOMETRIC

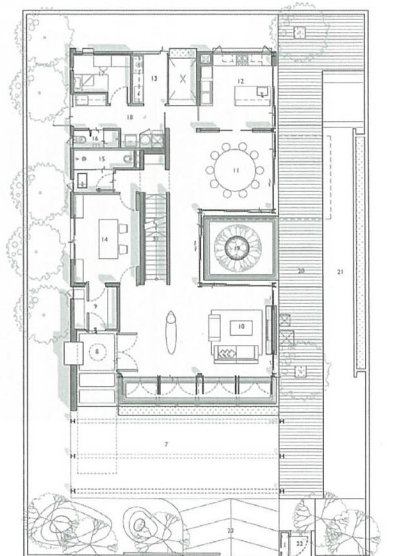


CROSS SECTION

- |                      |                    |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1 ENTERTAINMENT ROOM | 26 MASTERBATH      |
| 14 STUDY / LIBRARY   | 27 CORRIDOR        |
| 19 WATER FEATURE     | 31 STEEL STAIRCASE |
| 20 POOL DECK         | 36 M&E             |
| 21 SWIMMING POOL     |                    |



BASEMENT &amp; 1ST STOREY

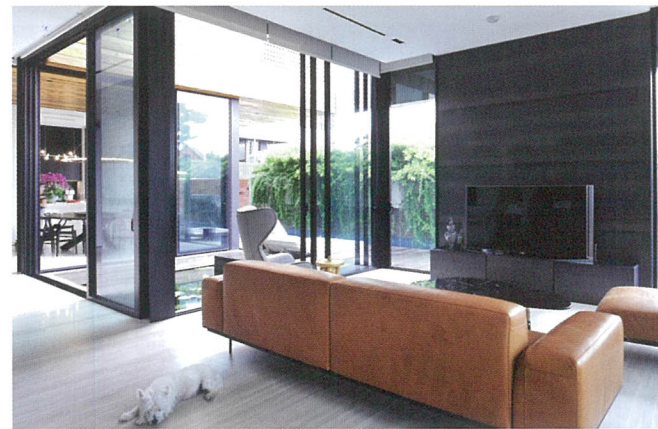
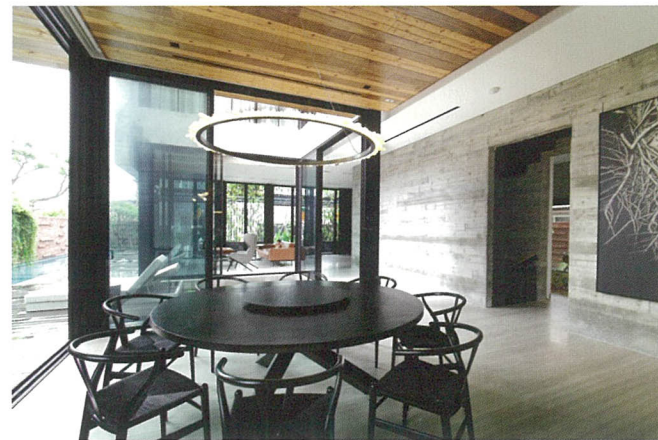


2ND STOREY &amp; ATTIC STOREY

- |                          |                    |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| 24 MASTER BEDROOM        | 29 BEDROOM 2       |
| 25 MASTER WALK IN CLOSET | 30 BEDROOM 1       |
| 26 MASTERBATH            | 31 STEEL STAIRCASE |
| 27 CORRIDOR              | 32 BALCONY         |
| 28 BEDROOM 3             |                    |

- |                          |
|--------------------------|
| 31 STEEL STAIRCASE       |
| 32 ATTIC GALLERY         |
| 33 JUNIOR MASTER BEDROOM |
| 34 ROOF TERRACE          |
| 36 M&E                   |



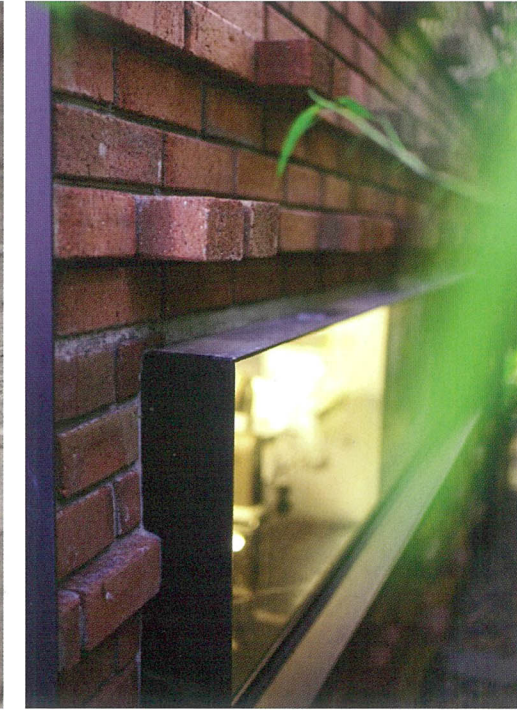
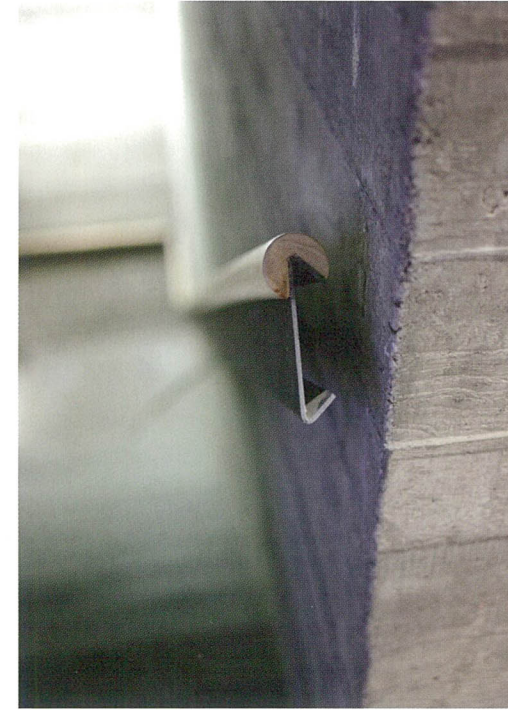
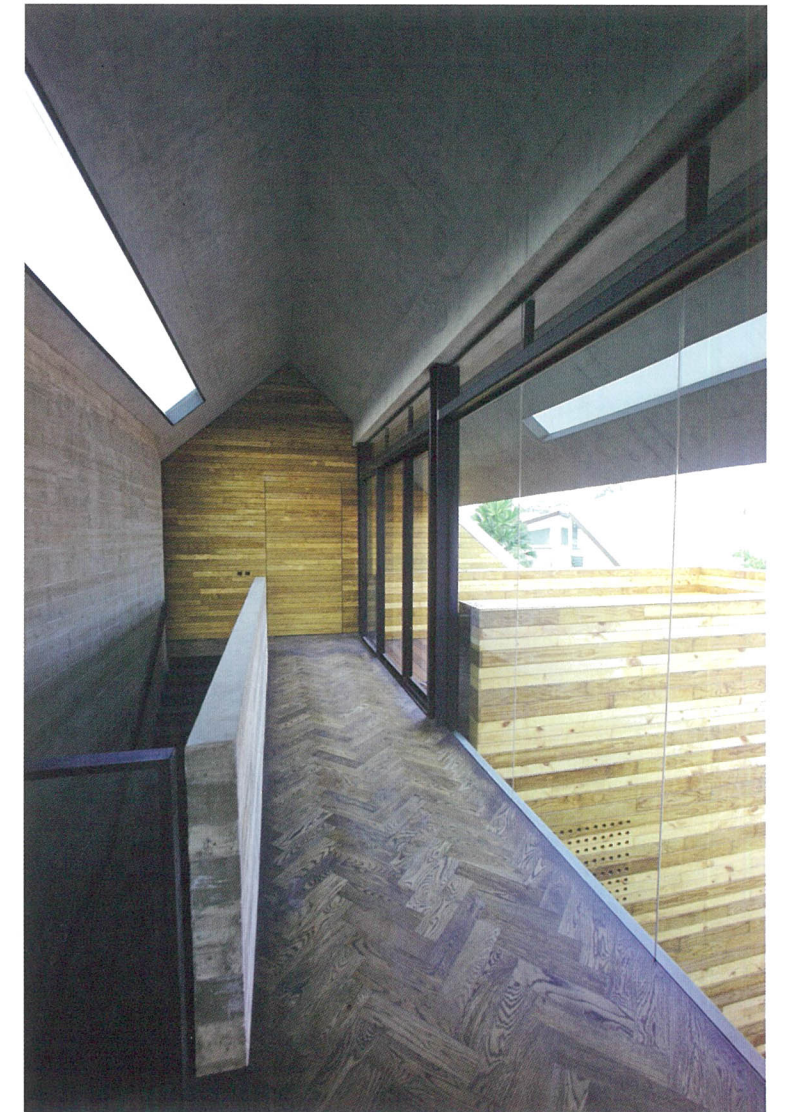
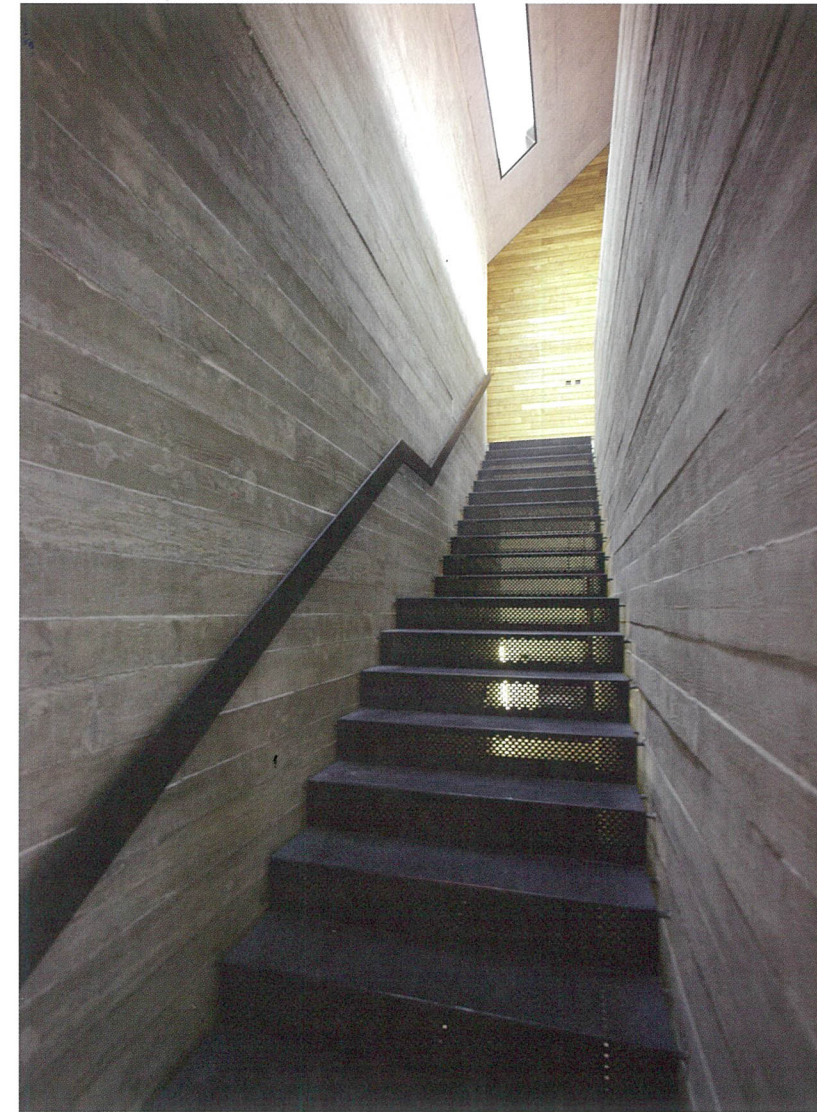


#### FRANKEL AVENUE HOUSE

LOCATION	FRANKEL AVENUE, SINGAPORE
COMPLETION	NOV 2014
GFA	590.69M <sup>2</sup>
ARCHITECT	LAUD ARCHITECTS PTE LTD
PROJECT TEAM	MELVIN H J TAN, TOH MINGHUI, BOW PISAMAI VAIDHAYAKARN, CHERIE ANN ZABALA, CHUAN LIM CONSTRUCTION PTE LTD
BUILDER	KTP CONSULTANTS PTE LTD
STRUCTURAL ENGINEER	HPX CONSULTING ENGINEERS PTE LTD
M&E ENGINEER	LANGDON & SEAH SINGAPORE PTE LTD
QUANTITY SURVEYOR	COEN DESIGN INTERNATIONAL PTE LTD
LANDSCAPE	TULSI GROVER/ONG&ONG PTE LTD
INTERIORS	

shell comes down on one side of the house and stops short on one side where it exposes the living and dining spaces to the poolside,' he explains. On the other western front, the concrete wall falls all the way to the ground, to shelter the residents from the strong western sun. A clearly articulated rectangular box clothed in pinewood timber panelling cantilevers from the concrete shell on the second storey over the dining area, while on the attic level, the box of the walls extend upwards to contain an open terrace. Proportions of the pinewood panels are kept similar to the concrete formwork for consistency.

'The house is a simple exploration of the various materials. We basically tried to keep everything as



natural as we could. Timber, concrete, or steel (as used for framing and interior elements) – it's always shown as it is rather than covered up,' says Tan.

Though simple, there is also an attempt at experimentation with the materials. For instance, Tan points out, a brick wall at the back elevation of the house has an interesting pattern that is derived from a Morse code pattern of the homeowners' names, as suggested by the homeowners themselves. This play of brick is continued in the boundary walls, though in simpler patterning.

The spatial programming of the house is straightforward, with some clever and artistic injections: an entrance portal with a marble seat leads into the living area and dining area that share a view of an external koi pond and the swimming pool beyond. This is followed by the powder room, kitchen and services, framed by an enchanting view of a rear bamboo garden that can be seen from the front of the house. Behind the entrance portal, a door opens functionally to generous shoe



cabinets. This links to the study can also be accessed from the living area, and which comes with a floor-to-ceiling window view of the garden. Thus, in just the first storey alone, the inclusion of sceneries of nature allow for a seamless indoor-outdoor relationship that makes this house an ode to living in the tropics.

On the second storey, the master bedroom is located at the front of the house, while the other end contains a bathroom, the two children's bedrooms and a playroom. The playroom is located in the timber box that hovers over the swimming pool. Circular cutouts punctuating timber façade panels are an ingenious way to allow in natural light and ventilation without compromising on the clarity of the box form from the exterior.

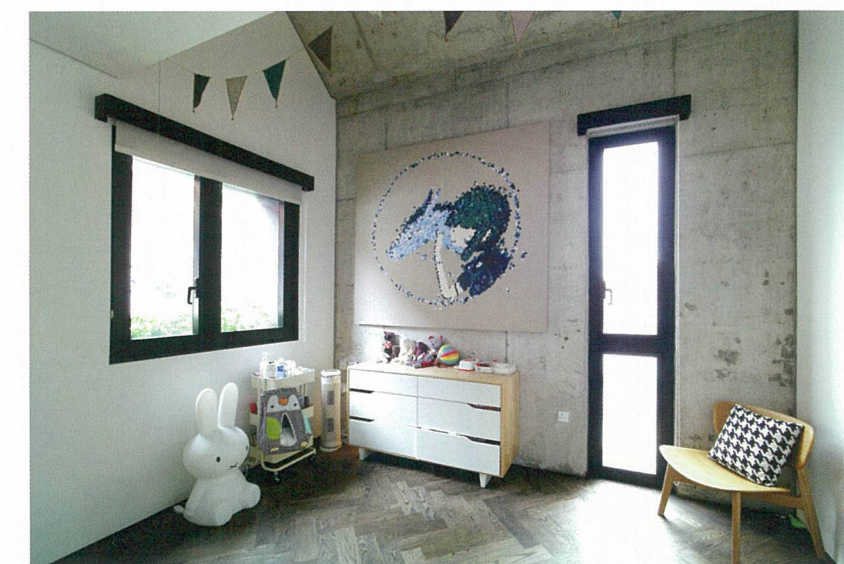
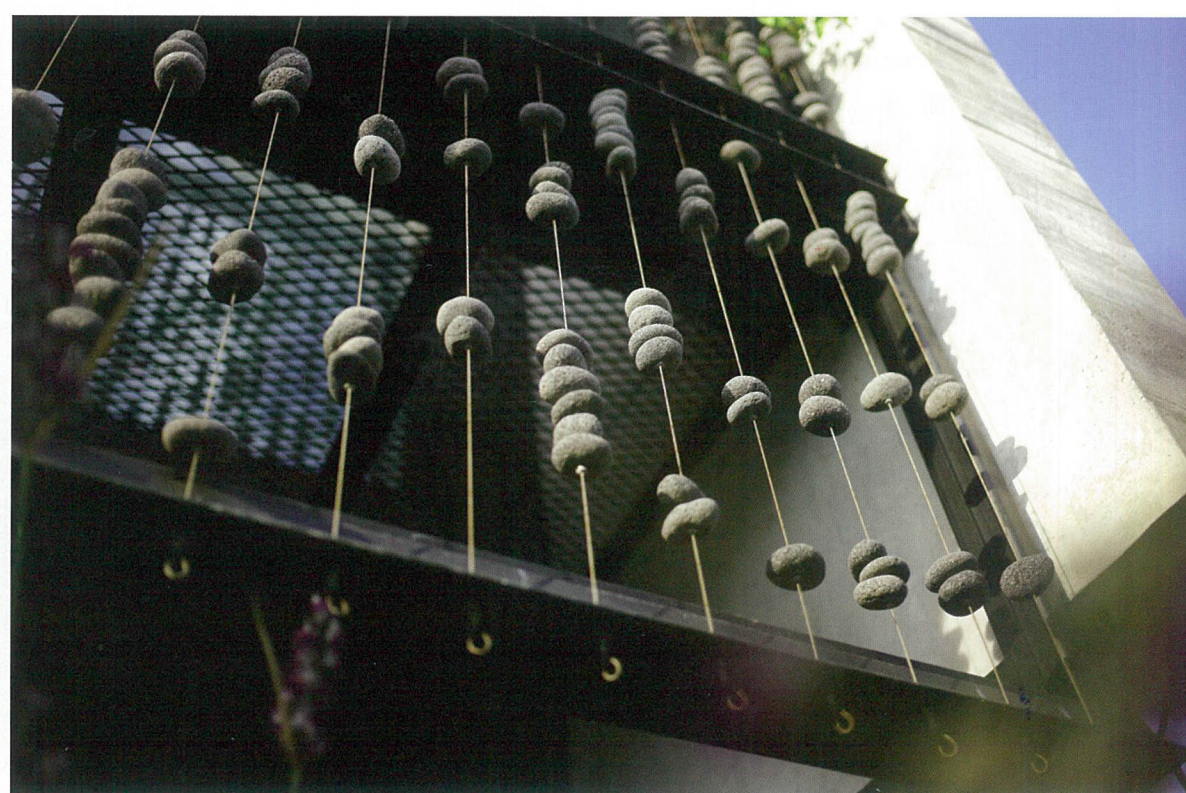
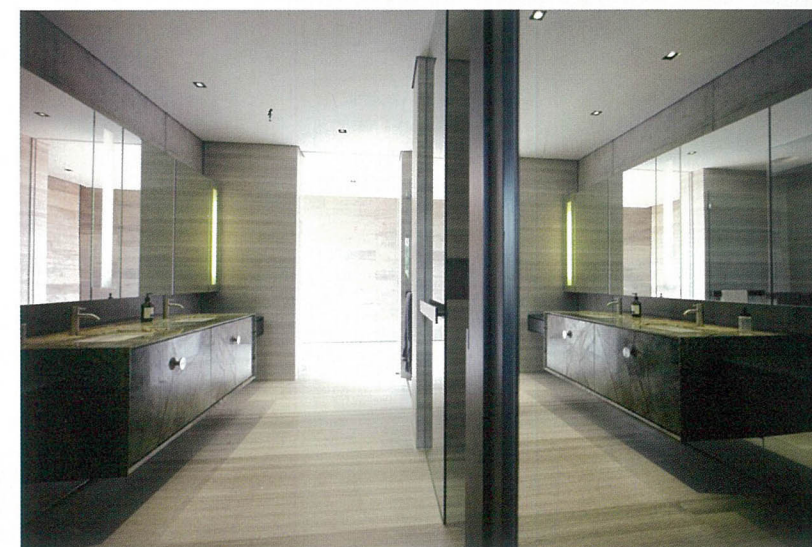
Meanwhile, the attic contains an entertainment space that is delightful for its expression of the pitched roof on the interior, the open roof terrace above the hovering timber box, and a guest room. Downstairs in the basement is a gym, with a view through to the swimming pool via a large cut out that allows in quite a bit of natural light into the space.

The staircase linking all these stories is created from folded metal plates, punctuated with circular holes and capped by a skylight to bring light all the way down to the basement. This vertical circulation element is bound

by off-form concrete walls. These are the only such walls in the interior, designed deliberately to inject a sense of the exterior architecture, points out project architect Toh Ming Hui; other walls are finished in white paint. Thus, for instance, in the master bedroom, the cool, luxe feel of the marble countertops juxtapose interestingly with the rough, industrial texture of the concrete wall.

Another key element defining the house is its front façade, which features an unusual screen created from a screen of 'abacus beads' made of rounded stones strung on wire, and coated lushly with a green wall. This is a privacy screen, shielding the master bedroom from the main road. A rectangular balcony protrudes through the green, made from rusty brown-painted mild steel. From the interior, the soothing panel of green creates a relaxing, calming ambience.

Another aspect that stands out in this house is the well-detailed elements in the interior. These were designed by Tuli Grover, Senior Design Manager of ONG&ONG Interior Design, and his team. For instance, bathroom counters in the typical baths are elegant, crafted boxes in translucent marble that echo the clean language of the architecture. Air-conditioning services in the ceiling are concealed within slim slots. 'There is no inherent concept but what we have tried to achieve is



simplicity and purity in the interior architectural elements. With the use of tactile materials, such as black raw mild steel panels (in the joinery), unfinished timber planks, polished marbles, white walls, etc, we have maintained a subtle transition between architecture and interior design,' he elaborates.

Custom-designed elements are key to providing this seamless experience, he adds. For example, a black shadow gap in the floors, walls and ceiling renders a floating effect to these elements. The interior doors are also designed with concealed pivoted hinges and follow the finish of the walls to be visually perceived as one element.

A committed design team, coupled with a design-savvy couple (the homeowners are architecturally trained and very open-minded) has led to a project that is as well designed in all aspects – visually, physically, materially, emotionally – without simply buckling trends. +