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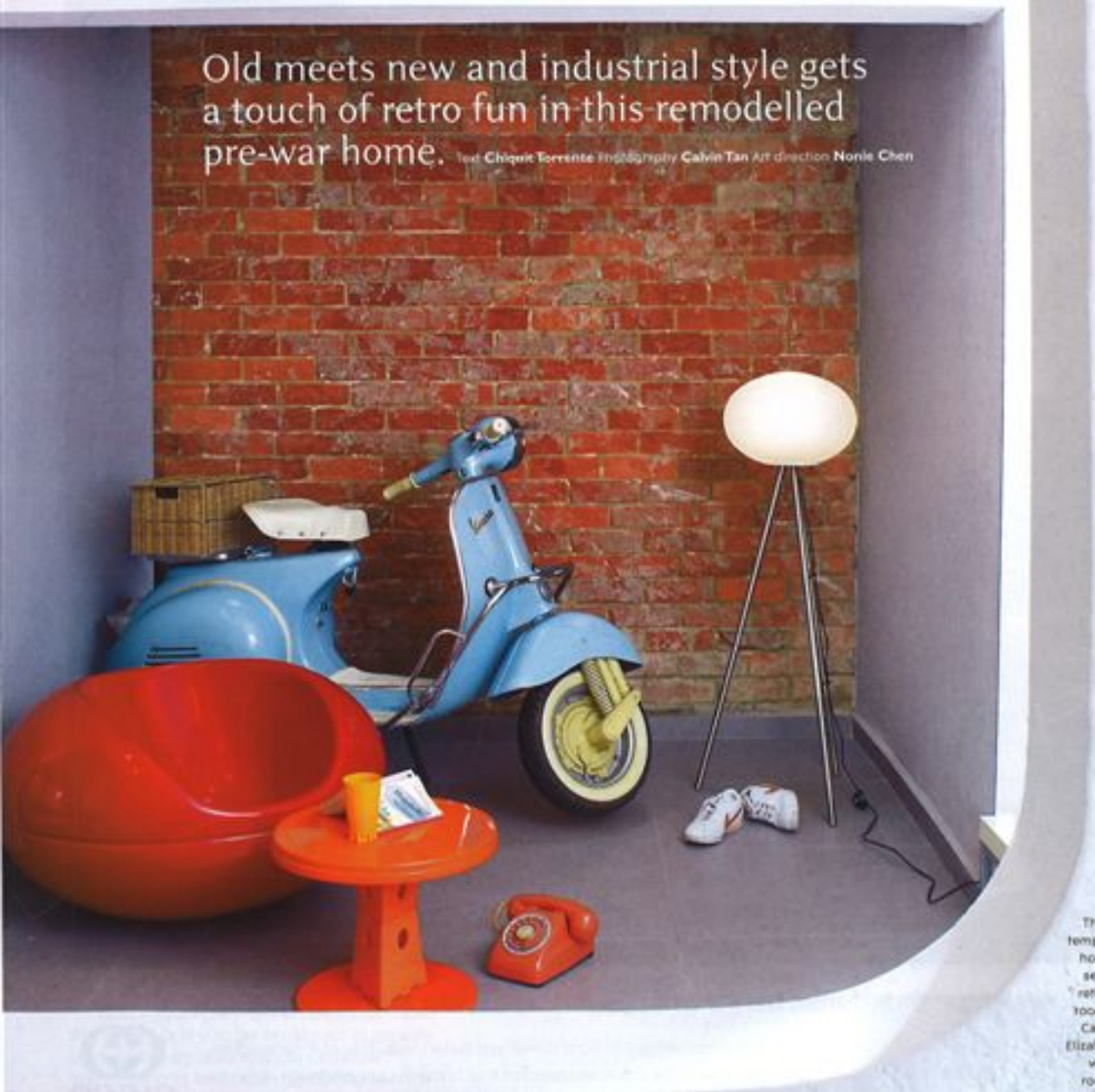
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BALANCINGACT

Old meets new and industrial style gets a touch of retro fun in this remodelled pre-war home. Text Chiquit Torrente Photography Calvin Tan Art direction Nonie Chen



The powder blue Vespa, temporarily parked in their house by a friend who is selling it, completes the retro setting of the spare room. **OPPOSITE ABOVE** Cate Blanchett as Queen Elizabeth in a movie poster watches over an Eames rocker and other vintage pieces. **OPPOSITE BELOW** The corridor gets its own signage – “New Bridge Road”, to indicate it is a major passageway.



Media professional Fenfei's new home is chock-full of personality. The pre-war abode in Tiong Bahru estate has bits of history mixed in with film and travel memorabilia, not to mention a neighbourhood visitor in the form of an insistent cat.

"I used to live in a similar type of home before I got married, and I like how the pre-war houses have this raw and minimal type of design," Fenfei narrates. The bare, industrial feel is also a good canvas for her colourful furnishings, which include art film posters, retro furniture and quirky accessories.

Fenfei and her husband moved in just a few months ago, after a three-month renovation by interior designer Kelvin Giam of Intent. "We were shopping for a designer because my previous designer had become too expensive," Fenfei laughs. The search ended with a copy of *Home & Decor* and one appointment. "Kelvin's project was featured in one issue. We liked his work, so we gave him a call. We decided to work with him as we established an instant connection in our first meeting."

Paying homage to the 1930s housing estate, Kelvin's interior renovation incorporated a clear visual differentiation between the old and the new. The original, load-bearing walls were given a smooth finish, while the new walls have rough surfaces. The coarsely finished walls with their curved windows and arched doorways are reminiscent of adobe homes in the Spanish Mission style of architecture, but a glossy white coating keeps it looking industrial. Textured floors demarcate some spaces like the kitchen, dining and living areas from the hallway to the bedrooms, so there are fewer walls and hence more light and ventilation to go around. Interior windows were cut into the walls too, making the cavernous house brighter despite the brick, cement screed and bare concrete finishes. The furnishings and lighting fixtures are mostly from Fenfei's previous house and her existing collection. "I asked Kelvin to keep it spare because we were bringing in a lot of our old things."

Bahn furniture set the stage for Fenfei's childhood collectibles.

BELOW LEFT A built-in bed in the master bedroom has a concrete hollow block-finished headboard and frame. **BELOW RIGHT** Bahns-inspired wire chairs balance the heaviness of the concrete dining table.



AS AN ODE TO THE HISTORY OF THE TIONG BAHRU ESTATE, THE RENOVATION PLAYED UP THE SMOOTH OLD WALLS AGAINST THE ROUGHLY-FINISHED NEW ONES.

A bare brick wall adds colour to the kitchen and dining room. The skylight lets in natural light, as does the open back door, through which the neighbourhood cat visits.



Fenfei plays up her sleek new bathroom with the quirky sign outside. **RIGHT** An arched door and portholes add fun to the bare white walls.

Fenfei says there is a lot of room for growth in the 1,100sqf residence – a spare bedroom should the in-laws choose to move in and a study area that can be turned into another bedroom “when we decide to have children” are already in place. With the fun vintage pieces and the subway station look, it’s easy to imagine children having a blast growing up in and running around this house. Of course, the stark white walls would be a convenient and tempting canvas for a child’s crayon doodles, but they would simply add even more character to Fenfei’s home.

WHERE TO GO

INTENT, tel: 6296-9559, e-mail: enquiries@intent.com.sg



Ideas We Love

SHOW ME A SIGN Fenfei picked up this cool toilet sign on one of her retreat trips to Johor Bahru. “I always buy something when I travel, whether it’s far overseas or just nearby JB, to remind me of that particular trip.” So, does every trip to the loo remind her of that little mall in the outskirts over the border?

HISTORY AT YOUR FINGERTIPS It’s easy to tell which are the original walls and which are the newly-built ones – all you need to do is feel the surfaces. Designer Kelvin Giam kept the new walls roughly finished to contrast with the smoothness of the originals.

Photo: Darrell Gani Photography Studio