



BEST OF 2016 - BEST SPACES/PRODUCTS

Pretty places and objects that inspire us

Local architects and designers have come up with creative but functional spaces and products.

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FROM a new age hostel to a dining and recreational centre for the elderly, local architects had their hands busy designing creative but functional spaces, which hopefully will inspire even better projects in the future. Here's a look at spaces and products that impressed us most.

COO

259 Outram Road

COO is not your usual sort of hostel. Instead it markets itself as a "societal", an establishment providing accommodation, meals and other services that revolve around all things social - social spaces, socialising and social media.

Designed by award-winning firm Ministry of Design, COO brings together a design hostel and a casual bistro, while introducing COO Connect, a digital interest matching tool aimed at connecting like-minded hostel guests.

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COO's location at Tiong Bahru was the inspiration for the hostel. For example, the eye-catching entrance is framed by metal mesh, taking cues from the metal gates of the old housing estate; the ceiling is covered with graphic prints of kopitiam uncles, Bob the neighbourhood cat, art decor architecture and traditional kuehs.

The 68 bunk beds come with their own personal lockers and thick curtains for privacy. House rules in bold prints are plastered on the walls while witty icons are punctuated across the common areas such as the bathrooms. Design-wise, the highlight of COO Bistro is a suspended neon art piece shaped as an abstract map of the neighbourhood.

Put simply, COO is so cool that even non-budget travellers will want to spend a night here.

The Great Room

1 George Street, #10-01

They don't call it The Great Room for nothing. This co-working space feels more like the lobby of a luxury hotel than an office. Good news for bosses as staff won't be having the Monday blues or grumbling about having to work late. There are large leather couches and plush armchairs, with patterned rugs in vibrant hues covering the floor. The desks have timber and brass details. Through the windows, take in views of the Singapore River and other landmark buildings.

The space was designed by hospitality specialist Distillery studio, which later merged with design firm Hassell, best known for designing cool offices.

The Great Room's founder, Jaelle Ang, says that the end result is a beautifully designed space, with all the intelligence and business efficiency of an office.

Members choose from hot desks, or small to medium-sized rooms which are private offices. The offices come with timber desks, leather task chairs, storage shelves with brass detailing, flattering lighting and good fengshui.

Goodlife! Makan

Blk 52 Marine Terrace

Goodlife! Makan is a community kitchen with a twist. It offers a place for seniors who live alone to prepare, cook and share their meals with each other.

The centre is located at a void deck, and is an innovative social initiative created by voluntary welfare organisation Montfort Care to support ageing-in-place, built around meaningful pastimes that address the physical and mental wellness of seniors.

DP Architects designed Goodlife! Makan to have an open design, so that seniors can freely mix with one another and the rest of the community. The fenceless compound reduces the social stigma and addresses the psyche of the stay-alone seniors.

Besides the kitchen, the centre has its own dining, reading and entertainment areas too.

A vivid palette of colours and textures are used to create a distinctive and vibrant setting for the seniors.

Instead of text, pictographs such as that of a coffee cup are used as signage, as a universal language to communicate with seniors from all ethnic backgrounds.

Birds of a Feather

115 Amoy Street

Some eateries have Instagram-worthy interiors, but the food is less than palatable. In some other places, it is the other way around. But at Birds of a Feather, you get a combination of both.

The menu is contemporary Western with a pronounced Sichuan influence, such as the grilled cheese panini with Sichuan braised pork belly, pickled cabbage and fried potato.

The interiors are gorgeous - and it comes as a surprise to hear that the owners, a Sichuan couple, had no professional help but designed the space themselves.

The interior of the eatery brings to mind a sunlit aviary awash with positive feelings. The space is naturally lit by two large air-well openings, and filled with plenty of plants, evoking the green gentility of Chengdu.

Diners get their pick of seating areas, from intimate corners to open loungy areas; on single chairs, sofas and banquettes and at high or low tables. The decor is stylish but quirky, such as the cloud-shaped hanging lights, a hand-crafted wall art piece of bulbs and jointed copper pipes, a lighting feature composed of real leaves from Chengdu, and actual tree branches complete with faux cockatoos at the entrance.

Open House

Siglap area

Houses usually come with four solid walls, but architect Gwen Tan's home only has two - the side party walls. In front, there is the main door but that has been designed like a series of movable walls - otherwise, it is a thoroughly porous facade. The rear is all glass to capture views and light.

Ms Tan, one of the four founders of Formwerkz Architects, lives with her husband and son, her mum, and mother-in-law.

With only two walls on the side, the home is largely open, and designed to be a lush, green sanctuary not only for its human inhabitants - but also for trees and birds. There are trees not only in front and in the backyard but also inside the house. A 10m tall Memphat tree provides filtered light from the glass roof.

Another highlight of the house is the 13m-long lap pool on the second storey located directly over the kitchen. "Skylights" built into the floor of the pool allows daylight penetration into the kitchen below.

Since the house is so open, everyone knows what each other is doing. A series of timber and steel screens and motorised blinds gives the house some privacy from its neighbours.

Bynd Artisan Travel Sleeve

byndartisan.com

You may find yourself booking a holiday soon, simply so that you can use this stylish item. Designed by local bookbinding company, Bynd Artisan, the Travel Sleeve (right) is a modern travel wallet. It is smaller than the conventional travel wallets, but yet still long enough to hold a boarding pass, and it comes with four card slots, four side slots, which are handy for credit and frequent flier cards, and a sleeveless pen slot. It is made of natural grained cow hide, and available in five colours.

Supermama Singapore Architecture Collection

supermamastore.com

Keep Singapore architecture alive while dining. Edwin Low, designer and founder of Supermama wants to "lock in images of iconic buildings in Singapore forever". So he has created the Singapore Architecture Collection of plates. There are currently five plates in the series depicting five spots, which are Singapore River, Marina Bay (above), Bras Basah, Kampong Glam and Katong. On each plate are illustrations of iconic buildings of the area, such as the Marina Bay Sands, and quirky icons, such as the junks that used to ply the Singapore River.

There are plans to create a whole series of different neighbourhoods in Singapore.

WMF Tea Stick

WMF Counters

Save the earth by not using disposable tea bags, but have your cuppa using this tea infusion stick (right) instead. Use the tea scoop to measure out the right amount of tea - straight from the tea caddy into the French tea press - add boiling water and leave to brew.

The tea stick is sleek in design, won't take up precious countertop space, and is dishwasher friendly.

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