

LUXE HOMES

CLUTTERED GENIUS

An interesting mix of elements and a clever approach to decor give Pandot Ocampo's home a unique charm

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A deep, rich red radiates from the flat as its door swings open, the burst of colour a pleasant surprise in the white-walled corridors of its metropolitan address. The interiors, replete with its current resident's many collections, old and new, are a stark contrast to the sleek, minimalist themes popular amongst contemporary living spaces.

"It's really more a collage than anything else," says Fernando "Pandot" Ocampo of his two-bedroom home. As favoured decorator to Manila society since the 1960s, Ocampo has travelled far and wide to see the richest fabrics, the most

unusual design pieces, and the best canvases for his art. His home is like an expanded, three-dimensional scrapbook of his life's work, brimming with stories spanning decades, countries, and even design lessons.

Upon stepping inside the unit, the Asian influence is unmistakable. "When I lived in Italy for two years, I thought Europe was it. But since then I've been travelling in Asia, and there's just as much opulence here," explains Ocampo of the inspiration behind his Eastern collection. Unique finds from around the continent are spread across his living room. Three large *capiz* panels line the expansive window—two of which were gifts from a client, while the cen-

THIS PAGE: *Capiz* panels line an expansive living room window. Warm lights and Persian carpets add to the rich but homey ambience.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Shelves filled with books and curios, right at the entrance to one of the bedrooms, creates a cosy reading nook.

PREVIOUS PAGE: Red walls play canvass to the wide collection of objects displayed in the living room. A striking Thai painting above the sofa serves as the room's focal point.





trepiece was crafted from old windows he had acquired for the shells' sizes. Fifteenth-century stone heads from Indonesia's *Majapahit* tribe adorn tables spread across the space—purchased in Jakarta after Ocampo had heard a tale of the tribe being one of the first inhabitants and ancestors of his native Pampanga.

Many of his favourite pieces are those with distinct shapes, and even more interesting histories: a set of long, silver hair pins from Chiang Mai which, they say, used to hold opium. "It took me about 10 years to collect them, as they're not easy to come by," he recalls; and a variety of pineapple containers—steel ones originally from a *palitera* (toothpick holder) set, and old jam jars from Penang, which now serve as candle holders. "They're quite pretty as a

fruit," he says with a laugh.

Despite its obvious strength, though, the space is actually not entirely Eastern-inspired. He credits the West for the manner in which pieces are shuffled around. "It's a very European way of cluttering things," he says. Souvenirs from his adventures there blend in the space: a 17th-century Venetian sculpture stands on a table by the window—purchased by a young Ocampo in 1955 while studying art in Italy under a scholarship grant from the Thailand Embassy; and a miniature bust of a blindfolded woman—Lady Justice—from a Parisian flea market.

In his bedroom, volumes of books are arranged in a mid-height shelf by the door, and in a floor-to-ceiling variation by the adjacent wall. More mementos fill the spaces between books

THIS PAGE: In the master's bedroom, a self portrait hangs between a pair of sconces crafted by Ocampo from various finds **OPPOSITE PAGE:** A delightful *yum cha* (Chinese afternoon tea) is served in the terrace



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and shelf partitions: a piece acquired straight from the ruins of Pompeii, now framed and mounted—"at that time you could still go to the Ruins and just pick up things," he recalls; and several tiny wooden cages, formerly shelters of his old collection of crickets.

As a designer, Ocampo is unconstrained by styles and trends, but rather lives by the tenets of quality, level, proportion, and function.

The pieces in the unit were pulled in from his old house according to what he deemed would complement the new space. He takes the same approach when decorating clients' homes, taking his time to arrive at the best versions of any space. "We finish what we have to finish but do it slowly. Do it well, or not do it at all," he would say. "There's no substitute for a good thing."

Now, the "uncluttered clutter" is achieved through levels. According to Ocampo, the eye must be able to travel from floor to ceiling

without any obstructions. "In this room, all have different levels. So even if you have a lot of things it doesn't seem too crowded," he quips, citing his living room as an example of how a variety of heights affect a space.

The number of large items are likewise kept to a minimum so as not to overpower the space. A large painting from Thailand, for instance, hangs on the wall above the sofa and serves as the focal point of the room. Besides the furniture, all other pieces placed around it are intentionally smaller to create a balance.

The Philippine Institute of Interior Design (PIID) hall-of-famer (2006) also shows his knack for enhancing a space by making its decoration appropriate to its function. A taupe curtain, for example, hangs from a lone window in the kitchen. When pulled down, the curtain creates a backdrop for Ocampo's decanter collection, displayed on glass shelves overlooking the living

THIS PAGE: A collection of religious artefacts in the living room includes a prized antique altarpiece from Bohol **OPPOSITE TOP LEFT:** Ocampo's interesting collection of pineapples on a side table; antique Buddhist monk figurine in gold leaf from one of his many travels; a set of Chinese brushes and other accoutrements on his writing desk; beautifully framed vintage paintings

THIS PAGE:
Decanters are displayed in a recessed part of the wall framed by Oriental wooden shutters. The curtain behind it, when pulled up, reveals a window to the kitchen



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room. From this side, the window appears no more than a recessed space, accentuated by classic wooden shutters on either side.

Despite its location at the centre of a young city known for its brand-new skyscrapers, the unit exudes the charm and comfort of a home that has been in the family for generations. "I've been here only since March, and a lot of people think I've been here forever. It feels that way," he says. What is even more remarkable is that Ocampo lives here on invitation from a client, much like his previous homes. "I've been staying in clients' homes for as long as I can remember," he says; and yet he fits perfectly into the space. Asked about his ideal

place to live in, he gives a sagely, unassuming answer: "It all depends on how you wake up in the morning." No wonder he's able to make a home wherever he is.

It's difficult to put one's finger on what exactly gives his apartment its charm at first glance. Perhaps it's in the way the colours greet you on the way in, or in the replacement of overhead lighting with adjustable lamps of warm light. It's actually in the spaces between: the references to the personal expressed through keepsakes, and the clutter created by the thoughtful juxtaposition of elements. **H**

FROM TOP LEFT: A Thai Buddha sits atop an oriental cabinet in the hall; an abundance of greens in the patio lend a refreshing twist to the home's rich colour palette **INSET:** The compact but well-styled kitchen