

Maximizing space and character

BY CHRISTIAN REGIS / PHOTOGRAPHS BY WILLIAM ONG

MORE ROOM,
MORE PERSONAL—
WITH A LITTLE
IMAGINATION AND
ELBOW GREASE



Living room of the one-bedroom condo unit of Jason and Nice Jose. Behind one couch is a row of stools matching the home's general palette, providing additional seating.

WITH WIT AND A DO-IT-YOURSELF ATTITUDE, Jason and Nice Jose turned an ordinary high-rise condo into a comfortable home with a design that reflects their character.

"It was a typical condo when we first saw it. Simply introducing our stuff wouldn't make it our home," says Nice.

When Jason Jose, an industrial plant assistant manager, and Erica Tioco, a BPO process architect, married in December 2010, Jason's father gave them an unfurnished single-bedroom

condo unit at Eastwood City as a wedding gift.

Demolition job

The old photos show an empty rectangular space for the living and dining rooms, a half-size kitchen to accommodate the maid's quarters, and a bedroom with no direct access to the bathroom. The ceiling and walls were white, the floors were laminate, and the windows in the main space and bedroom had louvered exhausts for the air-conditioning compressors,

which were within the apartment. Clearly, this condo needed a major overhaul.

The couple enlisted the help of interior designer Joy Valenton to demolish and rebuild the condo.

With permission from the building management, Joy had her crew rip out the laminate flooring and replace it with glossy dark gray ceramic tiles. The maid's room was dispensed with to expand the kitchen and to create a powder room. Black granite replaced the laminate

kitchen counter, and multiple shelves and cabinets were built to make space for kitchen equipment and supplies.

The door to the bathroom was sealed off, and a new door was built from inside the bedroom. A sliding door replaced the hinge door of the bedroom. The walls were painted a pale



ABOVE: Nice and Jason. Instead of cluttering the space with many picture frames, a pair of blow-ups of the couple has bigger impact. BELOW: Dining area continues rigorous palette of blacks, whites and grays.



blue, bringing out a cool modern tone. Work was done only during the daytime on weekdays so as not to disturb the neighbors.

Hiding in plain sight

The Joses wanted their first home to be a reflection of their personalities. Business-minded Jason is an avid mountaineer and an enthusiast of witty gadgets. Nice is caring, systematic, and likes her things in order. Though their preferences are different in many ways, they have the same taste in design

and are both resourceful.

Cabinets were built to enclose the air-conditioning compressors, putting an end to the noise and eyesore. To prevent heat from radiating out of the cabinet (and the units from overheating), it was lined with insulating heat-reflective film. Tubing was hidden under wooden boards in the same color as the walls.

Now the compressors are completely invisible. Guests are oblivious as they gaze out at the Pasig River and Marikina skyline from the window.

Another problem was where to hide infrequently used necessities, such as Christmas decorations and suitcases. They created hidden storage by building a crawl space above the dining room, accessible only by ladder. Jason does most of the climbing and crawling inside the hidden space, and it involves a lot of sweat and a bit of backache. "It is a witty technique, as long as I don't have him frequently going up there," says Nice.

Jason and Nice are pleased with all the extra storage space they achieved in the kitchen. "We're amazed at how much space can be saved by hiding a front-loading washing machine under the kitchen counter," says Jason.

But not all space-saving techniques involve hiding something in plain sight. To double the visible space, they installed a large mirror on the dining room wall.

Affordable multipurpose furniture

Jason says, "My wife and I wanted to design our very first place together in a way that made daily chores efficient, having guests easy, and coming home a welcome treat at the end of a long day!" Interestingly, the couple was able to acquire furniture that highly suits their interior design, but not a heavy drain on their budget.

"We visit the Cainta branch of Mandaue Foam every chance we get. I would say we're



LEFT: The maid's room was taken out to expand the kitchen. Folding clothes rack and table enhance functionality. RIGHT: The bath in the maid's room was transformed into a slick powder room.



regulars," says Nice. That's where they got the six-seater dining set, and pair of cabinets which they placed side by side to create the appearance of a single console of more dramatic proportion.

To offset the rigorous palette of blacks, whites and grays, Nice picked a pair of mocha-colored couches for the living area. Gray linen runners and pillows with a graphic print reiterate the general color scheme. The smokey tempered glass coffee table emphasizes the modernity of the setting. Across the couches are an LED TV and entertainment system, excellent when friends come over for game nights or parties.

Jason and Nice are also regulars of True Value, where

they got the Philips light fixture above the dining table and the shelves over the TV, both of which Jason installed himself.

He says, "We wanted a look that was modern but warm. To do this, we spent a lot of time in Ikea Singapore, marveling at the multifunctional furniture and inspirational showrooms."

Before they were married, Nice was employed in Singapore so Jason made regular trips to the city-state. She was on a plane bound for Manila when Jason suddenly appeared and proposed to her in front of everybody.

In Ikea Singapore, they bought a multipurpose kitchen table, which can be pulled up to make an additional counter when cooking, and pulled down

to make space when doing the laundry. Also from Ikea is a foldable clothes rack, installed in the kitchen, that can hang loads of laundry.

Resourcefulness

Guests are always struck by the large-scale mechanical wall clock in the dining area and a floor lamp in the living area that looks like a small tree with numerous twigs with LED bulbs at each end. Both pieces were acquired in Singapore, the latter at Ikea.

In the kitchen, a trio of abstract art pieces, found in Tiendesitas, add color and visual interest. A tall and a small

plant, which the couple call money makers, are a small yet conspicuous green highlight of the condo.

To finish the design, Jason had two large photos of him and his wife printed on canvas and stretched them over wood frames he built himself. They hang on the wall that was once the doorway to the bathroom and add a very personal touch to the apartment.

Nice, as a dedication to Jason, bought decal mural of an Alpine mountainscape off the Internet, and installed it as a backdrop to the living area.

During their engagement, Nice and Jason Jose agreed that their first home would reflect their character as a couple. Today, they are truly at home. 