

LOOKBOX LIVING

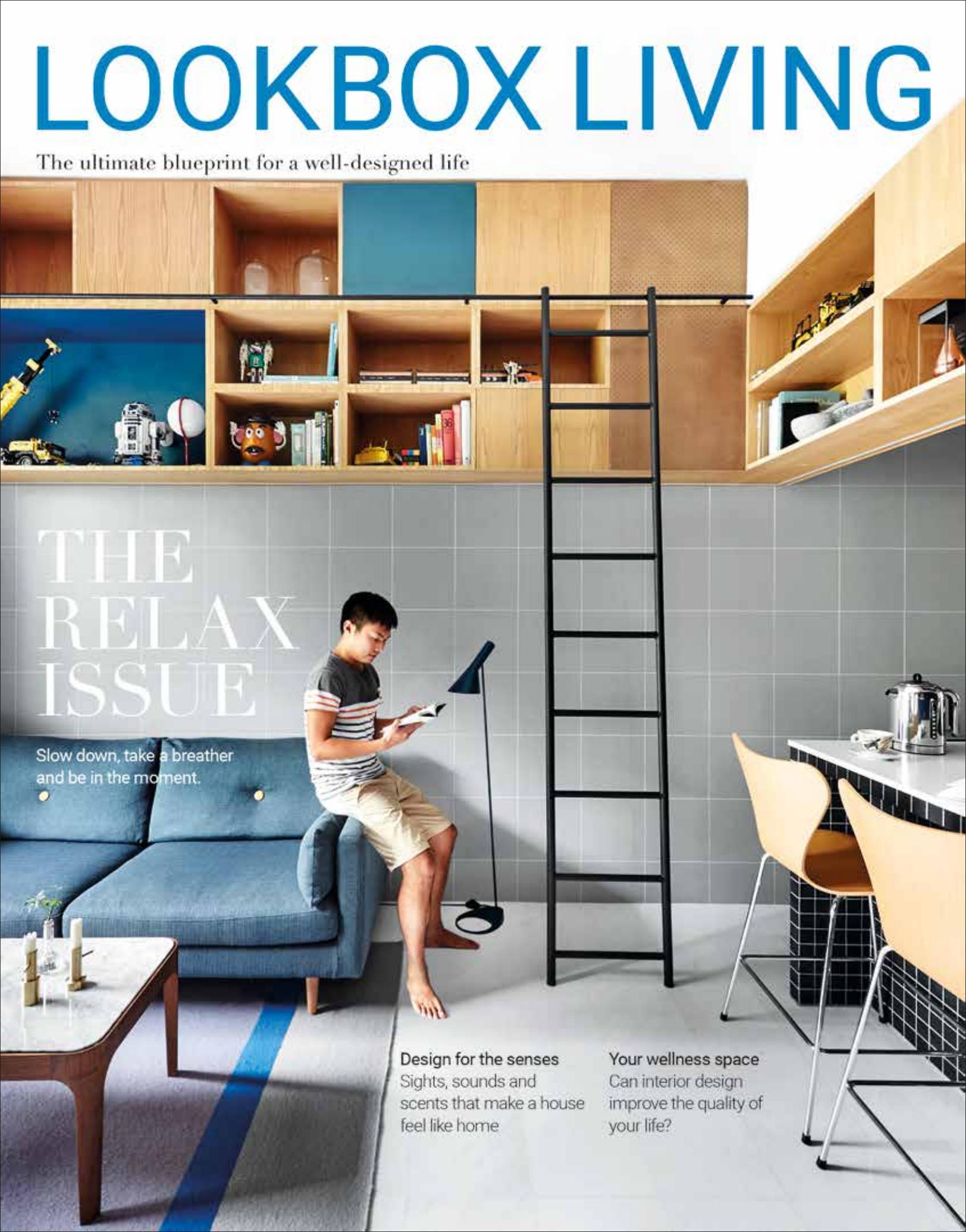
The ultimate blueprint for a well-designed life

THE RELAX ISSUE

Slow down, take a breather and be in the moment.

Design for the senses
Sights, sounds and scents that make a house feel like home.

Your wellness space
Can interior design improve the quality of your life?





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WORLD WITHOUT WALLS

From serial renter to happy homeowner, civil servant Serene Tng shares the journey of how she overhauled her first forever home with a little help from Linear Space Concepts.

TEXT DISA TAN PHOTOGRAPHY WONG WEILIANG ART DIRECTION BETTY WONG

IN DETAIL

Home: 4-room resale HDB | Floor area: 1,075 sqft |
Who lives here: Civil Servant Serene Tng |
Where: Holland Avenue





The first impression you get when you step into Serene Tng's newly renovated flat is, typically, one of disbelief. Eyeballing the open-plan setting – especially the exposed bedroom and the glass-encased walk-in wardrobe – can be quite a shock. With every single internal wall knocked away, Serene's home is barely recognisable as the typical HDB flat it is. For the fearless bachelorette, this bold design is accompanied by feelings of pride and elation. And why not? After all, she's spent many years jumping from one rented home to another, and has come a long way to finally owning her own place.

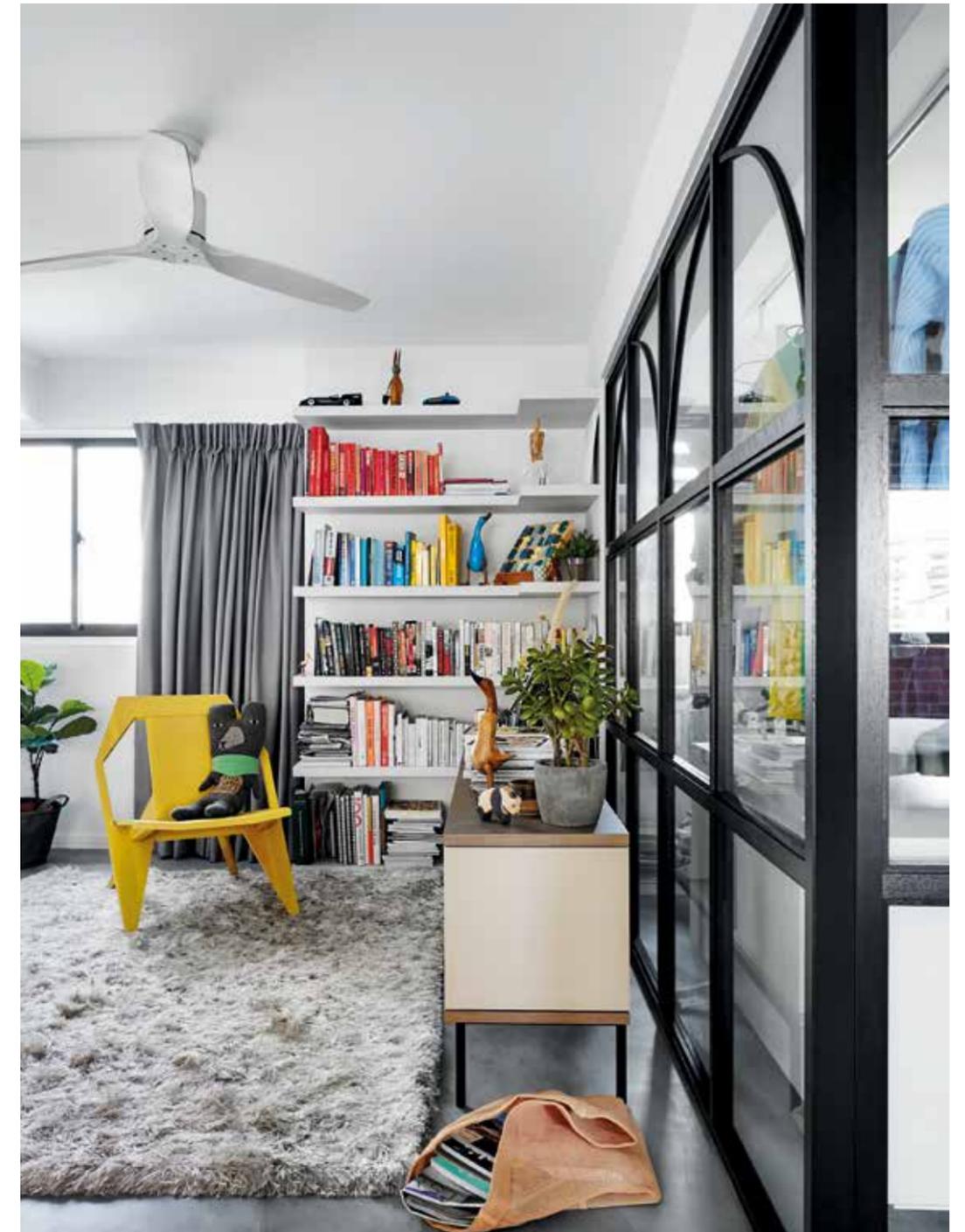
Serene's story of landing this home is nothing short of inspirational. Initially, the idea of buying her own home seemed like nothing more than a pipe dream. "I would have carried on renting if not for my sister. She encouraged me to 'just do it'. She helped with that final push," recalls Serene. House-hunting was rocky in the beginning, but Serene trudged on like a trooper. "I think I viewed close to 20 homes and was on the verge of giving up. Nothing felt right until this flat listing in the Holland district popped up. After seeing the place, I sealed the deal almost immediately."

Besides its prime location in an in-demand neighbourhood, what really appealed to her are the

"good bones" of the three-bedroom resale flat. The place is bathed in good light and ventilation, and while the living and dining zones are on the small side, it could be easily rectified by hacking away a bedroom or two. Serene could also envision her collection of books, drawings and artwork set against a modern Scandinavian-style palette living here with her.

To say she was excited about renovating her own place would be an understatement. As a first-time homeowner, Serene enthusiastically carried out extensive research on renovation materials, from the colour palettes to the countertop selection. Every piece of furniture and décor accent is a product of measured consideration. "I have been waiting so long for this day to come and seeking interior inspiration gradually became an interest of mine," she says.

In spite of her enthusiasm, Serene had the good sense to leave the renovation and conceptualisation in the capable hands of Marc Wong, creative director of Linear Space Concepts. She says, "Marc understands me and could bring to life the ideas that I wanted for me home. In fact, he improved on them and made things even better." As an example, she recalled her initial request for a simple gallery-like home. Marc responded with a suggestion to go all



Opposite page: What you see is what you get in this open-concept bachelorette's pad. Even with all three bedrooms hacked away, its New York loft design elements don't get lost in the open plan setting. Instead, the home exhibits a good flow of space accented by focal points visually defining the different living zones.

Right: It is easy to see why the living area is Serene's favourite place to be. Furnished mostly with a curated selection of designer pieces from Pomelo, the well-appointed space emits a cosy and warm ambience. Without a TV, she also gets a great, unblocked view of her tastefully decked wardrobe from the comfort of her sofa.

“Marc proposed a lot of small but essential design elements that added to the big picture. There were times where I was honestly surprised and impressed by his ingenuity in combining aesthetics with functionality.”

– Serene Tng, homeowner



Bottom left: The only bathroom maintains the airy disposition of the home with its bone glass panels and black powder coated steel frame. It works well with this newly extended space which was previously two separate wet and dry bathrooms.

Bottom right: Wide flooring tiles from Hafary and a light cement screed treatment for the walls come together to create an inviting neutral palette. Serene then injected her personal style with modern Scandinavian accents.

Opposite page: Serene's kitchen is loaded with charming tile patterns from An Huat Trading. The interior enthusiast loves her stainless steel countertop and matching mounted bar rack. The beauty of it is the more wear and tear it sustains over the course of time, the more character it brings.

out and combine all the rooms into one large and expansive space.

"The most unexpected part of the renovation was when he hacked away all the walls," recalls Serene. "It turned out so well and I love how it uncovered all these hidden corners and structural pillars that lend a sense of mystery to the place."

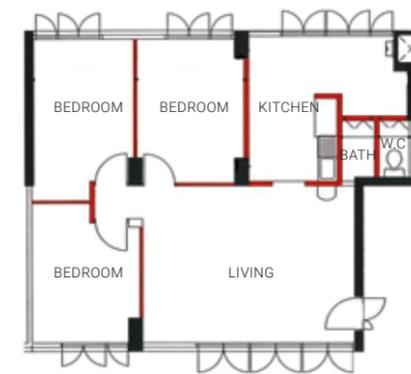
Another bold design move that Marc proposed was to build a completely see-through walk-in wardrobe. Clad in clear glass, the wardrobe sits directly opposite the front door and is immediately visible from the entrance. Admittedly, not many people will be able to accept this lack of privacy, but Serene was completely on board with the idea. Her boldness wasn't lost on the Marc, "Serene has great taste and this applies to her fashion choices as well. We knew that an open boutique-style wardrobe works for this home because she has a great collection of outfits that looks good as a backdrop to the interior design."

With its open concept and Serene's vividly coloured wardrobe making a confident visual statement in the home, Marc designed the rest of the place according to her wish list. This includes the stainless steel kitchen countertop, cement screed flooring, red brick walls and plenty of storage and display options for her collection of books and art pieces.

One of the standout design elements is the vibrant shade of midnight blue on the dining room wall. It took Marc two attempts to achieve the ideal intensity of blue — a bold colour that matches the dark design outlines of the enlarged window frames and the French-inspired wooden arches of the walk-in wardrobe. The bedroom sits pretty amidst the open plan setting and is defined by red brick walls and a casual gallery of quirky art pieces.

One of Serene's favourite spots in this open-concept home is the living room, surrounded by some of her most treasured belongings. Her books, which have journeyed with her from rental home to rental home, have finally found a permanent spot on a series of open shelves. The interior enthusiast even colour-coordinated her library, transforming it into a vibrant focal point in its own right. Now that Serene has found a happy ending with her dream home, what's next on the agenda? "I'm already thinking about dressing up my next home," she says with a laugh.

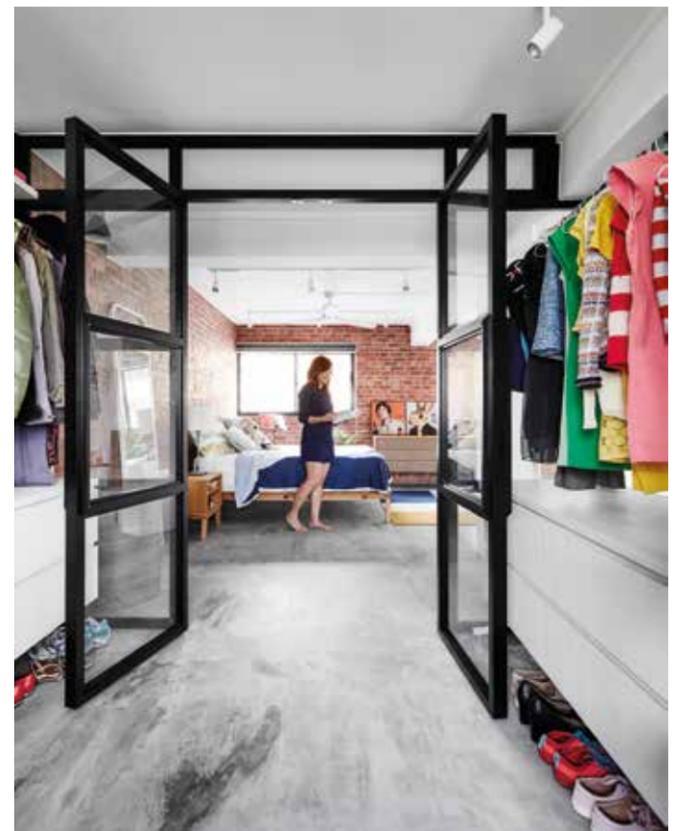
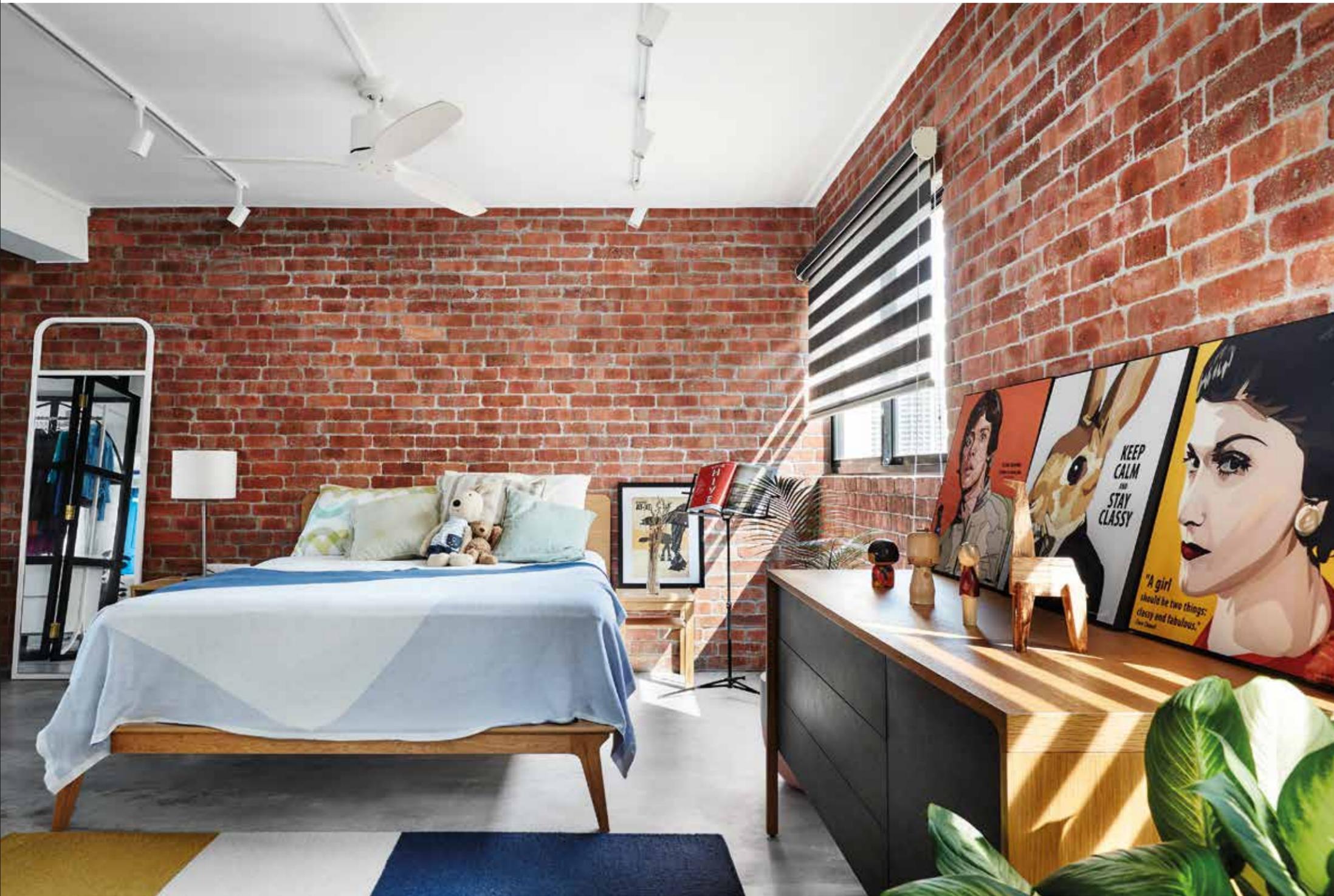
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BEFORE



AFTER



INSIDE STORY

Homeowner Serene Tng shares how she spends her downtime hosting and improving her open-concept flat bit-by-bit.

HOW DO YOU SPEND YOUR WEEKENDS AT HOME?

I like to 'people-watch' and just be one with the current surroundings. It's a quiet and quaint neighbourhood and I enjoy observing the neighbours do their thing and just take in the background noises. I'm also working on my pet project of creating a gallery with one of the blank walls. I'm currently looking around for the right study or console table and art pieces.

people in my 4-room flat. People were hanging out in the kitchen, living and dining and even on my bed. They were so comfortable they stayed longer than expected!

WHERE'S YOUR "RELAX CORNER"?

Definitely the living area. I'll be lounging around, checking out interior trends and wondering which trends to furnish my next home with!

NOW THAT YOU HAVE YOUR OWN PLACE, ARE YOU HOSTING A LOT MORE?

You could say that! I have hosted both big and small groups of friends and the biggest one to date was packing over 20