

Title:

Shopping for a chic pied-a-terre in Singapore

Word Count:

715

Summary:

Whilst droves of tourists descend on Singapore for the annual spot of shopping, some come with intentions of purchasing that pied-a-terre, an increasingly definitive lifestyle statement.

Fueled by the plans for the integrated resorts, and a government policy that clearly encourages foreign investment in real estate, the real estate scene in Singapore now merits some excitement once again.

Keywords:

modern apartments, investment, singapore, loft, designer, penthouses, luxury, real estate, rentals, architecture, design, tropical vernacular bungalows, contemporary aesthetic, integrated resorts,

Article Body:

An article in the International Herald Tribune talks about the variety of 'modern luxury condos' that have been developed in Singapore. Whilst good workmanship and quality of materials have been cited as factors that make Singapore's condominiums desirable and have allowed its property market to be categorized as aspirational, the rush to tap into the renewed interest in private properties and the craze for 'modern' design has spawned varying interpretations of modern, contemporary architecture.

Following the early entries into modern development projects (The Loft on Nassim, Paterson Edge) came a slew of less distinguished developments. The progenitor of luxury living and sophisticated, boutique developments, SCGlobal has added BLVD to its luxurious troika of urbane, uptown developments.

Even more mainstream developers, more known for generic housing projects have incorporated more edgy design elements to stand out from the rest of the developments. The efforts seem to have paid out- Far east Organization's 'Icon' sold out in an otherwise dreary property market. Located close to the CBD area and next to an MRT station, these loft apartments which afforded buyers a more customized, tailor made package by allowing buyers to choose from a different combination of finishes, this development made headlines when the better units

were bought and 'flipped'- reminiscent of the pre-1996 property boom years. The Central at SOHO similarly employs a more experimental approach towards showflat design and marketing- spiral staircases connected by strings of thick rope and a showflat that opens beyond 10pm on weekend nights.

Whilst there are projects that continue to try to distinguish itself by employing radical design ideas(a la the all glass façade of Edge at Cairnhill, Moshe Safdie's latest development in Singapore), there are many more that simply adopt vague interpretations of modern, resulting in modern developments of the most contemptible exteriors, undistinguished in its sterilized homogeneity.

Older, modern developments

Developments distinguished by interesting architecture are by no means a recent phenomenon in Singapore. Some of the more interesting developments include Paul Rudolph's Colonnade on Grange Road, Moshe Safdie's Habitat I and II and the Futura apartments on Leonie Hill. Moshe Safdie's Habitat apartments on Ardmore Park- Habitat I and Habitat II have had different fates- the Habitat I project, with larger units of 3300sqft and above, have benefited from a recent makeover by Eco-Id architects, resulting in a concierge desk of lit, opalescent faux mother of pearl that speaks luxury. The entrance to the pool area is a wide swivel door made of glass with wooden handles and the previously depressingly aged pool has taken on modern, streamlined proportions with a parallel slab of concrete running through its side for architectural impact. The result is a rejuvenated development that is more in synch with the times and keeps up with the avant garde character of the building. Its sister development Habitat II, maisonettes of 2500sqft is sadly up for en-bloc re-development. Paul Rudolph's Colonnade has similarly had its ground refurbished by Kerry Hill architects and remain a favourite for the expatriate crowd looking to rent spacious apartments in a good location.

Size and modernity

Going by the recent offerings of 'modern' developments, a good square footage of 2000sqft and above does not seem to co-exist with modern design elements without an associated price tag. Most modern developments- the result of enbloc sales and consequent subdivision have yielded paltry square footages of 850sqft for a studio apartment to 1100sqft for a 3 bedroom. Top end luxury developments such as the Grange Residences and BLVD, with a square footage of 2030sqft and up, come with price tags of \$4m and above.

Savvy home buyers, keen on spacious apartments without the associated price tags have sought out older developments- with run down facilities and common grounds

no doubt, but with views of greenery not afforded by the newer developments. The result is often a home with finishes to rival, if not trump- the best developments in the market. Renovated apartments in these older developments have attracted a new niche market- home buyers frustrated by their need for larger space and modern design elements. A new trend, but a significant one nonetheless, judging from the sales of such apartments recently and certainly bids well for the design scene on the property market in Singapore.