



## ARCHITECTURE

PROJECT CREDITS  
 DESIGN FIRM ASIACITY ARCHITECTS  
 DESIGNER ALEXANDER WONG  
 FLOOR AREA 2,600 SQFT

# NUDE AWAKENING: HOUSE OF EMBRACE

TEXT BY RONALD WAN  
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“I believe for any design to be beautiful, it has to be meaningful; meaningful because it is functional; and functional because it is useful on an everyday basis. I call this approach Naked Architecture, because naked means stripping away all layers of superficialities.”

It's hard not to be impressed. The location is at the prestigious Mid Levels in Hong Kong and the view overlooking Victoria Harbour is panoramic and nothing short of spectacular. With the world at your feet literally, life is as luxurious and opulent as it gets. But living in the House of Embrace at Régence Royale is a different story altogether.

The 2,600-square-foot luxury apartment owned by a couple is exquisite in design without being obtrusive, elegant in aesthetics without being garish and well-equipped without being excessive. It is all about finding meaning in function, according to architect Alexander Wong. “I believe for any design to be beautiful, it has to be meaningful; meaningful because it is functional; and functional because it is useful on an everyday basis. I call this approach Naked Architecture, because naked means stripping away all layers of superficialities.”

An inclusive and intimate vibe is evident in the apartment, thanks to the original site plan of the apartment, which is fixated in a “Y” shape. Wong likens it to a pair of embracing arms – hence the name of the house – and incorporates its symbolic meaning into the interior design. “Living inside this space is almost like being held gently by a pair of strong protecting arms and I think House of Embrace works well both symbolically and functionally. When you walk through the spaces, it feels like you're inside an art gallery where every object is free to express itself.”

A chic and sexy glass curtain greets guests at the entrance, which feels diaphanous and soft. It exudes a teasing hint of what to expect next, as the line of sight directs towards the living room and a sweeping grand view of Victoria Harbour.

A first glance of the Y-shaped dining and living areas would suggest a dynamic flux due to the curved planes and delineations (the residential building itself is constructed in a dazzling arch form). This was not ideal for Wong's intention to create a composed and relaxed space. The architect then cleverly solved it by introducing a unique off-centre cylindrical volume, or drum, which acts as a TV swivel console and more importantly, a pivotal point in anchoring the living and dining spaces.

The dining area was created to be warm and the purple hue chosen by the homeowner to induce gravitas and passion to the space. The tasteful pendant droplight, which is the homeowner's own, glows in this space effusively. Contrast the dining space with the living one and you see an interplay of hot

and cold colours. Wong explains, “The texture is hard and soft at the same time with natural timber and stones in muted colours, velvet fabrics in organic tones, walls painted in matte white and vibrant plum.” An assortment of lights is also used to create a gallery effect to highlight the different planes and volumes enclosed.

Naturally, the curvilinear space veers towards a corridor and a gorgeous study-cum-guest room. Here, we see a narrow space that has been artfully widened with a series of large glass sliders to delineate boundaries and dramatise the look. From dark timber shelves mixed with leather panels and bronze dividers to the black sofa, the study is simply set up yet painfully hip. Evidently, it resonates with Wong's philosophy in utilising a space for its function without going over the top. The guest room and corridor ultimately lead to the master bedroom and bathroom space. “It is our intention to let the space flow along with the rest of the promenade-like circulation, which culminates in the master bedroom and a luxurious walk-in wardrobe at the end of this journey,” remarks Wong.

Indeed, the master bedroom features a deluxe walk-in wardrobe and integrates seamlessly with the adjoining bathroom, separated conservatively by a transparent glass partition. A soft palette of beige and light brown colours is found here in the timber walls, carpeted floors and silk curtains to create a relaxed mood for the couple. In the bathroom, opulence is apparent in a conspicuous Aveo whirlpool tube by Villeroy & Boch. “I wanted to create a luxurious day spa experience and with the glass partition, a visual dialogue between the bedroom and bathroom is established. The bathing experience is heightened, almost ritualised.” We believe sexy and naughty should be more appropriate terms used.

Despite its intrinsic inclinations of a luxury apartment, extravagance or profligacy wasn't in the pipeline. Wong sums up his basic intentions: “Sheer extravagance was never our aim in design. My team and I try to be as original and innovative as we can without wasting any valuable resources. This approach adds value to the design because a sense of luxury and sophistication can be created without buying expensive furniture, accessories or materials.”

For someone like Wong whose ideas are innovative and progressive, taste can be acquired at a low cost. “In architecture or design, I believe finding the true voice of the site or space is the hardest part. Everything else follows from there.” ■





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