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CREATING A HOME
IS LIKE TELLING A
GOOD STORY.

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BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

BY REBECCA FOSTER

By striking a fine balance between tradition and modernity, Cameron Woo is building a strong reputation as one of the leading interior design companies in Southeast Asia.

“If what I want doesn’t exist, I design it,” says Cameron Woo, chief designer and founder of luxury interior design firm, Cameron Woo Designs (CWD). With headquarters in Australia and Singapore, CWD has positioned itself to become one of the premier design and lifestyle firms in the Asia-Pacific region. The firm boasts an impressive portfolio of residential, commercial and hospitality projects that have been co-developed with private clients, as well as large-scale property developers including Capitaland, Ho Bee Group, Wharf Holdings, Wheelock Properties and Allgreen Properties.

Woo is adamant that the raw, primeval culture of his roots in Papua New Guinea have played a fundamental part in shaping his unique design philosophy. Through his parents, Woo developed an interest in art at an early age, and years of training, working alongside some of Australia’s leading architects and designers, gave him the confidence to begin building his own design practice.

“I see myself as having the dual roles of creator and editor,” he says. “First and foremost, I am a creator of desire. I need to create romance and glamour. As the editor, I distil the design to its essence.”

While artists and designers across the globe compete to maintain fresh style through cutting edge projects, Woo is adamant that the heritage of Southeast Asia’s traditional design culture still plays an important part in his work.

“I’ve learned to see colour in the rich and intense way it is used in Southeast Asian cultures, which is very different, for example, to Scandinavian cultures where colour is used more softly,” he says. “I’m sensitive to what I refer to as the ‘native and exotic’. I like to contrast local and exotic materials and finishes against more modern materials and finishes in my interiors and product designs, such as shell, coconut wood, shagreen and lacquers,” he explains.

Certainly for Woo, integrating the region’s traditional influences with modern techniques and materials is one of the key steps to success. When it comes to working on a new project, he believes that maximising the physical space in order to create a sense of luxury is also a key priority for any designer.

“Creating a home is like telling a good story,” he says. “The home reveals the owner’s personality by way of their possessions and collections. Walking through the home

should be like a narrative: you see new rooms and vistas that tell the story of the owner’s life journey.”

The designer also has a lot to say when it comes to the latest trends that are gaining ground in Southeast Asia’s style stakes. As regional economies continue to expand, the region’s status as a design hub is growing along with it, despite its reputation as a production base as opposed to a core for cutting edge design. In Woo’s opinion, Singapore is already a leader when it comes to luxury interior design.

“The green and modern landscape of Singapore is what many of its neighbours are desirous of creating. To that end, many of its latest condominium developments best typify what modern and international homes look like in tropical Southeast Asia,” he explains. “The impact of technological trends in interiors interests me, as to how technology can make a home function more comfortably, efficiently and discreetly.”

Woo is also careful to emphasise, however, that the influence of any passing fad is secondary to what is appropriate in the context of the client’s brief. Indeed, it is not simply creative trends that influence the direction of his work. Interior, furniture and product designers across the region are stepping up to the challenge of creating stylish environments in the shrinking space of box-like apartments in space-challenged cities like Singapore and Hong Kong.

“I like to layer spaces so that the room or area adapts to the changing demands of the occupants during the day, evening and week,” says Woo. “Although the footprint of the apartment is small, one can make really big statements by carefully layering the order of spaces.”

The desire for sustainable materials and eco-friendly manufacturing techniques is something that an increasing number of regional designers are accommodating. Woo ensures that his firm uses renewable resources like coconut wood wherever possible. “We specify that eco-friendly materials and sustainable products, including technology that helps reduce energy consumption, are important for our client, especially those in Singapore.”

To view Cameron Woo’s designs in Singapore and Australia, visit cwd.com.au ■