

MY SPACE



THE COUPLE TEND TO HAVE A SOFT SPOT FOR CANINE-INSPIRED DESIGNS when collecting ornaments for their garden from flea markets abroad.

PHOTO: TERENCE TAN

A garden with a mix of old and new

Retiree Benedict Leow, 55, and his wife Dolly, 50, have filled the garden of their semi-detached home at Hillcrest Road with curios collected from their travels overseas. **Jean Loo** is invited into their enchanted garden

"IT'S all about creativity and the use of space. Some of these plants and garden furniture have been with us for more than 20 years. We collect them from all over the place, and we have more kept in storage because we try to avoid clutter.

Generally, I prefer artefacts made of stone and wood as they enhance the natural environment of the garden.

One example is this clover-shaped garden table. It is actually an old mahjong table I bought from a fish farm in Old

Tampines more than 10 years ago.

Other than replacing the handles with sea shell-shaped knobs, I've left it in its original state.

I enjoy spending my time working with my hands. For example, I used small pieces of wood bound together by thick steel wire and coconut husks to create my own planter boxes.

The leaves with holes that you see draping down from the pots are actually called "Cheese plants". They are

rather unique because the pattern of holes on the leaves is similar to that on cheese.

The dolls sitting on the side of the gate and on the stone table were made by me too. I used small pots and different kinds of materials to add some spice to the garden.

I also created a tablet from raw cement with imprints of our dogs' paws and had their names painted on.

Dolly and I enjoy collecting ornaments from flea markets whenever we go overseas.

I've bought candle holders, a table from a ship, and all kinds of knick-knacks from Australia, New Zealand and the United States.

Since she loves dogs, we tend to have an eye for dog designs, like miniature dog statues resembling our three dogs.

I've also inherited many

things left by my grandparents and used them to add character to my garden. For example, an old stone pounder which my parents used for pounding food 50 years ago now serves as a stand for a pot of Swedish Ivy.

They also left me with a grinder that blends in well with the garden. It sits next to two old shells that weigh around 25kg each. They were harvested from the sea port in the Philippines years ago and I chanced upon them from a shop that dealt with Filipino artefacts.

I have certain sentimental attachments to my plants. After all, I do my own gardening every day and only use fertiliser from my own compost pit.

The open concept of the garden allows me to turn it into an eclectic fusion of old and new."

PROPERTY

85% premium for ex-HUDC in Marine Parade

High price sparks interest among owners in other estates but size and location are other determining factors

► **Joyce Teo**
PROPERTY CORRESPONDENT

COLLECTIVE sale interest is strong, with the spotlight now thrown on former HUDC estates following the first successful sale of one such estate, Amberville in Marine Parade Road, last Wednesday to developer Far East Organization.

Besides, the premium that each Amberville owner would stand to get over market value is higher than usual at 85 per cent or more.

Each owner should get an average of \$1.089 million instead of about \$588,000 on average on the open market.

"Amberville was the first ex-HUDC estate sale, so that's definitely a positive for general market sentiment," said Credo Real Estate executive director Tan Hong Boon.

And this week, all eyes will be on the possible sale of another 99-year leasehold former HUDC estate, Minton Rise. The tender for the 342-unit estate in Hougang closes on Thursday.

"Potential sellers of former HUDC estates will be very excited because they now think such HUDC sales would be something that's tangible," said DTZ Debenham Tie Leung director Tang Wei Leng.

But pulling off sales similar to that of the 168-unit Amberville could be harder to achieve as the estates are often much bigger, with 500 to 600 units, say consultants.

Collective sales require the consent of 80 per cent of the owners, if the project is 10 years or older, or 90 per cent if it is less than 10 years old.

Thus, the larger the number of owners, the more difficult it is to meet the threshold. The payout is also much bigger for developers.

Aside from its smaller size, Amberville also has the advantage of location, being in a coveted residential area and fairly close to the sea, consultants said.

Other former HUDC estates where owners are trying to carry out a collective sale — such as Gillman Heights off Depot Road, Pine Grove in Ulu Pandan and Farrer Court on King's Road — have 600 to 660 units each.

Property consultants said many developers would think twice about paying a big sum for such sites. "And logistically, it would be a nightmare to handle the sale," said one of the consultants.

At the former HUDC estate Ivory Heights, the idea of trying for a collective sale has been broached, though concrete steps have not been taken.

A resident there said her family is not keen to sell even if they might get a sum larger than they could ever dream of getting if they sold individually.

"My parents like the place a lot, and it is no point getting more money to end up paying for a smaller unit crammed into a big development," she said.

Still, no matter how tough it is to go through a sale, success also eventually depends on demand.

Consultants are generally forecasting a stronger rise of up to 20 per cent in the high-end market this year, compared with 5-10 per cent for the general market.

Privatised HUDC sites tend to cater to the mass market. With prices of low-end projects slower to move up, interest in such former HUDC sites is unlikely to be as strong as that in prime sites, they said.

"Because prices of mass-market projects aren't moving as fast as those in the high-end market, developers do not feel the urgency to commit to buying such sites," said Ms Tang.

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