

CONTEMPORARY *Asian* GLAMOUR

Singapore has given British expat PRIYA NAIK what it has so many of us – the opportunity to make a long-time career dream come true. The warm and friendly interior designer and decorator showed **Verne Maree** around her Pasir Ris condo.

Photography by Ken Tan





Who lives here: Priya and her husband, Dharmesh Tailor
Country of origin: The UK; Priya from Leicester, Dharmesh from Rugby
Time spent in Singapore: 7 years
Size of apartment: 1,528 square feet, three bedrooms
Rented or owned: Owned
Personal style: “Coming from a fashion background, I love colours, textures and patterns.”
Home style: Contemporary Asian glamour

Top: “We kept the old-style doors and the window shutters – they have an English look. Instead of curtains in the dining room, we decided on wallpaper; this one has a raw silk effect, but is actually made of durable vinyl.”
Trio of glassware from Bali; large abstract painting from Taylor B – “my favourite store,” says Priya.

What brought you to Singapore?
Dharmesh’s career in banking technology brought him here in 2007, and I followed to see if I liked the place. I loved Singapore at first sight, so I went back and told my parents, “It’s great, I’m going!” I spent the next year planning our big Indian wedding in the UK, and six weeks later we started our married life here. So, whatever happens, Singapore will always be a special place for us.

Where have you lived on this island?
Dharmesh started off in a Farrer Park condo, but we decided to look for something bigger and more affordable farther away from the centre of Singapore. We were in Woodlands for two years, and then found another nice place at Tanah Merah, all the while saving up to buy our own home. We bought this Elias Green condo four years ago, and I couldn’t be happier. When I come home at the end of a busy day, it’s exactly where I want to be.





When you first moved to Singapore, newly married and just 25 years old – what did you do with yourself?

I'd left a job in the UK that I absolutely loved – I was a fashion merchandiser for Next, looking after women's denim and outerwear (and I cried the day I left) – so at first I tried to find something here in the same line. It wasn't going to happen, though: all the jobs were advertised for Singaporeans and Permanent Residents only.

Googling jobs, I found one as a project coordinator for a small design company. Over two years, I learnt all the tricks of the renovation trade; then I moved to a slightly larger company, working on some amazing hospitality projects and learning an incredible amount. Apart from designing spas, restaurants and more for hotel chains, I worked on residential projects such as black-and-white colonial homes (which I love!). From finishes and fabrics to architectural drawing, I learnt so much in those three years.

Was interior design and decoration a huge departure from fashion merchandising?

Actually, interior design was my first career choice, but a more academic career path was regarded as being more culturally acceptable. I'd even chosen Textiles as an A Level subject, along with Business and Maths, before going on to do Business Studies at university. That's why I'm so grateful to Singapore

***Above:** As in the master bedroom, Priya has hidden the wardrobe behind glamorous curtains – something she personally prefers – “it feels softer”. She designed the silk and velvet pillows in a striking turquoise and lime combination, with elegant flange details. Green crystalline beaded embellishments make beautiful tie-backs; the lamp tassels bring out the green in the pillows. “I made the art myself, simply mounting fabrics and wallpapers into IKEA frames.”*

***Following page:** The spacious master bedroom features wallpaper in Priya's favourite colour, gold, and a collection of the cushions and pillows that she loves to design.*

“I searched for a dressing table for years before finding this one at Taylor B; I bought it straight away. The sunburst mirror is from Bali.”

“I love curtain tie-backs to accentuate a colour scheme; these I found in England a couple of years ago.”

for the opportunities it has given me to follow my passion. Even my dad has stopped asking when I'm coming home to England – he understands that this is my home now.

Tell us about your business, Interior Design Journey.

It follows on from Designs by Tailored Solutions, the business I set up about two years ago. This year has been so exciting for us: we both finally got our PR, and I just launched in September the new rebranded Interior Design Journey, together with my new website (interiordesignjourney.com).

Why did you choose this apartment, and why in this area?

Here in the far east of the island, we could get more space for the amount we wanted to spend. You know immediately when a place feels right; I could see the potential the minute I stepped through the door.

How much did you have to do to it?

We undertook a full renovation, opening up the space by knocking out a whole false wall and ceiling in the living room, a big feng shui feature in the dining room and all the built-in bedroom furniture. We renovated the bathrooms, too. As for the flooring, we laid pale marble-effect tiles in the living and dining areas, and I had the orangy bedroom parquet stained black.



I'm so grateful to Singapore for the opportunities it has given me. This is my home now.

Which is your favourite room?

That's easy – my relaxation room! When my husband's watching football and screaming at the living room TV, it's good that I can come in here. I love the restful pattern of the feature wallpaper; it's by UK designer Carl Robinson, and I installed it horizontally as I generally do with vertical wallpapers; it always has a better feel that way. Together with the zebra-effect Jim Thompson cushions and my soft English blanket, it couldn't be more calming.

How would you describe your design and decorating philosophy?

Our goal is to create elegant atmospheric spaces that are stylish, practical and restful without straining the budget. It's all about creating spaces that promote wellbeing. I would like to help both renters and home-owners to rework spaces so as to make them feel more like home. And it doesn't have to be expensive – small details like cushions, accessories, curtain tiebacks, a painting, the right shade of paint for a feature wall, can make all the difference.

I don't follow trends. I buy things I like, and I try to do the same for my clients; that way, you don't get bored with your home. And I tend to stick with contemporary; contemporary is always on trend.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Asiatique Collections – “A favourite, especially for an accent piece.”
14A Dempsey Road
6471 3146 | asiatiquecollections.com

Business Women’s Network – “A great resource with wonderful, warm and helpful members.”
businesswomennetworksg.com

Departures & Arrivals – “Gorgeous handcrafted home furnishings; Denise, the founder, is very passionate about her work.”
livingdna.sg

Iwannagohome – “Often has interesting things.”
iwannagohome.sg

Just Anthony – “A fab selection of Chinese furniture; Danielle is a pleasure to work with.”
379 Upper Paya Lebar Road
6283 4782 | justanthony.com

Interior Design Journey – “Of course.”
interiordesignjourney.com

Modern Eclectic – “Fun home furnishings, just what I like.”
Chillax Market, #03-07 The Grandstand, 200 Turf Club Road
modernelectic.com | 9128 5102

Talking Textiles – “Deborah McKellar is an amazing artist! I love her Asian prints.”
talkingtextiles.asia

Taylor B Fine Design Group – “I know them all by now, and they know me. It’s my favourite store.”
43 Keppel Road
9420 4000 | taylorbdesign.com

The Shophouse – “For contemporary, chic furniture.”
#07-03 Tan Boon Liat Building, 315 Outram Road
6323 7190 | theshophouse.com

Super Loco and Lucha Loco – “Fun, casual Mexican food, at Robertson Quay and at Duxton.”
super-loco.com | luchaloco.com 