




Eat Play Love   




17 – 31 Jan 2024  

 C-1 Holland Park  

 S'pore 249469   

Seven artists bid a house

goodbye    Open

daily 11am – 7pm   

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## Producer’s Notes



## Tan Ngiap Heng

Growing up in C-1 Holland Park, I was generally happy. My sister and brother are older than this building, but I was brought up in this house since I was born. In the last thirteen years of my parents’ lives, I looked after them in this house. For the last five years, my wife and I, and then my daughter Lila after she was born, have been living here. Seeing how my daughter runs around in this mid-century Singaporean house brings back childhood memories of my siblings and I. Lila asked me recently, “Do you miss ‘Por Por’ and ‘Kong Kong?’”

Yes, I miss my parents, but they lived a good life. As much as I miss them, I am grateful to be their child and for all the blessings they bestowed. This house represents the physicality of my parents, and it is full of personal memories. Family meals. Shelves full of books and images. Fruits, flowers, and herbs in the garden that ended up as ingredients for our typically Asian dishes. This was my parents’ home, where they brought up their children and welcomed their grandchildren.

My father dreamt of being a concert pianist, but the practical side of him drove him to become a doctor. When I was growing up, I would hear my father practising on the piano, sometimes late into the evenings. He also had a huge record collection and an expensive audio setup in his library. My father would take us kids to concerts in London, and my mother would stoically follow along even though she did not enjoy them as much. Besides musical events, we were taken to dance performances and art exhibitions. This upbringing influenced my brother, who studied English literature but became a trader of Middle Eastern art and antiquities. It was common for my father’s peers to collect the art of Chen Wen Hsi and Lee Man Fong, so my parents had some lovely pieces as well. They also purchased works by lesser-known artists during their travels. My mother tried her hand at copper tooling and clay art, so her artworks could be found around the house. Having art in this house feels natural to my siblings and me.

While this house is filled with personal memories, it also holds significance as the design of esteemed architect and my father’s school friend William Lim. It is also the last of an estate belonging to Fraser and Neave. It will be put on sale after the exhibition ends.

This exhibition **Eat Play Love** 🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷 is hence a farewell to my parents’ family house. It is both an opportunity to explore different aspects of family life and a tribute to the work of Lim. Red brick walls, parquet flooring, and marble flooring — these are textures that are hard to find in modern homes. The materials are simply from another time. So is the large garden that provided my mother with much pleasure. Few homes in Singapore have large gardens now, as it is popular to build big houses with small strips of green.

While we say farewell to the house and mourn its probable demise, my remaining family members will remember the good times we shared in it. This house has witnessed a large part of my life, from childhood to work to marriage and to fatherhood. I am also happy that my parents were able to spend their last days in their home, and that my siblings and I were able to give them the love and care that they provided us with when we were young. With my parents no longer around, the soul of this house is gone. My siblings and I are sad to part with it, but we still have memories. Time passes, situations change, and eventually, we all become memories.

I am grateful to Michael Lee for agreeing to curate this exhibition. When he suggested inviting other artists to create works for **Eat Play Love** 🍷🍷🍷

🍷, I did not know what to expect but trusted his advice. And these artists have warmed my heart. They came with fresh perspectives and took the time and effort to interact with the narratives of this house and my family. With the support of Lee, they created works that enhanced my own experience of this house.

I hope **Eat Play Love** 🍷🍷🍷🍷 gives visitors a chance to experience a unique work of architecture and get a glimpse of how a family lived in it. This exhibition is not a solemn farewell but a celebration of life. And that is how my father would have wished it.

## Ways of Saying Goodbye to a Home



## Michael Lee

During my childhood, a three-room flat on Depot Road was my world. There, my brother and I were ‘hall guardians’ at night, while my sister and I made ‘ant houses’ from paper and sugar. The bathroom was our refuge from parental discipline. In that abode, we shared meals, dreams, and endless adventures. When the flat underwent redevelopment, we missed the chance to bid it goodbye. On my return, a new housing block had taken its place.

Fast forward some 30 years, a text message from fellow artist Tan Ngiap Heng brought forth a unique proposition: for me to curate an exhibition of his artworks at his parents’ home at C-1 Holland Park, which will soon be sold, and likely demolished. I said yes, as I was curious what saying a proper goodbye to a home looks like, but not before I got his support to invite six other artists to view the house together.

This essay introduces works by the seven participating artists in **Eat Play Love** 🍷🍷🍷🍷. While not all the works explicitly engage the theme of bidding farewell to a home, let alone the house in which the exhibition is held, I can’t help but interpret them as such: a loose collection of three types of farewell to a home.

	Negotiating Public and Private Farewells
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Tan Ngiap Heng’s family lineage includes members who contributed to Singapore and the region in business, science, and culture. For instance, his great-grandfather Tan Hiok Nee started as a cloth peddler and later became a prominent farmer of gambier and pepper. Around 30 such extended family members are featured in **Family Leaves** (2024), an installation of chlorophyll-printed leaves and printouts of public documents. Tan’s burgeoning archival research is not about ego; it’s a means to discover the privileges that led to his existence.

In contrast to **Family Leaves’** public-facing nature, **Memories of Mum and Dad** (2023) and **Eating Living** (2023) document the more private aspects of family life. **Memories** is a collection of family memorabilia, including audio recordings, significant books, home videos, photographs, and personal documents. It offers a glimpse into personal dimensions of his parents’ lives. **Eating** is a series of duplex photographs of family meals. Alternately showing dining portraits with and without people, these ‘malayan’ prints also suggest the impossibility of absence in the presence of loved ones.

Susanna Tan, who explores mourning through the representation of botanical life, has created works that bookend Tan Ngiap Heng’s **Eating Living** in interesting ways. The younger Tan presents pressed flowers and leaves from plants in the elder Tan’s house garden. Installed onto the dining hall

windows, these botanical specimens — **Bringing Lemak** (2024), **The fruit that is a sound** (2024), and **Fruit Accents** (2024) — enact the cycle of growing, harvesting, cooking, and eating. In addition, she presents **Bling Bling Prawns** (2024), a notepad containing printed family recipes that could be torn away by exhibition visitors, extending the life of private culinary concoctions into public domains.

	Grounded Imagination
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**Bedtime** (2023) is a video installation directed by Tan Ngiap Heng. It features a pair of dancers sharing space in bed. The couple moves between intimacy and solitude, play and conflict. Besides reflecting the reliable need to negotiate space, the film foreshadows a universal truth: the inevitable grief of a loved one’s departure.

In Lei Yuan Bin’s **A Dance for A House** (2023), Tan serves as a dancing subject alongside cameo appearances by his wife and daughter. This film pays a dual tribute by honouring Tan’s background as a trained dancer and his renowned dance photography while acknowledging the impermanence of the house and its objects, many of which have been removed for the exhibition. In the film, time stretches, bends, fluctuates, duplicates, and reverses, symbolising the march of time and humanity’s desire to halt it. It tracks Tan’s life stages and relationships in the house.

Khoo Guo Jie has captured the house’s evocative qualities through photographs. Over several visits, he examined the house’s design, structure, materials, and textures, experimenting with camera focus, angles, and exposure. The resulting prints, including those of overlapping architectural elements and bedsheets that resemble tablecloths, serve as the titular **Portals** (2023) to parallel dimensions.

Two artists have reimaged domestic objects. Mike HJ Chang, known for his whimsical works, has stacked 3D-printed doorknobs and cups into sculptural forms to explore their relations to architectural elements like column [**Coffee Cups (the weight on your spine, 2024)**] and entrance (**Door Knobs, 2024**). Concerned with time, Cynthia Delaney Suwito was struck by the varying ages of architectural elements and household objects. For example, she observed wall lights from the 1960s being used in the house alongside an Ikea pendant light bought last year. This inspired her to present **Belongings** (2024), a series of sculptures that take the form of artificial plants. Comprising photographs of domestic items in the house, these sculptures explore the future of current possessions. During the exhibition, these photographic sculptures of fantastical plant species are located “in places where real plants cannot grow.”

These works suggest that saying goodbye is not solely a solemn affair but can be a playful one, if one lets personal imagination shape the parting. Importantly, it is a gesture of accepting the natural order of things.

	Embracing Impermanence
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Nothing stays the same, as everything is in the state of flux. This holds true for Tan Ngiap Heng, who — after being a single male for most of his life — recently married at age 51 and became a father.

Before his daughter was born, he had his pregnant wife pose in **For Lila** (2020), a meditative video gift to their impending child. In time to come, Lila may start her own family, continuing the legacy of love and connection captured in her father’s art.

During the site recce, Catherine Hu saw makeshift structures that support the growth of homegrown climbing plants in the house garden. She likened this to an architect’s design of a house for its residents. Hu’s scaled-down replica, titled **Garden Varieties** (2023), crafted

from bamboo and raffia, appears to be part memorial to the house and part offering to nature, but what she’s investing is value. What defines the artistry of the house’s architectural design without privileging it over the makeshift construction of the plant support system by the house’s inhabitants?

“Pang tio” (Teochew for “Let go”) was an oft-used phrase by Tan’s late father to mean the acceptance of nature’s course. Initially a Buddhist, his father eventually renounced religion for spirituality — practising what he preached as he abandoned convictions that had lost their relevance to him.

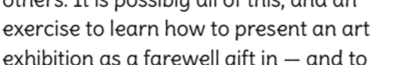
Tan Ngiap Heng’s **Pang Tio** (2024) transforms his father’s favourite injunction into an ephemeral text-based work. Created using live grass in the house garden, with letters formed by stencils that shield portions of the garden from sunlight, this work’s legibility and presence will gradually fade over the course of the exhibition. The large textwork faces the sky. It is as if Tan is addressing his late father and saying — “Look, Dad, I made it!” It is an aesthetic decision that allows him to embrace — and relieve himself of — the received wisdom of his father.



Tan Ngiap Heng’s generous move to open his family home to younger artists to present new commissions alongside his artworks has spawned surprising collaborations and outcomes. These include Tan starring in Lei’s dance film, Khoo’s evocative photo-documentation of the family house, and the younger (Susanna) Tan’s transformation of plants, recipes and memories that belong to the elder Tan’s family. The exhibition also features more whimsical farewells through reconfigured domestic objects by Chang and Suwito. Hu’s work — a structure for climbing plants that is a scaled-down version of the house’s framework — underscores not just the co-dependency of nature’s elements, but also the parallels between architectural and everyday designs.

Curating this exhibition has let me indirectly make up for my missed farewell to my own childhood home. I learnt vicariously that saying goodbye to a home involves negotiating social and personal needs, can be playful yet grounded, and requires embracing nature. Witnessing the works-in-progress sometimes brought involuntary tears, prompting me to revisit my childhood experiences and dreams (including long forgotten ones) so as to understand my present preoccupations.

**Eat Play Love** 🍷🍷🍷🍷 may come across as indulgently sentimental to some, and fiercely opportunistic to others. It is possibly all of this, and an exercise to learn how to present an art exhibition as a farewell gift in — and to — one house: by exploring eating, playing, loving, and other mundane activities that happen all the time at the Tan family’s home, and likely, in other households. As we experience these artistic interpretations, we ponder broader themes: family legacies, domestic life, and the interplay between humanity and the larger ecology. It invites us to reflect on life’s complexity and our place in it.



**Part 1: C-1 Holland Park, Architectural Modernism, and the birth of the Malayan Architects Co-Partnership**

	By Ronald Lim
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MAC was formed in 1960 as a partnership between three young Malayan architects: Lim Chong Keat, William S. W. Lim, and Chen Voon Fee.

	→ Figures 1–4 <p>(1) Lim Chong Keat (showing the then Minister of Law a model of the Singapore Conference Hall, 1962); (2) William S. W. Lim; (3) Chen Voon Fee; (4) Logo of the Malayan Architects Co-Partnership from letterhead of surviving documents.</p>
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These architects were trained in England in the 1950s. While it is not easy to ascertain the extent of their exposure to progressive architectural ideology during their studies, their writings offer an indication.

In an essay, William Lim recounted about his studies abroad:

**Introduction — The Critical Endangerment of Iconic Modernist Residences**

	By Ho Weng Hin
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C-1 Holland Park (also known as the house for K.K. Tan) was completed in 1963. It is the earliest work that can be solely attributed to pioneer architect William Lim in his position as a co-founder of Malayan Architects Co-Partnership (MAC). It is also an iconic example of an architectural type — the private residence — whose significance as part of the history of architectural modernism in Singapore has been underrecognised.

Masterworks like C-1 Holland Park reveal the purest visions of independence-era Malayan architects, but they are unprotected due to a gap in Singapore’s built heritage conservation policies. To date, no post-war private modernist residence has received conservation status in Singapore. Many of the most significant modernist houses of this era have likely disappeared.

As appreciation of our modern architecture grows, we should consider how our modernist private residences are worthy of protection. As Ana Tostões, Chair of Docomomo remarked, modernist homes are in need of urgent recognition, “given the key role they played in the ideal definition of the Modern Movement architecture, as a symbolic and functional affirmation of the utopian turning of dreams into reality.”<sup>1\*</sup> Furthermore, many of these homes offer lessons for the present-day, representing our previous generation’s best minds’ answers to the still-vital question: “How should we live?”

In an age of ecological crises and cultural strife, we may find inspiration in the climatic sensitivity, local “as-found” materiality, and unifying cultural convictions embodied in the best modernist homes of the post-war era.

It is with the recognition of modernist private residences as a critically endangered and valuable form of architectural heritage that the following texts were produced. They aim to establish the significance of C-1 Holland Park. By drawing attention to its cultural, historical, and artistic value, we advocate for it to be conserved and adapted for reuse. Further, we hope that C-1 Holland Park may serve as a springboard for appreciation of modernist private residences, and be a catalyst for their protection as significant achievements of our pioneer architects.

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1	Ana Tostões, ‘Editorial: The Home at the Core of Modernity, An Optimistic Architecture’, <i>Docomomo Journal</i> , No. 64(2021).
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These architects were trained in England in the 1950s. While it is not easy to ascertain the extent of their exposure to progressive architectural ideology during their studies, their writings offer an indication.

In an essay, William Lim recounted about his studies abroad:

During my years at the Architectural Association (AA), I was very much influenced by Le Corbusier as well as the ideas of my tutors... Graduate study at Harvard gave me first-hand exposure to the group working philosophy of Walter Gropius. In 1957, I returned to Singapore — very idealistic and nationalistic — eagerly ready to serve and to put theories into practice.

	He elaborated,
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My professional training at the AA in the early fifties provided me with a sound understanding of the best in the Modern Movement. Critics and tutors at the time included the Smithsons, (James) Stirling, (Bill) Howell and (John) Killick. This training was further reinforced by my post-graduate experience at Harvard University under (Walter) Gropius, (Josep Lluís) Sert and (Jacques) Tjwahrt.

The mentors identified above represented the progressive frontline of Western architecture in the 1950s. Buildings by James Stirling and Peter and Alison Smithson for example, were critically showcased in the influential architectural critic Reyner Banham’s seminal publication **The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic**, while Josep Lluís Sert — a former disciple of Le Corbusier — was then the President of the International Congresses of Modern Architecture (CIAM).

	→ Figures 5–8 <p>(5) Cover of <b>The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic</b>, first published in 1955; (6) Hunstanton Secondary School by Peter and Alison Smithson, 1954; (7) The Engineering Building at the University of Leicester by James Stirling, 1963; (8) Architect Josep Lluís Sert</p>
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A clear intellectual arc connects the progressive architectural agenda as defined in the West to the founding agenda of MAC, which existed from 1960 to 1967. MAC’s built work over the seven years revealed a vision of architectural modernity that was inventive. It adapted European modernism to the local climate and avoided the sentimental pastiche of mimicking vernacular forms.



	Malayan Architects Co-Partnership’s legacy and C-1 Holland Park
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MAC was only in existence for seven years but it bears a legacy in Singapore’s architectural history. Its successor firms Architects Team 3 (led by Lim Chong Keat) and Design Partnership (led by William Lim and Tay Kheng Soon) went on to design Singapore’s most recognisable post-independence landmarks, including Jurong Town Hall, Golden Mile Complex, and People’s Park Complex.

MAC itself designed landmarks that loom large in the recent architectural memory of both Singapore and present-day Malaysia. MAC’s better-known buildings include the Singapore Conference Hall (1965), the Malaysia-Singapore Airlines Building (1968), the State Mosque of Negeri Sembilan in Malaysia (1967), and the Penang branch of Bank Negara Malaysia (1965). These landmark commissions were mostly won by merit through open architectural competitions.

	→ Figures 9–12 <p>(9) Singapore Conference Hall and Trade Union House, 1965; (10) The Malaysia-Singapore Airlines Building, 1968; (11) Penang branch of Bank Negara, Malaysia, 1963–1965; (12) State Mosque of Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia, 1967</p>
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Besides civic-scale commissions, MAC also designed private houses for wealthy clients across Singapore and Malaya (later Malaysia). These include the House on Rochalie Drive for Dr Chia Chin Tiong, 66 Binjai Park for Dr Tan Peng Nam, 96 Binjai Park for Mr Wong Hee Deong,

and C-1 Holland Park for Dr K. K. Tan in Singapore. MAC also built similar houses in Kuala Lumpur and Penang.

	→ Figures 13–16 <p>(13) House at Rochalie Drive for Dr Chia Chin Tiong, 1963; (14) 66 Binjai Park for Dr Tan Peng Nam, c.1959; (15) C-1 Holland Park house for Dr. K. K. Tan, c1963; (16) 96 Binjai Park for Wong Hee Deong, c.1961</p>
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These houses are steeped in the modernist paradigm of form follows function. Cantilevered structures, free-standing walls, in-fill panels, and floating volumes were deployed in a self-assured way. These houses represent MAC’s response to local discourse on Malayan architecture, asserting a progressive, modern and technological attitude. In their forms and details, they were sophisticated in their quotations from modern masters like Mies van der Rohe and Paul Rudolph.

This context frames our understanding of C-1 Holland Park, one of William S. W. Lim’s first built works upon his return to Singapore. It melds local materials, climatically responsive architectural details, and a technological aesthetic. Its unusual V-shaped butterfly roof echoes similar forms in contemporary tropical buildings like the Kumasi Technical College in Ghana and MAC’s Yardley Jardine factory.

	→ Figures 17–20 <p>(17) Kumasi Technical College in Ghana, by James Cubitt &amp; Partners, 1956; (18) Yardley Jardine Factory by MAC, 1967; (19) C-1 Holland Park House by MAC, c.1965; (20) Singapore Conference Hall by MAC, 1965</p>
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C-1 Holland Park embodies the intellectual currents coursing through London in the 1950s prior to MAC’s founding, tying its modernist agenda to the genesis of the Modern Movement in the West. Yet, it also demonstrates a counter-process by which the architects readapted their designs to the local context through the use of local materials and construction methods. In a way, it is a singular blend of local and global.



	<b>Part 2: The Spatial Organisation of C-1 Holland Park</b>
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	By Jacob Meyers
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C-1 Holland Park is organised around a compact long and narrow rectangular plan. Like many of MAC’s residential projects, interior spaces are defined within the modulated width of regular structural bays of single-room depth. Here, one finds four bays based on module widths of 3:2:4:3 and spaces distributed over two levels.

	Entrance (→ Figure 21) <p>One enters the house from a covered walkway that runs from the car porch. The entry vestibule is spatially demarcated by a timber-strip ceiling that runs continuously from exterior to interior, with the threshold framed by a large timber-framed ensemble of a large door and surrounding glazing. Upon entering, one faces the main staircase and a gravel garden underneath, both subtly backlit by a double-height bay of timber louvres.</p>
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The living room also features cast-in-situ terrazzo floors, with darker terrazzo bands separating the entry vestibule and dining room.

	Dining Room (→ Figure 23) <p>Turning left from the entrance vestibule one arrives in the compact dining space. Like the living room, it is demarcated by brick structural walls, bi-fold timber doors allowing the room to be opened to the garden, and timber-framed infill walls finished in timber strip panelling. These walls are delicately offset from the load-bearing brick structure, creating tall and narrow slits for operable loured windows, further facilitating natural ventilation.</p>
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Kitchen (→ Figure 24)
A unique and recurring feature in C-1 Holland Park is the use of fixed furniture and cabinetry to frame spatial thresholds and introduce multiple functions within compact rooms. Toward the rear of the dining room, one can see an integrated timber assembly that demarcates the kitchen — housing the door, dual-sided cabinetry, serving or bar-top counter, display shelves, and various clerestory and vertical windows. The kitchen also features ceramic mosaic tiled floors, with a slanted skirting that can also be observed in William Lim’s later works.

	Stairwell (→ Figure 25) <p>Moving upstairs, one rises through the double-height stairwell into a darkened landing, framed by timber louvres, fairfaced brick, parquet floors, and timber-strip wall and ceiling finishes. One also catches subtle glimpses of the rooms beyond through narrow vertical windows that frame the gap between load-bearing masonry wall and internal timber-framed partitions. The stair landing leads to a corridor where one can find three bedrooms, a dressing room, and a bathroom. These rooms are demarcated through timber-framed partitions with loured and glazed panels.</p>
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	Bedroom (→ Figures 26 & 27) <p>The house features a total of four bedrooms (two master, one standard, one guest), of which the main three are located on the upper floor. The two master bedrooms are effectively mirrored at each end of the house, comprising parquet floors, timber strip walls and ceilings, and balconies set within the fairfaced brick structural bay. Here, infill walls are timber-framed, featuring narrow vertical and clerestory windows that look into the common corridor, timber louvres for ventilation, and large bi-fold windows opening onto the balcony. Again we may notice the ingeniously designed fixed-furniture elements — such as those demarcating the master bathrooms and the dressing room — that serve as partitions, cabinetry, and internal fenestration.</p>
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Entrance (→ Figure 21)
One enters the house from a covered walkway that runs from the car porch. The entry vestibule is spatially demarcated by a timber-strip ceiling that runs continuously from exterior to interior, with the threshold framed by a large timber-framed ensemble of a large door and surrounding glazing. Upon entering, one faces the main staircase and a gravel garden underneath, both subtly backlit by a double-height bay of timber louvres.

	Living Room (→ Figure 22) <p>Turning right, one finds oneself in the brightly lit and airy living room. Located in the widest structural bay within the house, the living room is demarcated by fairfaced brick walls, timber-framed infill bays of windows (facing the driveway), and bi-fold doors (facing the garden). These allow the space to be partially opened to the exterior, providing for natural cross-ventilation and a sense of spatial fluidity between the interior and garden beyond.</p>
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	By Jacob Meyers
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As critic Michael Hays once characterised as the “worldliness of architecture,” buildings are products both of the autonomous formal artistic vision of architects and the specific cultural circumstances — material, economic, social, intellectual, political, and environmental — in which they are produced. This text attempts to understand the tension between form and culture in C-1 Holland Park through an analysis of the house’s materiality, construction, and detailing. In doing so, we may uncover latent values that straddle both the formal (as related to Lim’s artistic intent) and cultural (as a historical reflection of Singaporean construction culture in the post-war period) in C-1 Holland Park.

	Materiality
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The materiality of C-1 Holland Park has a two-fold significance. First, it is a representative index of construction culture in post-war Malaya. Second, it reveals a possible self-reflexive embracing of the poetic capacity of the roughness of local materials “as-found” by William Lim, informed by the avant-garde architectural discourses of the era.

	→ Figures 4, 28–29 <p>Selected surviving documents related to the development of C-1 Holland Park: (4) Invitation from MAC to contractors to tender for construction; (28) Contract signed between William Lim, Dr. K.K. Tan, and appointed contractor Tong Brothers; (29) Architect’s Specifications issued by MAC to Tong Brothers.</p>
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The materials used are typical of mid-century local construction works: Jurong or Alexandra bricks, tropical hardwoods, kapor, balau, terrazzo, ceramic mosaic tiles, and concrete screed.

	→ Figures 30–35 <p>Selected materials from C-1 Holland Park: (30) Fairfaced Jurong or Alexandra bricks with cement mortar; (31) Balau timber-strip wall and ceiling finish; (32) Kapor fixed timber louvres; (33) Ceramic mosaic tiles; (34) In-situ terrazzo; (35) Fritted wire-mesh safety glass.</p>
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The ways in which these materials were applied are reminiscent of the avant-garde architectural discourses current during William Lim’s education and early career, particularly that of New Brutalism. The movement was characterised by an appreciation of the rough poetry in materials “as-found.” The use of fair-faced structural brickwork and exposed concrete slab edges are clearly indebted to contemporaneous New Brutalist works such as the Smithson’s House in Soho (1953) and Stirling & Gowan’s Ham Common Flats (1959).

In the absence of definitive authorial accounts, we may read the use of materials in C-1 Holland Park as representing a New Brutalist cultural and aesthetic lexicon. Transposed to a Singaporean context, it coalesced with the pragmatics of local construction methods, regionally available materials, and a necessary economy of means.

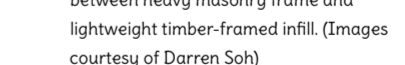
	→ Figures 42–44 <p>Construction methods and assembly are clearly articulated, such as the tongue-and-groove joint of staircase treads and risers, and the exposed mid-stile baluster bolted to treads. (Images courtesy of Darren Soh)</p>
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The most poetic feature of the staircase may be its balustrade: a mild-steel section with a threaded end, secured to treads with an exposed nut-and-bolt. Similarly simple, though ingenious and poetic gestures can be found in the fenestration detailing: off-the-shelf louvre systems where conventional fritted glass panels have been substituted for stained plywood — an elegant hybrid-composite of an industrial objet trouvé (found object) with natural (though industrially produced) timber.

	Conclusion
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Returning to Hay’s definition of the “worldliness of architecture” straddling both the formal and the cultural, C-1 Holland Park may be understood both as a product of the specific artistic intent of William Lim as well as the pragmatic culture of construction and available materials in post-war Singapore.

In perhaps no other building may we see such a rich concentration of the architect’s artistic ideas and the modern construction methods and materials in post-war Singapore. C-1 Holland Park is both an invaluable form of national cultural patrimony as well as a rich material culture research resource, deserving of protection.



Architectural critic Kenneth Frampton has outlined two predominant approaches to structure in modern architecture: the stereotomic (solid, opaque, load-bearing masonry walls) and the tectonic (a skeletal, highly porous structural frame of steel or reinforced concrete).

C-1 Holland Park subverts this dialectic relationship by creating a hybrid structure where opaque load-bearing masonry becomes the structural frame. The use of slender two-brick thick (–21.5 cm) planar walls, spanned with reinforced concrete beams and floor slabs, create a hybrid portal-frame structure. As a result, the house reads from the front and back as stereotomic — constructed of solid brick — but from its sides as tectonic — one only sees the narrow edges of brick walls as a skeletal frame and large expanses of infill fenestration. With its innovative structural approach,

C-1 Holland Park also straddles a relationship with Western high-modernism while exhibiting sensitivity to the local climate: its narrow plan, the open-ended quality of each structural bay, and extensive loured circulation core, facilitate cross ventilation while blurring interior and exterior spaces.

	Detailing
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Like the material palette used, the house’s details may be read both as an inventory of common fixtures available in post-war Singapore but applied in a self-conscious manner that evokes a New Brutalist appreciation of the poetry in the everyday.

The details of the home comprise materials and methods that one may find in other austere modernist houses produced in the same era: wire-mesh safety glass, stained kapor cabinetry, mild-steel balustrades, and timber-strip wall panelling. What sets C-1 Holland Park apart is the exceptional care behind the detailing. This is visible in key features. The central staircase, for example, is deftly offset with a shadow gap from the adjacent load-bearing brick wall to emphasise its ‘floating’ quality and structural independence, while the tongue and groove joints between treads and risers are left exposed.

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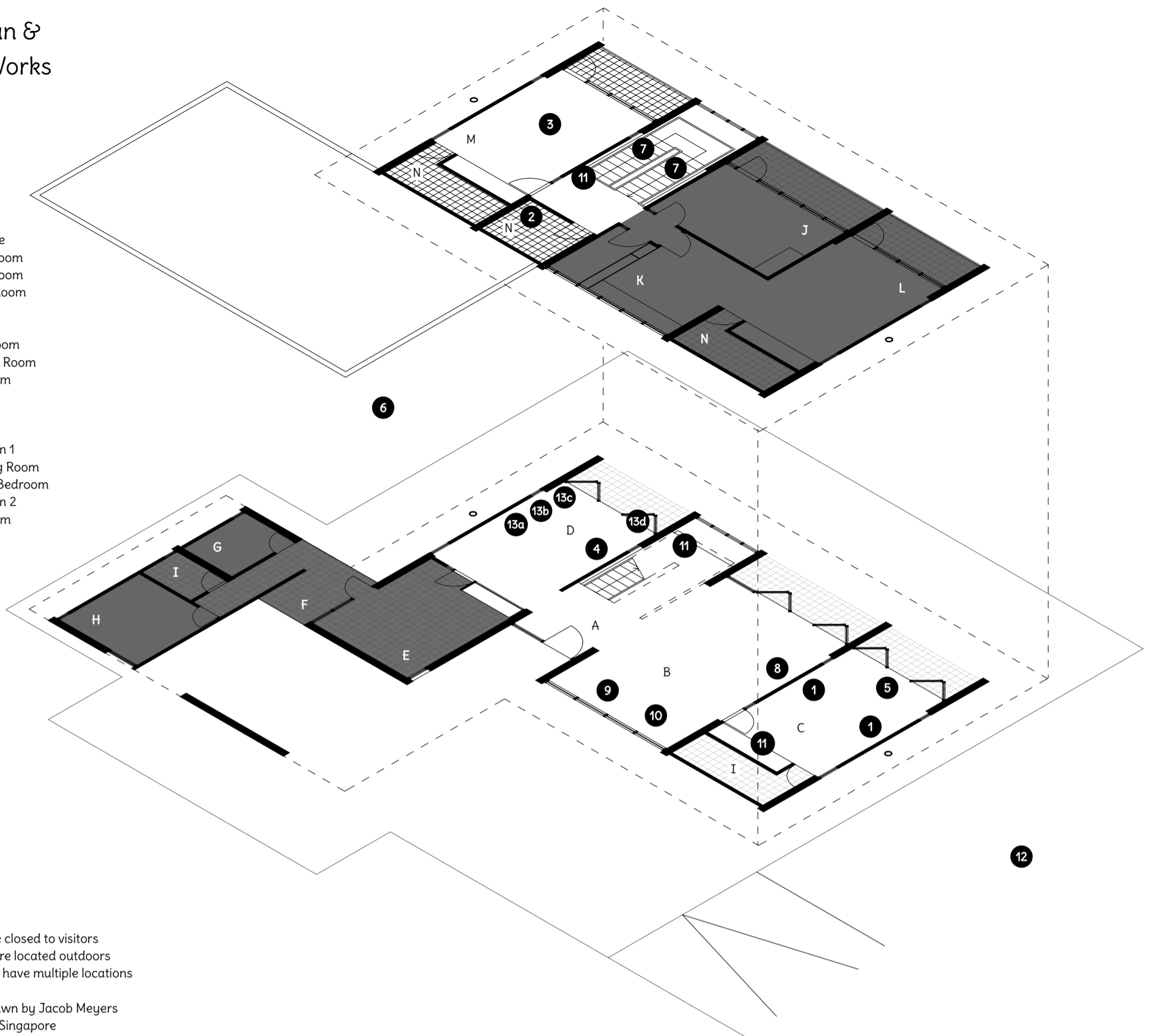
# Floorplan & List of Works

## First level

- A Entrance
- B Living Room
- C Guest Room
- D Dining Room
- E Kitchen
- F Yard
- G Store Room
- H Helper's Room
- I Bathroom

## Second Level

- J Bedroom 1
- K Dressing Room
- L Master Bedroom
- M Bedroom 2
- N Bathroom



### Note:

- Grey zones are closed to visitors
- Works 6 & 12 are located outdoors
- Works 1, 7, & 11 have multiple locations

Floor plans drawn by Jacob Meyers  
of Docomomo Singapore

## Artworks

- 1 Family Leaves, 2023  
Tan Ngiap Heng  
Chlorophyll print on leaves and laser print on paper  
Dimensions variable  
Family Leaves is an installation of chlorophyll prints made from family photography archives, articles and advertisements in the newspapers mentioning my family and relatives. In the research on my family, it has been interesting to see the spread and influence of my relatives in Singapore and Malaysia.
- 2 For Lila, 2020  
Tan Ngiap Heng  
Video  
3 min 57 sec  
For Lila is a meditative video dedicated to my daughter Lila.
- 3 Bedtime, 2023  
Tan Ngiap Heng  
3-channel video installation  
30 min  
Artistic Director: Tan Ngiap Heng  
Movement Director: Goh Shou-Yi  
Camera Director: Zhou Zihao  
Dancers: Adelene Stanley & John Cheah  
Music Composer: Dr Philip Tan  
Inspired by becoming a couple with my wife Quek Choo San, this three-video installation is an exploration of the seemingly uninteresting one-third of our lives spent at bedtime, where much of our lives are played out.

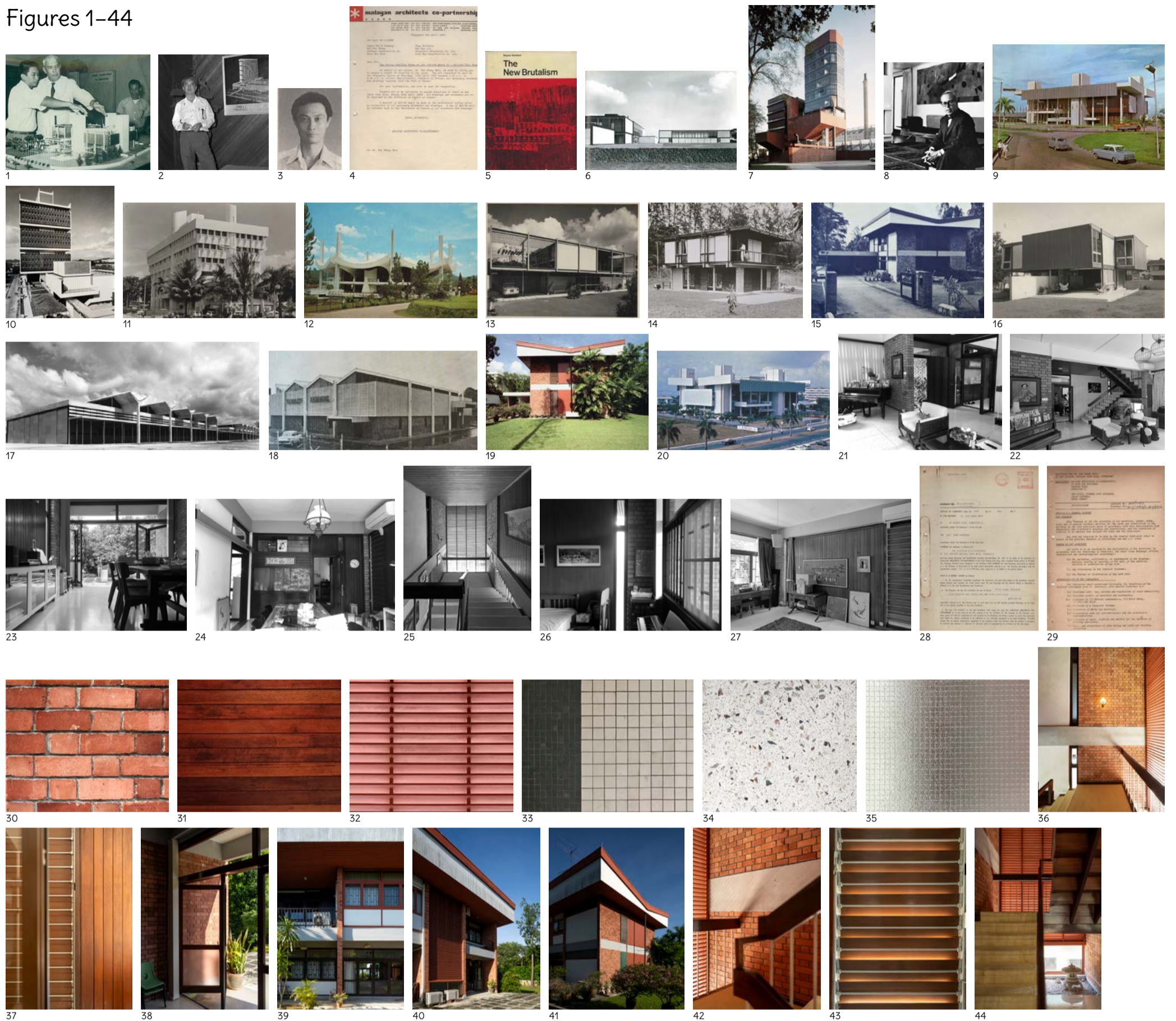
- 4 Eating Living, 2023  
Tan Ngiap Heng  
Lenticular prints  
6 parts of 28 x 59.5 x 3 cm each  
A great part of our lives is spent eating. As my parents aged and became less mobile, mealtimes were an opportunity to get together, catch up, make plans, and a reason for them to leave the house. Do we eat to live or live to eat? I think it is both.
- 5 Memories of Mum and Dad, 2023  
Tan Ngiap Heng  
Books, audio, videos, family memorabilia  
Dimensions variable  
This is an installation celebrating the lives of my parents Dr Tan Kheng Khoo and Gunn Chit Siew. My father had a great interest in photography and filmmaking in his early years and often made my mother, the love of his life, the subject of his works.
- 6 Pang Tio, 2024  
Tan Ngiap Heng  
Text installation with live grass  
Dimensions variable  
As a meditation teacher, one of my father's favourite spiritual teachings was 'Let go, Pang Tio'. The letters 'Pang Tio', meaning 'Just let go' in Teochew, which are imprinted on the grass of our family house, fades as new grass grows. It is also a reminder of letting go of our family house.

- 7 Portals, 2023  
Khoo Guo Jie  
Diasec prints  
13 parts of variable dimensions  
This is a series of images that documents the living experience in the house at C-1 Holland Park.
- 8 A Dance for a House, 2023  
Lei Yuan Bin  
Video  
13 min 30 sec  
The dance short film, featuring Tan Ngiap Heng as the main dancer in the house C-1 Holland Park, is an intersection of film, dance and architecture. A 'danced body language' was improvised by drawing upon Tan's memories in his family home, and bidding farewell to the memories of the house.
- 9 Coffee Cups (the weight on your spine), 2024  
Mike HJ Chang  
3D-printed installation  
Dimensions variable  
Coffee Cups (the weight on your spine) is a vertical sculpture representing one of many formal and poetic conversations with the architectural elements on site inspired by the decorative support column of the past, where a column-like structure extends from floor to ceiling.
- 10 Door Knobs, 2024  
Mike HJ Chang  
3D-printed sculpture  
Dimensions variable  
Door Knobs is a sculpture representing one of many formal and poetic

- conversations with the architectural elements on site. Horizontally orientated is the frozen trajectory of a door knob sans a door in a 90-degree motion when a door opens.
- 11 Belongings, 2024  
Cynthia Delaney Suwito  
Mixed media  
Dimensions variable  
Belongings marks the flourishing of the newer household objects that found a way and sought new areas to exist and find belonging among the multigenerational objects in the house. Inspired by artificial plants, the photographs are worked into a sculptural form to create a sense of comfort amidst displacement.
- 12 Garden Varieties, 2023  
Catherine Hu  
Bamboo and raffia  
350 x 250 x 110 cm  
In Garden Varieties, C-1 Holland Park's distinctive form is recreated in bamboo and raffia, the same materials used by the house's residents to build plant support structures for their vegetable garden. The work highlights parallels between the building and these plant scaffolds — rectilinear, enclosing a piece of space, constructed for the purpose of supporting and maintaining life — even as they exist at vastly different scales, smaller acts of architecting next to large ones.

- 13a The fruit that is a sound, 2024  
Susanna Tan  
Pressed flowers, leaves, adhesive, acrylic frame  
80 x 120 cm
- 13b Bling Bling Prawns, 2024  
Susanna Tan  
Tearaway pad of 4c x 1c digital print on 120 gsm woodfree paper gum-bound with 250 gsm backboard  
29.7 x 21 cm x 200 sheets
- 13c Fruit Accents, 2024  
Susanna Tan  
Pressed flowers, leaves, adhesive, acrylic sheet  
48.8 x 13.8 cm
- 13d Bringbring Lemak, 2024  
Susanna Tan  
Pressed flowers, leaves, adhesive, acrylic sheet  
104.8 x 72.3 cm  
This project follows an ongoing personal research of locating suitable plant species that embody anecdotal potential to talk about loss and love. Using collected familial recipes, preserved/pressed flowers and foliage as materials, the conventional flower tribute of farewell, mourning, commemoration and condolences extends itself as different text-based representations through this series of site-specific pieces.

## Figures 1–44



## Programmes\*

### Architectural Tour

20 Jan 2024  
2 – 3pm & 2.30 – 3.30pm  
\$40/ticket

This house tour is a rare opportunity to experience the creative vision of William Lim, one of Singapore's most important modernist architects. Ronald Lim, a founding member of Docomomo Singapore, and contributor Jacob Meyers will conduct the tour.

### Artist Talk

20 Jan 2024  
4 – 5.30pm, free

Drawing on his personal relationship to the abode, Tan Ngiap Heng explores his family history through works that span across various mediums. With inspirations that stem from domestic objects, lived experiences, botanical life, and more, six other artists present works that explore the themes of family life, architectural heritage, and the future of landscapes. Curator Michael Lee will moderate this artist talk.

### Producer & Curator Tour

27 Jan 2024  
4.30 – 5.30pm, free

Join Tan Ngiap Heng and Michael Lee in this tour as they unravel the challenges of presenting art in a private home, modes of engaging the artistic community, and their work processes.

### Private Dining

27 & 28 Jan 2024  
7 – 9pm, \$100/pax

Food binds many families together, and in this dining experience, you will get a taste of dishes that are significant to the Tan family. The menu is based on heirloom recipes passed down from Madam Gunn Chit Siew and her maternal family, and five courses will be served in an intimate dinner setting.

\* To register or find out more, visit [www.eatplaylove.site](http://www.eatplaylove.site).

## Profiles

**Catherine Hu** is a Singaporean artist working primarily in sculpture and print media. Her work tends to behave like puns — allowing multiple meanings to coexist in one form.

**Cynthia Delaney Suwito's** practice explores the subtleties of everyday life and the experience of time. Humour runs through her work which takes varied forms especially sculpture and installation.

**Docomomo Singapore** is the Singapore chapter of the International Committee for Documentation and Conservation of Buildings, Sites and Neighbourhoods of the

Modern Movement. A non-profit group, it is dedicated to research, education, and advocacy for the conservation of Singapore's modern architectural heritage.

**Ho Weng Hin** is a partner of Studio Lapis, an award-winning architectural conservation consultancy. He is founding Chair of Docomomo Singapore Chapter, and also a founding director of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) Singapore National Committee. As an advocate for Singapore's built heritage, he has co-authored books on the subject and currently sits on government advisory panels.

**Jacob Meyers** graduated from the Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London (UCL), where he was awarded the Trevor Sprott History & Theory Prize. He is a recipient of the DesignSingapore scholarship. His interests lie at the intersection of architectural history and theory, critical heritage, and design for re-use. He is an assistant architectural conservation consultant at Studio Lapis and a volunteer for Docomomo Singapore.

**Khoo Guo Jie** is a photographer based in Singapore. He specialises in architecture, interior, and lifestyle imagery.

**Lei Yuan Bin** is a founding member of the film collective 13 Little Pictures. He was conferred the Young Artist Award for film in 2012 by the National Arts Council. *A Dance For A House* is a continuation of his short film series, with the first film called *A Dance For Ren Hang* (2018), a homage to Ren Hang's photography and a farewell letter.

**Michael Lee** is an artist and independent curator based in Singapore. He researches urban memory and fiction, and transforms his observations into models, diagrams, environments, events or texts.

**Mike HJ Chang** is a Taiwanese American artist and educator in fine arts. Chang's process involves a curiosity towards conventions of seeing, resulting in shapes, forms and objects that claim a presence of their own.

**Quek Choo San** is an avid self-taught cook who enjoys exploring old heirloom recipes and cooking for social gatherings of friends and loved ones. She previously owned a health and wellness café Qi Philosophy Café (located at Skyterrace@Dawson) for 6 years, promoting holistic approach to healthy eating and a sustainable wellness lifestyle.

**Ronald C. T. Lim** is an architect and design educator. He is the co-chief editor of The Singapore

Architect magazine and serves on the Singapore Chapter committee of the Royal Institute of British Architects. Lim is also the lead curator of the retrospective exhibition *To Draw An Idea: Retracing the Designs of William Lim Associates / W Architects*. He has worked internationally for distinguished architects.

**Susanna Tan** is a visual artist who makes works about thriving disappointments, regrets, loss and love. She founded 「花花世界」 @fahfahsaigai, a collaborative art practice established to further explore the relevance and relationship of humans and plants.

**Tan Ngiap Heng** is a visual artist with a love for dance and the performing arts. He has exhibited at numerous exhibitions, including Month of Photography in 2002 and 2004, *Body of Work* in 2014, and M1 Fringe in 2015. He is currently interested in the history of dance in Singapore and his family tree.