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ORIENT EXPRESSION

This Shanghai home fuses Eastern and Western influences without resorting to cliché, thanks to a pared-down contemporary approach

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Dining room The dining area leads directly off the kitchen and features a custom-made table with an iron base and white Chinese marble top with a single vein running through it. Vintage Chinese chairs, bought locally, have been renovated and painted black

Staircase Forming an elegant focal point, the white painted-steel frame staircase has a design that allows light from a window in the roof to filter down to the rest of the house. The original brick wall provides texture and warmth as well as a clue to the building's history ♦♦



Steeped in history, this Shanghai house captivated Edoardo Allegranti, a shipping business manager, the minute he set eyes on it. Built in 1935, the now protected brick and timber three-storey building is typical of the old English quarter in which it sits. Here, so-called 'Shikumen' residences are arranged in terraces along straight alleys, with a small courtyard garden and both front and rear entrances. 'They have a similar feel to an English mews house,' says Edoardo. 'Yet when I bought the house in 2006 it was very run down.'

With the help of fellow Italian Nunzia Carbone, the founder of DeDo Design, Edoardo completely transformed the interior of the building. The exterior remains untouched, but everything has been stripped from the inside except for the old timber roof beams and the brick wall that stretches like a spine through the centre of the space. Living areas have been arranged on split levels around this wall and are connected by a bespoke open-tread staircase. While the kitchen and dining room are on the ground floor and the main bedroom and bathroom are at the top of the building, a living room, study, guest room and bathrooms have been arranged in between. 'I wanted to create an open space that was easy to live in. I wanted it to be light and elegant but a house for me also has to be whimsical in some way or else it's boring,' says Edoardo.

Although the interior has a predominantly western feel, with the muted natural materials providing a subtle sophistication, nods to its Chinese heritage are visible throughout. Über-modern bathrooms are concealed behind local antique doors and contemporary Chinese art adorns the walls. Edoardo has also made the most of the rich textures of local materials with wood from Chinese gates covering his floors and local marble topping his dining-room table. A built-in cupboard stretches along the corridor between the bedroom and bathroom. Covered in green silk wallpaper and painted with a swirling dragon motif, it adds a coolly sophisticated shade to offset the textured palette of brick and wood.

When the house was originally built, Shanghai was a flourishing centre of commerce between East and West. Since the economic reforms of 1990, the city is thriving again and this home embodies the cross-cultural influences that make Shanghai so special. ➡➡

Kitchen The white laminated kitchen with stainless-steel worktop was custom made to the designer's drawings

Living room Italian architect Nunzia Carbone created the sofa and the 'Taccia' lamp is by design icon Achille Castiglioni for Flos. The walls throughout the house are adorned with contemporary Chinese art bought from Shanghai gallery Art Scene

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‘I WANTED THE HOUSE TO BE LIGHT AND ELEGANT, BUT ALSO WHIMSICAL IN SOME WAY OR ELSE IT’S BORING’

Bedroom The dark grey bed was custom made and measures 2.2m by 2m. The table in the bedroom is from a local antiques market. If privacy is needed the room can be closed off with a velvet curtain

Corridor The green silk-covered cupboard was custom made and stretches along the corridor between the bedroom and bathroom. It adds a strong tone to the house alongside the otherwise muted feel created by the brick and wood palette.

The fitted timber floors throughout were made from old Chinese timber gates that have been cut into three varying lengths of board. ‘Originally they were grey, but we waxed them to give them this deep tone,’ says the homeowner ➡

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'I WANTED TO INTRODUCE SOME RED INTO THE BATHROOM BECAUSE IT IS A LUCKY COLOUR IN CHINA'

Main bathroom The main bathroom at the top of the house has a huge bespoke bathtub with stepped-up sides for easy access. Made from elm wood (try Evitavonni for wooden baths), the interior is lined with multicoloured Chinese-made tiles. The sauna and shower are hidden behind a yellow glass panel, which is

illuminated by a skylight above the shower during the day (try Opticolour for coloured glass). The glass panel was bought at the Jinsheng Guoji Jiaju market in Shanghai and features embossed calligraphy **DECO**

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