



SHORTLIST,  
LOOKBOX DESIGN  
AWARDS 2018

Bog slab, concrete-like tiles  
are a reminder of the original  
BTO flat floors.



# SUBJECT TO CHANGE

For a young couple, this BTO flat is home and work studio for two but could accommodate change and more functions in time to come.

TEXT YVONNE XU

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## IN DETAIL

Home: 4-room HDB BTO flat | Floor area: 1,001sqft |  
Who lives here: Designers Karen Chiam and Kiat Ng | Where: Bedok North |

When I arrived at Bedok North estate, the strengthening mid-morning sun was just starting to dazzle. Entering the home was a respite. The interior welcomes all that morning light through the entire length of windows (two rooms long) but the atmosphere is gentler — domesticated. One notices the translucencies at play — drapery, glass, and polycarbonate. Though dominantly white, the home is not minimalist, and everything seems to settle into a quiet calm.

"This is how the setting is like on most days," Karen says. "We turn on soft music and I would sit here and work."

Karen Chiam and Kiat Ng run the multidisciplinary design studio Dazingfeelsgood and as a couple, undertake projects including interior design, industrial design, graphic and branding work. Since moving in, they have found themselves working more from home, even when they still keep a studio space at Tannery Lane.

On their design approach for the home, Kiat shares, "We didn't have a theme, scheme or a certain style. We just wanted everything to be flexible." Envisioning a home that would adapt to different daily scenarios, as well as changing needs as time passes, the design became an exercise to turn a standard BTO flat into a space with no fixed boundaries or prescribed function.

Karen explains, "We intend to stay here for a while. We don't know what would change — maybe we would have a kid or maybe our parents would want to come and stay, so we just want to stay flexible."

At present, the apartment functions as a home studio where clients are also entertained. Loose

furniture pieces, indirect lighting and curtains are used to demarcate spaces. The living area flows into the dining/work space, which is surrounded neatly by all their work material. This is separated from the rest area by white curtains railed along a trio of vitrines.

What are left more defined are an end room, two bathrooms, and the kitchen (which is kept closed to control cooking fumes, but still visually connected to the living spaces through glass windows). The living spaces can be combined to enlarge, or switched up — as Kiat imagines: "If I wanted my bedroom to be in front, I could do that. Or we could remove all these if we wanted to have a big luxurious chill out area."

Kiat also points out, "A lot of cabinetry are not built-in. We designed the TV console — they are basically blocks that you can stack and shift around." Apart from the console boxes, the designers also customised the dining table so it is perfectly tailored to fit the space. Bathroom doors are handle-less, with back-of-door towel rails doubling as pull bars.

In terms of palette, white is chosen for its neutrality. This white-on-white scheme (white walls, white-painted furniture, whitewashed laminates, white cotton and white linen) is complemented by warmer ash timber tones. They share, "The choice of utilising white as the key colour in the background is essential as it resets the interior palette to its default mode, like galleries. White also neutralises all visual details and enhances spatial quality when interacting with natural elements like the light and shadow."

**Dazingfeelsgood**  
www.dazingfeelsgood.com

(Facing page, top) Karen and Kiat designed a set of modular stacking boxes that can be shifted, stacked, and rearranged.

(Facing page, bottom) Having an open space meant that the screen projection can be viewed from the entire home, including the dining and work area, as well as the glassed-in kitchen.

STYLE KIT



### DESIGN NOTES

The couple chose to have a projector over a TV because it doubles as a great presentation tool for their 'working studio'.





*“This is how the setting is like on most days. We turn on soft music and I would sit here and work.”*

– Karen Chiam, homeowner and designer

**INSPIRED LIVING**

Designers Karen and Kiat share vital tips on making a home studio work and how they resolved certain design challenges.

**What is your advice for people who wish to work from home?**

**Kiat:** Privacy is the most important. If you want to convert your home into an office or studio, you will have to welcome public. It will affect the things that you want to show; you do not want to display some very personal things. In a wide-open space like ours, privacy poses a problem. That’s the reason we have curtains.

**Karen:** The working area has to be big enough. The ambience is important. Our ambience is cosy and calm, and we chose white, a neutral that helps to create an environment for work.

**Did you run into any challenges or issues that you think new homeowners could benefit from knowing?**

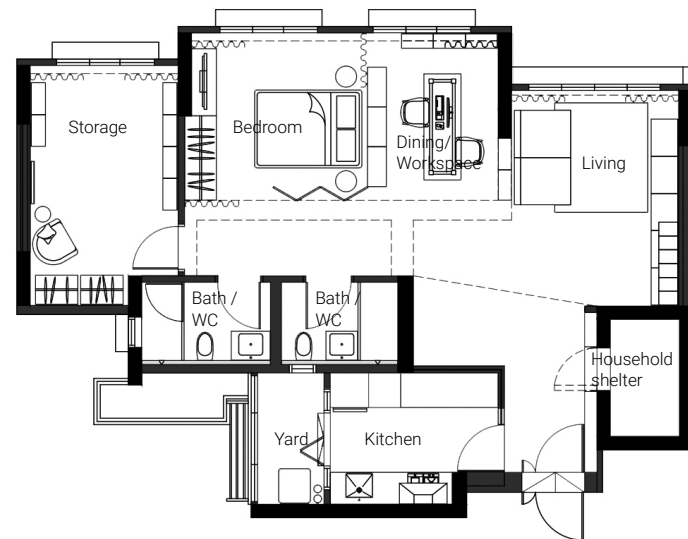
**Kiat:** We wanted to really knock down all the walls to combine all the rooms but there was a fair amount of practical issues. For example, our open bedroom is directly facing the toilets so there are ventilation issues. In the end, we installed exhaust fans and use dehumidifiers.



Photography: Justin Loh

**FLOOR PLAN**

The original floor plan was left more or less unchanged, but the removal of walls opened up many more spatial and layout possibilities.



**SHOP THE LOOK**

Achieve a simple yet stylised aesthetic with clean lines and understated designer pieces.



Rotary Tray by Vitra from Grafunkt



Tank-L Display by JotterGoods from Star Living



Louis Ghost Armchair by Kartell from Lifestorey/Space Furniture

