



These ornate metal curtain rods were originally used as weighing scales in Kerala's markets

making the collection valuable as it is about keeping the pieces in balance with all the styles.

Also on the scroll table is set a Feng Shui compass, meant to gauge the balance of a space using wind and water as a measure. In many homes Asian homes, a Feng Shui expert comes in to balance the house, often recommending structural changes be made in order to align the abode with the zodiac sign of the inhabitants' birth dates, as well as enhancing the light. If the home owner is unable to make major changes, then a mirror here, a gold fish there, is said to do the trick. Mr. Spurling takes the practice with a grain of salt, though he does subscribe to the aspects of balancing energy and natural elements.

Once, Mr. Spurling bought a pair of Fu dogs, which look more like lions, and put them on the pillars of his old house next door when he lived there. Now the aggressive looking pooches face directly into his new bedroom. "I have hung up an evil eye to counter the negative energy," says Mr Spurling, smiling.

Across the room, on the east wall, is a pair of genuine Indian temple columns made from smooth dark wood. From the window behind, the worn texture of the pillars is highlighted. Originally, the bases were most likely made of wood, though probably rotted, and so the current bases are of made of carved stone. Mr Spurling had the roof and its support bases to be specially made, with Woolfworks lovingly staining the Indian temple style roof to remain in keeping with Indian design.

On the walls are several paintings by a contemporary Austrian painter who has spent much of his life in Hong Kong and Singapore, and his work reflects the Asian influence. Gerd Koidl paints as a hobby and for love, though his career is in the hotel business. "For art on the walls," says Mr. Spurling. "It is colour that motivates me—and composition." With seven pieces by this same artist, Spurling is clearly a fan. "Koidl captures the combination of Buddhism and Hinduism represented by the Tibetan Tantric form of Buddhism," he says. "And it this mystic depiction that I like." Within each piece, the many paint layers, colours, and themes add to the complexity of the work. The procedure of spilling turpentine onto the paint causes a mottled earth-like

texture. He then blends his autumnal tones with gold leaf, and incorporates generic religious panels into the paintings.

Also on the walls, scattered about the house, are several temple pieces with intricate worlds carved into the pale wood. Mr. Spurling knows the names and purposes of all the gods depicted, rattling off their descriptions. "That one is Ganesh, the Hindu god of happiness and prosperity," he says, pointing to a large panel above the front door. "He is a multi headed, multi armed elephant god and is sitting astride a lion with his wife."

As Mr. Spurling wanders down the steps to the lower floor, countless statues and objects full of history and mysticism line the stairway. There is an ornamental boat bow from Kerala, a Rajasthani horseman warrior, and a list of gods like Vishnu, Pavarti, and Hanuman - all with their purposes for worship. At the foot of the stairs is an eerie pair of Chinese ancestor paintings, with eyes that watch as one walks down the hall.

A dramatic set of carved wooden doors, bought in Kerala, lead into the bedroom, and here the museum continues, even in the sleeping quarters. Another temple panel hangs at the head of the bed, displaying Vishnu, Shiva, a crocodile god, and some lions across the top. Linens are tossed into a genuine Colonial Indian laundry basket, with its elegant bands of dark wood airing the fabrics.

Leading into the bathroom is, yet again, another pair of carved wooden doors, also from Kerala. The bathroom has some charm and humour mingled into its elegant Italian tiled exterior. The exotic doors have a 'vacant/occupied' lock fitted into one panel, the container holding toiletries is an original Indian money box made from dark wood and an Indian spice box is now used for cotton.

From the splendid carpets from Rajasthan to the Colonial Indian furniture which have been given new uses, or the tremendous compilation of wall hangings to the details built into the architecture, Mr. Spurling has succeeded in combining modern living with old world treasures. This house is full of fantasy, history and tranquillity. The endless details and art effects make wandering its different rooms a constant adventure, while remaining a serene home at the same time. Mr Spurling has cleverly incorporated his passion for Asian art and a passion for harmony in the home, making Red Barracks a reality that should be admired. ■

Kerala, when Spurling saw the table in a junk shop, he had a vision. He was convinced a dining table foundation was a more appropriate use for the unusual piece of furniture than as a massage table, which from his experience proved to be rather uncomfortable.

Beyond the Chinese screen is a living room that exudes creativity. A glass topped window from Rajasthan makes an intriguing coffee table, with a carved wood frame and brass and copper panels instead of glass. Similarly, the side table is made from a lattice work window of rope-like metal, with its tarnished white and turquoise finish only adding to its beauty. Taken from a zenana near the border of Pakistan, these women's quarters were guarded by eunuchs, and these intricately woven windows were designed so the inhabitants could see out, but outsiders couldn't see in.

The curtain rods look like ordinary wrought iron ones at first, but then it becomes apparent that the ends are different. In Kerala's markets, these ornate rods were once used as weighing scales. The seller would hang the produce on the hooks at one end, and shift his hand along the shaft until the pole balanced. He would then use the marks on the rod to state the weight of the food.

Under the window looking out over St George's Harbour stands a heavy wooden Chinese scroll table, used to unroll paintings and scrolls. Its swirled feet imitate the shape of unrolled paper that keeps its shape, and its soft corners mimic paper as well. On it stands a terracotta horse. When the dealer had bought the horse, he had believed it was an original from the Tang Dynasty, but before selling it to Mr Spurling, discovered it was a copy. The horse's mouth is wide open with its teeth exposed in an almost human grin, as if the horse is in on the deception. Despite being a reproduction, the repaired broken legs and the stressed surface only add to its old world beauty, and although it is not genuine, it is a wonderful statue and Mr. Spurling enjoys it just as much as if it were the real thing. Since the house is full with so many antiques, it is not as much about