

The sitting room of the master bedroom of the main house; the wall behind the sofa is made from antique screens





Two fiddlewood trees flank the courtyard of the guest bedroom

A Zen Mansion

Inside the private oasis of one of Thailand's wealthiest businessmen

Photographs
FRANÇOIS HALARD

It was during a visit to Chiang Mai's Rachamankha hotel in 2005 that Paiboon Damrongchaitham began the five-year quest to build his dream home. Paiboon, the 66-year-old chairman of GMM Grammy, Thailand's largest media company, was inspired by the way the hotel's rooms were arranged as freestanding structures around an open courtyard—a vernacular style popularized by ancient Chinese homes. "I wanted the same traditional design, with lots of green space and privacy for everyone in my family," he

says. So he tracked down the architect who built the hotel, Ong-ard Satrabhandhu, and commissioned him to build a 34,659-square-foot home in the well-heeled heart of bustling Bangkok. Dubbed the "Courtyard House," the plot contains 28 separate pavilions situated around 12 courtyards and four pools—one for swimming and three reflecting. A formal dining room welcomes guests with a Spanish glass-tube chandelier from Luminaire that runs the length of three lacquered dining tables, enough to seat 26 people;

separate entrances allow family members privacy during parties. Ong-ard decorated the home with custom furniture and antiques, such as the doors and wooden paneling, found in markets north of Macau. A low-pitched roof and wide porticoes that line the various entrances are additional nods to a traditional Chinese style, says Ong-ard, who studied at Columbia University and specializes in combining Asian influences with modern touches. The estate also has luxe amenities including a home theater, sauna, and exercise rooms. “Once you pass through the main gate of our home, you forget the confusion of the outside world,” Paiboon says. “That’s difficult to find in Bangkok.”

—SARAH NEWELL



Vintage teak columns anchor each side of the dining room; there are 164 in total, sourced from northern Thailand and Myanmar



Outside the sitting room, divided by antique Chinese screens, is a softly lit swimming pool