

JETGALA

A high-speed train, likely a Shinkansen, viewed from a top-down perspective, showing its white body and large windows. The train is positioned on a dark track, and the image is oriented vertically on the page.

The Lamborghini Urus
is a weekday car

Whats sets the Dassault Falcon 8X apart

Revealing the magic of Elliot James Interiors

AT HOME WITH ELLIOT BARRATT

A walk through two identical apartment units reveals
the magic Elliot James Interiors can do with a space

When Elliot Barratt, Founder & CEO of Elliot James Interiors, sent me a catalogue of apartments and homes

he's worked on for us to hold our interview and photoshoot, it is two condominium units at Cuscaden Walk that catch my eye. Done in wildly different styles – one very regal, and the other playful – that I immediately see the interior design firm's greatest quality: versatility.

"This was a dream project for us, as it allowed us to show our abilities and how broad our design expertise can be," Barratt explained. The units have the same exact floor plan and are only separated by a few floors, but because of his clients' different stages in life and opposite personalities, the apartments required research and working closely with each client to develop something both could call home.

This is where Barratt comes in. Barratt started Elliot James Interiors in London, England, where he is from, but moved operations to Singapore about seven years ago. "I'd been visiting Asia for years and fell in love with it. There was an open-minded attitude to the design scene in Asia, and a very entrepreneurial, can-do attitude to do business in Singapore."

That open-minded attitude to design is definitely evident in the approach Barratt takes with his design concepts also. "As much as we want our designs to have a flair of Elliot James Interiors, what's most important is that our clients can feel relaxed and calm whenever they come back to this part of the world."

The two units belong to a father and son entrepreneur duo from Europe, and these apartments in Singapore are just a couple of many other properties they own all over the world. While I had seen the two Cuscaden units in print, getting to see the detailing up close and in person made a world of a difference. When Barratt walked the Jetgala team through the apartments, adjectives for each of the men started to surface: "opulent" for the one upstairs, where the walls are covered in velvet leather and a custom-made bar looms in the corner of the large living space, and "laidback" for the one below, where pops of street art appear on the chairs and walls.

These were the vibes Barratt had gotten from his consultation with his clients. It's almost like Barratt plays sociologist, observing how his clients live and picking out nuances to make each apartment reflect their personalities. "Our creative process is a very intimate one, and it is important to understand how they interact with a space, and how they like to use their home, habits they have and routines they like to follow."

When speaking with the father, Barratt understood him as an extraverted guy who liked to entertain. The father preferred socialising at home and had requested for a space that would be able to host dinner parties and hold meetings. For someone who had built an empire from the ground up, he also wanted his space to reflect that grandeur that only comes from working hard. In addition, he wanted red to be a focal colour of the whole area.

TOP: The empty Cuscaden unit before renovation work by Elliot James Interiors

BOTTOM: The son's apartment with subtle hints of pop art (LEFT) vs. the father's apartment that speaks of grandeur (RIGHT)

Images courtesy of Dalton Lim





To make that a reality, Barratt broke the large floor space into three areas: a formal dining area, formal living area and a lounge area. The walls are done up in various forms of stucco for a polished plaster effect, then velvet leather with brass partitions for the lounge area. The challenge was placing red in the room. “Tackling red was a challenge as we wanted it to remain timeless, so we decided to go for a more subtle, darker red,” Barratt explained. This dark red features on the sofa in the lounge area, and in the dining room chairs.

Making things timeless isn’t as easy as it seems, especially when clients are vocal

about what they want or have styles that change frequently. But Barratt’s team has a solution for that. “We use clever layering, such as playing with lots of different textures – marble floors, bamboo silk rugs and leather on top of that,” Barratt said. This allows clients to change up elements as and when they may tire of them.

Adding to the timeless factor are bespoke pieces made to fit the apartments themselves. For example, Barratt’s favourite piece is the custom-made bar he built for the father, who uses it when hosting (he hires a member of his staff to mix drinks for the evening). Barratt had noticed that the units came with a

structural column that would have been wasted space. The bar was built around the column and is now a key focal point of the apartment that instantly draws people to the space, before their eyes naturally wander to each section of the other three areas seamlessly.

For Barratt, custom-making pieces is in his blood, who is also a furniture designer. He likes to mix and match brand name pieces with his own even when clients do have a preference for certain brands. “I believe this is what makes [Elliot James Interiors] truly unique; it is only when you start making your own bespoke things can you imagine and create a one-of-a-kind look for your clients. It’s not so much a trend, as it is that clients don’t want to spend a lot of money for a Minotti sofa, only to find that their friends have the same one.”

It doesn’t have to be bespoke pieces of furniture that help bring personality into an apartment. For the son, Barratt worked with two artists, Mr. Brainwash and Jimmie Martin, to incorporate street art into the

place. On the walls are graffiti artwork by Mr. Brainwash, while Jimmie Martin was hired to write out inspiring quotes the client liked onto leather chairs. As the son identified himself as introverted, Barratt’s challenge was making sure the street art wouldn’t overwhelm the personality of the apartment. “We wanted to retain sophistication with the street art but ultimately, what we wanted was for him to be able to come back and not feel stressed out, but rather be in the midst of what he enjoyed the most.”

It’s clear that when it comes to designing your perfect home, the Elliot James Interiors’ method of getting to know their clients intimately, playing around with layers and mixing bespoke with brand name pieces works. That versatility to put in and take out elements is what turns empty shells into homes. But Barratt probably summed it up best, as we locked up for the day: “No matter how many properties you own, we want to be able to have our clients walk in and feel like the apartment is saying, ‘welcome home’.” **J**

5 TIPS FROM ELLIOT BARRATT ON HOW TO GET THE HOME OF YOUR DREAMS WITH YOUR INTERIOR DESIGNER

Never too much information

Even if you don’t know what you want, you can at least communicate what you don’t want. The more information you give, the better your designer can develop insight into what’s best for you.

Dollars and sense

Talking about money might be awkward but setting a realistic budget with your interior designer helps set expectations between both sides on what can or cannot be achieved.

Racing against time

Give your interior designer ample time for renovations, and factor in extra time for delays, changes to concepts and lead time on products. Most custom pieces will require a build time of 12 weeks.

Complementary company

Many designers specialise in a particular style, like baroque or modernism, so pick one that matches what you’re after. They should also share a level of quality that is acceptable to you.

Enjoy the process

Renovating your home is a huge undertaking and can be a very emotional process, as you’re entrusting your personal space to someone else. But, as long as you and your designer have an open and honest relationship, the results will surpass your greatest expectations.