

# Softness and fluidity: How Ipli Architects' Yip Yuen Hong drew inspiration for GuocoLand's River Modern

BY JOVI HO

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The architect behind the popular 450-unit Martin Modern in District 9 returns after nearly a decade to again shape another of GuocoLand's residential developments. The 455-unit River Modern, which is now previewing ahead of its March 7 launch, continues the work of local firm Ipli Architects in the area — the new condominium is located just 900m from its predecessor.

Ipli Architects founding partner Yip Yuen Hong, the principal architect of both Martin Modern and River Modern, sees similarities in the "aspirations" of both projects.

"For River Modern, the whole team spent a lot of time siting the building — to position the building as majestically as possible... River Modern had that prerogative from day one," Yip tells *City & Country*. "The GuocoLand team spent a lot of time tweaking the plan so that every room has a good view; that is of paramount importance and that is similar to Martin Modern."

Where the projects differ is with texture. "For Martin Modern, we experimented with very, very rough textures. There was a huge basement, which was exposed, and a lot of hard walls. Basically, what we wanted was for a very, very textured wall to age beautifully, and for plants to climb all over it," says Yip, a four-time winner of the President's Design Award.

That aligns with Yip's personal preference for materials that feel "more rugged, more robust, more tactile and more natural". "I feel that materials like that stand the test of time a lot better; they age very well, they have a certain patina achieved through time."

Compared to more "pristine"



GuocoLand returns to River Valley nearly a decade after the successful launch of Martin Modern with the 455-unit River Modern, a 99-year leasehold luxury development in one of Singapore's most prestigious addresses

materials, such "natural" choices are more compatible with vegetation, he adds. "If you allow a natural material to age with the weather, you're a lot more sympathetic; you're more tolerant of a little bit of dirt, because it's supposed to be the look."

Interestingly, Yip says the concept for Martin Modern was a "bad hair day". "We didn't want it to be manicured [or] pruned nicely — just let it grow. Because of Covid-19, it grew beautifully."

That unfussy approach to landscaping was carried forward into River Modern, he adds. "We emphasise the landscaping and the

surrounding area — the park and the river — together with the development. The landscaping is still very dense; the colors are also softer [and] the texture is also softer."

The whole inspiration behind River Modern comes from its direct riverfrontage, with 186m of the Singapore River bending around the development. "Because of its fluidity, its curves, its movement, and most of all, its softness — the whole development tends to try and become a lot softer," says Yip. "That's why the texture is softer, the colours are softer [and] the landscaping is more encompassing."

Nine years have passed since

Martin Modern's launch in July 2017. The immediate vicinity is more built-up now, and River Modern is possibly the last luxury residence of its kind in the area.

Situated on a 126,325 sq ft site within River Valley next to Kim Seng Park, River Modern holds a trump card over existing developments in the area: it boasts direct connectivity to Great World MRT Station on the Thomson-East Coast Line via Exit 1, which also offers underpass access to Great World shopping mall. River Modern residents can reach home through a private, air-conditioned lobby just steps away from the MRT exit.



ALBERT CHUA/THE EDGE SINGAPORE

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Optimising the angle of River Modern's two 36-storey residential towers helps the units avoid lining up directly with an adjacent development, says Yip. In fact, the towers are 48m apart and rotated for optimal orientation and views; about 70% of the apartments at River Modern enjoy unblocked views of the Singapore River. Residents of higher-level units can even see Marina Bay Sands on a clear day.

With configurations ranging from two to four bedrooms, all units are generously sized, with no "shoebox" layout. More than 60% of River Modern's units are three- and four-bedroom units.

Designed with families in mind, River Modern is just across the road from the popular River Valley Primary School, accessible via a sheltered walkway. Other primary schools within 2km of the development include Anglo-Chinese School (Junior), St Margaret's School (Primary) and Alexandra Primary School.

The first residential level is about five storeys above Kim Seng Park. Instead of a boundary wall, River Modern employs a series of stepped "tiers" that gradually elevate the terrain from the riverside to the lawn, the pool and the residential towers.

"Sounds from the park and people could be a very pleasant thing to have, especially if you have families," says Yip. "There's a lot more life around, rather than something that is a bit more secluded [and] remote. It's an enhancement to family life." ■



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