

# This architect's home is earth-friendly



The residence of Liza and Robert Crespo offers a spectacular view of Metro Manila. The coffee table (above) is made of recycled retazo wood attached to a set of wheels. This makes it easy to wheel out during parties. An architect by profession, Liza (inset) poses by a framed photograph of the Empire State Building.

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**A**fter having lived in the big city of New York for 13 years, Liza and Robert Crespo decided to return home to the Philippines, permanently. The big move from the Big Apple happened almost two years ago and they've set up residence in a spacious two-storey condo unit in Ortigas Center. Living in a condo was the obvious choice for the Crespos, who grew accustomed to the high-rise lifestyle in Manhattan.

The place has a panoramic view of Metro Manila and Liza, an architect by profession, has made the view the main attraction of her home. From wherever one sits in the living area, one gets to behold the Ortigas skyline and even the high-rise buildings along Roxas Boulevard. Liza says they always have the best seats in the house during the fireworks display every New Year's.

Skyscrapers are very much a part of the lives of the Crespo family. At the hall entrance, guests are greeted by a blown-up photograph of the iconic Empire State Building, as seen from the Rockefeller Center. The New

York architectural firm Liza worked for was headquartered at the Empire State. She found the picture online and she contacted the photographer and offered to buy a copy. It would serve as a sentimental reminder of this "fast-paced city" she had lived and worked in, she explains. Happily, the photographer sent her a copy, free-of-charge.

At the foot of the staircase sits an original Le Corbusier chair. It was a gift from Brennan Beer and Gorman Architects, the firm Liza had worked for. As an associate architect, she worked on several of the firm's international projects. "Architecture is all about details," says she. "Executing the design from the blueprint phase to actual construction requires tons of detail drawings."

When the Crespos acquired the Ortigas condo, one of the first things Liza did was to have the stairwell relocated from the entrance to the opposite end where the ceiling is higher. "To create a point of interest and give a free-flowing feel," she explains. This eased up the space, creating an extra 10 square meters that became part of Robert's hobby room.

Mounted on the stairwell ceiling is an eight-foot diameter Big Ass fan, the smallest in the fan's product line. The Crespos are the exclusive local

distributors of this product. It is said to be very cost-efficient as it uses the high volume/low speed system that moves air with its size not its speed, producing better air circulation. "It consumes the same amount of electricity as a 250-watt light bulb," she says.

Liza is a registered LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) architect. She thus made sure her home in Manila would adhere to the principles of green architecture.

Most of her custom-made furniture as well as the steps of the staircase are made of recycled retazo wood. The Terrazo flooring (chips of commercially-cut marble set in a binding material) is another environment-friendly choice. Liza says it's a durable material and is easier to maintain. Terrazo is said to be considered as the "greenest floor" as it reportedly can lower the temperature of a room.

The coffee table in the living room was built by husband Robert. He also used retazo wood and attached a set of wheels underneath so it can easily be wheeled out whenever the family needs more space for a party. The tile flooring of the bedrooms is made of bamboo, which is a sustainable material. The entire unit is naturally bright, thanks to the condo's glass

walls and large picture windows. For lighting fixtures, she uses only compact fluorescent lamps, which are cost-efficient. "But because of the natural light that enters the place, we do not turn on the lights during the daytime," says Liza.

On the second floor is the study room which the family fondly calls the "command station." Here the kids study while Robert and Liza catch up with their work. As much as possible, Liza prefers to do her work at home. A second-hand work table purchased from a Japan surplus shop is the centerpiece of the room.

### Green tips

Liza gave the following tips to creating a "green" home. Says she,

"Select recycled and sustainable materials. Use low-VOC or Volatile Organic Compound Paint that does not give off gas. Opt for passive cooling and natural light. Choose fixtures that consume low energy."

Finally, she also says that a green home is not complete without plants. As such, the windows are lined with potted plants. "It was actually Robert's idea to put them," says Liza. "But I chose the design of the pots."

This well-planned and ingeniously-designed home is a labor of love. It is a place where care and warmth continuously grow in the hearts of the Crespos. The cold winter in New York is only remembered through a painting on the wall here in Manila, which the family now calls home.



The residence is equipped with earth-friendly features: (1) Joaquin Crespo sits on a Le Corbusier chair. He is kept cool by the efficient Big Ass ceiling fan. (2) The foyer uses Terrazo flooring which is environment-friendly. (3) Sustainable bamboo tiles were used for daughter Francesca's bedroom, which also offers a panoramic view of the city. (4) Francesca in the study room. (5) The kitchen follows the uncluttered look of the entire place.