

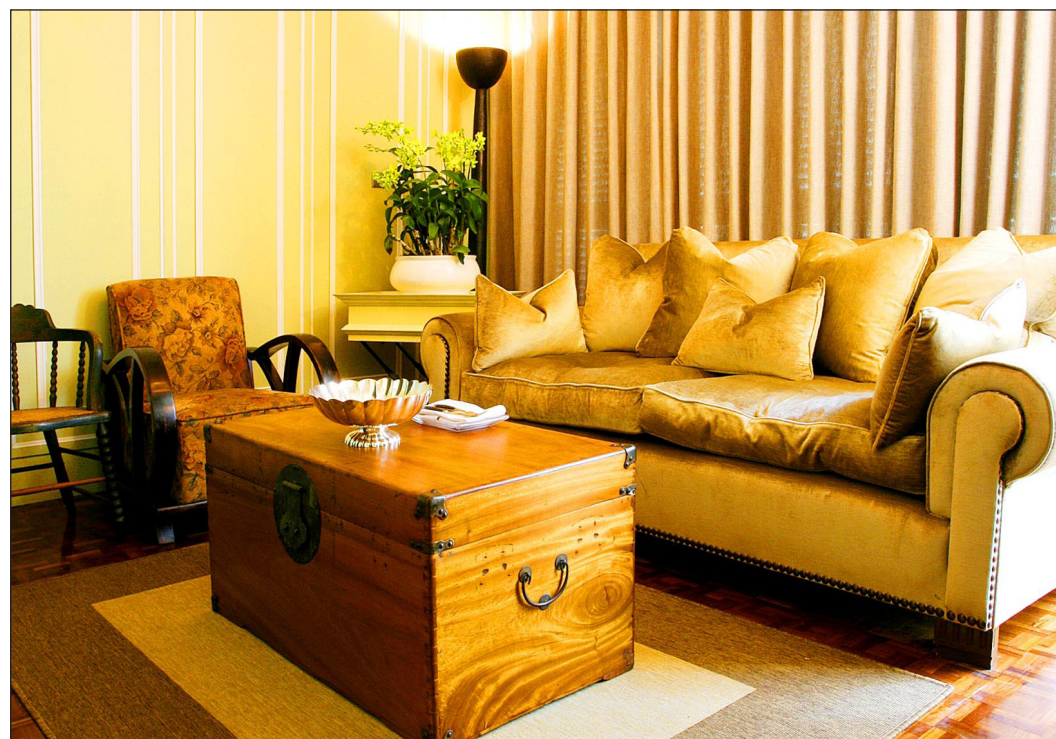
TRAVEL

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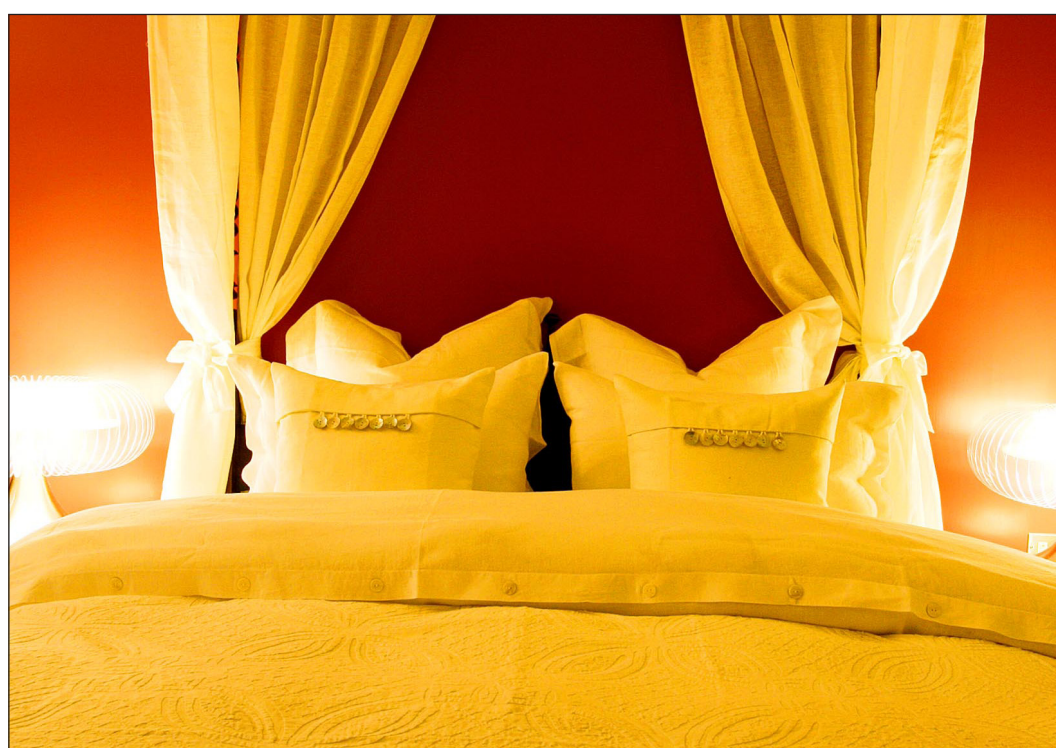
SATURDAY, AUGUST 22, 2009



VVG BB+B's comfy Fancia suite greets guests with bold reds. PHOTO COURTESY OF VVG BB+B



VVG BB+B, which stands for VVG boutique bed-and-breakfast, is located in Taipei's East District. Pictured is the Evon suite's living room. PHOTO COURTESY OF VVG BB+B



VVG BB+B blends contemporary and retro furnishings. PHOTO COURTESY OF VVG BB+B

Luxury inside:

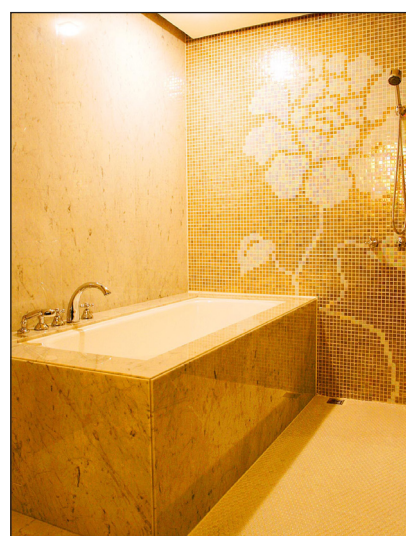
boutique bed-and-breakfast

In Taipei, happiness starts indoors, says VVG BB+B owner Grace Wang. In this second installment of a three-part series, the 'Taipei Times' looks at one of the city's best-kept secrets for high-end accommodation

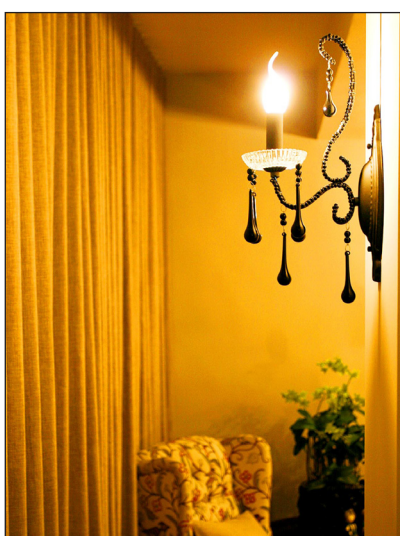
BY DAVID CHEN
STAFF REPORTER



No detail was overlooked in the bathroom of VVG BB+B's Fancia suite. PHOTO COURTESY OF VVG BB+B



The bath and shower room of VVG BB+B's Evon suite. PHOTO COURTESY OF VVG BB+B



Though VVG BB+B's suites are exquisitely decorated, there's no need for kid gloves. PHOTO COURTESY OF VVG BB+B

Those who know the name VVG will think of the trendy bistro that sits at the edge of a residential neighborhood on Zhongxiao East Road. But most VVG patrons, enjoying gourmet meals on the restaurant's skylit patio, are probably unaware of the posh bed-and-breakfast next door. VVG BB+B, which stands for VVG boutique bed-and-breakfast, cleverly conceals its luxury in this 30-year-old apartment building, which has the typically drab concrete exterior found everywhere in Taipei.

But that is precisely the charm for Grace Wang (汪麗琴), an interior designer and one of the partners that runs VVG.

"I like old apartments, Taipei's old apartments, where the outside doesn't look like much. But if you tidy it up inside, you can come up with a different feeling," she said, sitting in the bedroom and living room of Fancia, a 100m² suite that blends retro and contemporary styles.

But to describe VVG BB+B, which opened in 2006, as tidied-up apartments would be an understatement. Sick of hotel lobbies and inspired by stays at boutique hotels in the UK and Hong Kong, Wang and her VVG cohorts set out to create their fantasy guesthouse.

They turned the apartments inside out by knocking down walls and gutting rooms, taking advantage of every bit of available space.

Both Fancia and Evon, the smaller 50m² suite, feel bigger than they are, thanks to well-placed wall-sized mirrors and French windows that let in lots of sunlight.

VVG BB+B's lived-in but classy feel comes from retro furnishings chosen by Wang, an avid traveler who collects antiques and has a passion for "old things," fueled by visits to flea and antique markets in the US, Europe and Asia.

The suites sport antique and vintage replica chandeliers, including one that looks to be from the Shanghai colonial era and a 50-year-old Italian lamp. There are also pleasing oddities like an old wooden door frame from Sri Lanka, in a greenish-blue color, which Wang uses as a mirror frame.

The suites look picture-perfect, but refreshingly there's no need for kid gloves. Wang says she chose the furniture for utility as well as style, her ultimate goal being to create a "cozy ambiance."

In Fancia, guests are greeted by bold, passionate crimson hues. There's the wall behind the king-sized Balinese-style bed, accentuated by white curtains and charming bed linen. Then a set of matching red furniture: a weathered storage chest that serves as a coffee table; a large round rug underneath; a plush three-person sofa and matching pillows with frills.

The suites also entertain some of Wang's

quirky interests, such as vintage refrigerators. Both Fancia and Evon are outfitted with beautiful replicas of 1950s-era refrigerators by Smeg that cost a cool NT\$100,000 a piece. Evon's refrigerator is a soft pastel blue; Fancia's is painted in a pink that would make Hello Kitty fans weak at the knees.

The spacious bathrooms have a decidedly contemporary feel, decked out in wallpaper with bold floral patterns and intricate square tiling in the shower. The floors and countertops are made of marble, and the toilet, with its soothing lines and curves, is simply pleasing to look at.

Yet for all of the top-to-bottom renovations, soulful traces of the original apartments remain. In the Evon suite Wang kept the original parquet floor tiles. In Fancia's dining room and kitchenette area, one wall is stripped to the original brickwork and painted black.

VVG BB+B, which is serviced by VVG Bistro staff, prides itself on knowing its guests. Wang says meticulous written records are kept of their habits, likes and dislikes: Are they early risers or night owls? What did they prefer for their "welcome drink"? Do they like being pampered or prefer being left alone?

Exacting diet requests are all in a day's work for the staff. One past guest, a high-profile model, had to have a certain number of eggs per day; another guest, a Hong Kong actress, was a fan of Yonghe-style *doujiang* (永和豆浆) breakfasts, so the staff would make sure to have fresh take-out delivered to her room.

Wang says that many of VVG's repeat clientele include business executives, well-known directors and actors from Europe, Hong Kong and Japan, all of whom return because they like the anonymity and convenience of the neighborhood, and of course, VVG BB+B's comfort.

In part, the people behind VVG BB+B are motivated by a pride for the city. "For those who come to Taipei, I hope they come away with a good impression ... I think this is important," said Wang.

Next week, the Taipei Times looks at a boutique hotel for business travelers and some mid-priced options for a stylish stay in the city.

BED-AND-BREAKFAST NOTES:

VVG BB+B
ADDRESS: 2F, 18-20, Alley 40, Ln 181, Zhongxiao E Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市忠孝東路四段181巷40弄18-20號)
TELEPHONE: (02) 2775-4386
ON THE NET: www.vvgbbb.com.tw
DETAILS: Fancia suite NT\$7,800; with dining room and kitchen, NT\$9,800; Evon suite NT\$6,800. Rooms are furnished with one king-size bed