

Beauty and simplicity create sense of serenity

Yang Di

This stylish Hong Kong apartment in Mid-Levels proves it is possible to balance an eye for detail and simple beauty with the practicalities of raising a family.

"It has everything we look for in a home," homeowner Renee Wong said. "It is very bright because there are floor-to-ceiling windows in virtually every room so most days we are bathed in natural daylight and it is very quiet."

First and foremost, it has to be quiet and peaceful for the couple because Hong Kong is a noisy, crowded city. Their home needs to be a place where the family can escape all the commotion and enjoy some peace.

"Our favorite part is the views: on one side of our apartment, we have an open unobstructed sea view and on the other side, we have a beautiful green view of the mountain behind our building," Wong said.

To make the home minimalist but warm, sophisticated yet sturdy, Wong sought the professional help of designer Clifton Leung. Wong initially came across the Clifton Leung workshop in an interview he did for a local magazine, upon doing more research, the couple realized they really liked the design aesthetics and philosophy of Leung's work.

The design process was simple and fairly straightforward.

"We meet with Leung and his team and gave them a brief on what we like and dislike, what we want to achieve," Wong said.

"We wanted lots of storage space so we are not surrounded by clutter, but we like clean lines and minimalism although not to the point where the home would appear cold and unfriendly. Previously in our apartment we had a lot of Chinese antique pieces but in our current home, we wanted to change to a somewhat more contemporary style," she said.

The renovation process took four months. The major changes included the relocation of the kitchen. Originally, the kitchen was in the middle of the flat, between the study and maid's room, near the master bedroom. It was an ineffective use of space and cooking odors went into the bedroom easily. The kitchen was also separated from the dining room, which made meals inconvenient.

"Due to the problem generated by the original layout, I gutted the walls and relocated the kitchen next to the dining room. The semi-open kitchen design extends into the dining area, giving more space for entertaining," Leung said.

The relocation of the kitchen was a real challenge, which involved enormous piping changes, at the same time, water-proofing procedures were essential for the relocation.

Inspired by the mountain view in the dining room, Leung created this semi-open kitchen. By using a transparent sliding glass door, the view is still visible when cooking or preparing food in the kitchen. The trees and plants evoke a restful, soothing and cheerful ambience.

The design of the living and dining rooms exhibits clean minimalistic lines in simple form. The trough lights help create a very light and uncluttered ceiling, where functional decorations including a ceiling fan and pendant lamps over the dining table add to the aesthetic look. Slim roller blinds in sheer white also enhance the visual space of this area.

The predominant color white allows the owner's display collections to stand out from the TV cabinet. A wooden dining table and brownish sofa blend harmoniously with the floor color and the Oriental cabinets. The vertical spotlights in the corridor create a gallery-like setting for the beautiful paintings.

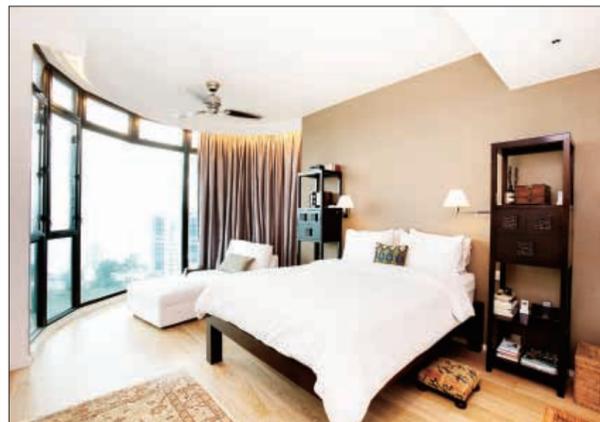
In the master bedroom, curtains along the curved window and area rug add a sense of warmth to the space. The bed lamps and ceiling fan are design details that add sophistication to the minimalistic philosophy. Coupled with the Oriental side cabinets, it is a nice blend of modern and Oriental design.

The kids rooms, her son is three years old and her daughter two, are clean but playful at the same time. Creating a flexible and interchangeable setting for kids is important, according to Leung. A display wall between the two rooms spices up the space and creates a cheerful environment. It allows the kids to hang pictures and other works they have created. A ceiling fan with pendant stickers adds a playful touch.

Although the apartment is predominantly white with earthy tones, Leung selected an accent color for each room. Each color represents the character and preference of the family members, such as lavender purple for the girl's room and light sky blue for the boy's. The accent color in the master bedroom is light brown, which evokes a sense of warmth that is conducive to relaxation.

The couple wished to have an uncluttered but homey home. As such, Leung created a full-height cabinet to meet their needs, with some shelves that allow them to display special items. The floating cabinet design with hidden light troughs emit warm yellow light on the underside and top, creating a sleek and minimalist look, enhancing the sense of space.

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1. The dining area reveals an open kitchen that adds to the sense of space.

2. The open kitchen is created to enhance communication between family members and friends.

3. The display wall between the kids' bedrooms adds a sense of playfulness.

4. The master bedroom is an impressive blend of Oriental and modern design.



ASK THE OWNER



Renee Wong

Q: What's the best thing about living in Hong Kong?

A: Being able to live so close to the city and have access to everything you need and yet, when you need to unwind and get away from the craziness, there are places that you can go and most of these places are only about 30 minutes away.

Q: Describe your home in three words.

A: Peaceful, natural, light.

Q: What's the first thing you do when you get home?

A: Kick off my shoes and grab a nice cold drink from the fridge.

Q: How do you unwind?

A: With two young children at home and being a full-time mom, I very rarely get time to relax and unwind, but when the opportunity arises, I love sitting on my sofa with a drink and my magazines. Often I just end up looking at the ocean view more than I read.

Q: Where do you spend most of the time at home?

A: I spend a lot of time with the kids

playing in the living room. We have a big space between the sofa and the television because we made a conscious decision to not have a coffee table so as to allow the children some extra space to play and create.

Q: What's the best view outside your window?

A: On one side, we love the blue of the sea. On a beautiful sunny day, there are so many shades of blue on the water. On the other side, the trees on the hill are so green and soothing, you will never get tired looking at it.

Q: What's your favorite object at home?

A: Our Eames Lounge Chair — we bought it years ago. The style is timeless and flexible, which means it fits into any decor style your apartment is in.

Q: Where do you source furniture in Hong Kong?

A: Generally, we go to the furniture stores in South Horizon. But for our modern pieces, we go to Aluminium. From time to time, we do like to shop for Chinese or Asian pieces, so for these, we would visit Altfield.



DESIGNER

Tom Bartlett

Who is he?

Tom Bartlett is an architectural designer and the founder of Waldo Works, which does both commercial and residential projects. The studio is known for its modern British design combined with a sense of wit.

Tell us some of your works and name the one you are most proud of.

We take great pride in organizing people's lives beautifully. We see it as storytelling and creating places for people and brands to live in that are an expression of themselves. We are really interested in translating the brand into a design identity.

We are currently working on a large-scale project in Mendoza, looking up at the Andes in Argentina from the plain below. I think the scale involved here is really exciting for us.

Are you currently involved with any project?

Upcoming projects include the entire remodeling of the New Bond Street flagship of Smythson (a maker of luxury leather and fashion goods) and the redesign of Selfridges Personal Shopping department, as well as numerous private houses.

At Smythson it has been great to be working with a strong British brand with an extraordinary heritage. The process is even more exciting because our design will be rolled out globally.

Selfridges is known for its particular approach to retailing and its ability to create a sense of life and energy. For the 500-square-meter Personal Shopping space, we first looked to the Selfridges brand and were drawn to the female icons of the 20th century. Our design is more like an apartment, with a central bar, library and drawing room inspired by the all-white drawing room of avant-garde 1920s' design legend Syrie Maugham's Chelsea Home. Maugham, a pioneer of the future, rejected the shackles of the time and stood for freedom, filling spaces with light, mirrors and laughter.

Describe your design style.

We are interested in translating our clients' identity into engaging design concepts and livable environments. Our designs are connected to the heritage of a place, be it architecture, former use, or materiality, but remain very much tied into the present. We have a dynamic and modern approach, taking the existing and skewing it, whether in proportions or through the juxtaposition of old and new, adding a layer of playfulness that ensures everything functional is beautiful.

Where are you most creative?

I have a cottage in the countryside, where I have a little studio. It allows me the space and time to turn over ideas and look at them from all angles. I gather all the inspiration I have from London, travel and research, and go there to distill it.

What does your home mean to you?

My home is a building site at the moment! So essentially just another place to get covered in builders' dust! But I like my house to be full of things that have a personal resonance to me.

What do you collect?

I am starting to collect Gio Schiano Memphis Totems, and have a collection of Holmegaard Carnaby Glass.

Where would you like to go most in Shanghai?

I would like to go to the Shanghai Museum with a proper guide showing me those simple Song Dynasty (960-1279) ceramics and explaining how on earth something so modern-looking can possibly be so old. But, frankly, sucking up the atmosphere of the city would be the priority.

What will be the next big design trend?

I am increasingly looking to crafted objects and spaces — things and places worked by hand have an intrinsic worth that cannot be ignored.

Digital design and manufacturing are fascinating, opening almost limitless possibilities; but the one-off, the handmade and the bespoke seem to resonate increasingly strongly within the mass of images and objects we face.