

SE Magazine
HD **Over down under; After relocating from Australia to Mid-Levels, a family of five needed a home to suit all their individual needs.**
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When Joanna Lee first saw the Mid-Levels flat she and her husband, Michael, an investment banker, would eventually **buy**, it was in such a state she felt it could pass for something out of the 1970s. The 2,750 sq ft flat was dark, damp and smelly, but something about it - the high ceilings, its potential for space - struck a chord.

"The **apartment** was in a poor condition and dated but I felt that as long as the space was there, I could do something with it," says Lee. "I'm not a designer, though, and didn't have a vision. That all came from Clifton Leung and his team."

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Leung gutted the **property** and, among a host of changes, reduced the number of bedrooms from five to four and substituted the fifth bedroom with a glass-walled study. He opened up the living and dining areas and installed large glass doors leading onto the balcony to allow light to flood in.

Since the Lees and their three children were living in Australia while the renovations were taking place, everything was done via Skype, e-mails and phone calls, with Lee paying only two visits to check on progress. The renovation took about eight months, from initial concept discussions to completion.

"Technology is amazing in that it enabled me to see what was going on and make decisions without actually being there," she says. "What also helped enormously was that Clifton really understood where we were coming from. A family of five is larger than the average and we needed a design and layout that worked for everyone."

Although open planning was the order of the day, the Lee children were about to hit their teenage years when the family moved to **Hong Kong** three years ago, so a degree of privacy was also required. Leung used sliding doors in larger-than-average doorways to section off the sleeping quarters and the kitchen from the living area when needed.

"Joanna often jokes about how many doors she has ended up with but they give the **apartment** great flexibility," says Leung. "Joanna and Michael love having friends over, so if they are entertaining in the living room, for example, their children can shut off the entire corridor leading to their bedrooms and enjoy their privacy. Smells from the kitchen can also be contained. But when all the doors are open, the **apartment** has a flow of space from one room to the next."

Unlike a typical "out with the old, in with the new" renovation, the Lees decided to bring most of their existing possessions with them. Again, thanks to modern communication technologies, Leung was able to see what furniture they had and come up with a suitable layout and colour palette.

"We took pictures of our old house and the furniture we were bringing," says Lee. "Clifton and his team then suggested wallpapers, colours and curtains that would match our things and our requirements. We like our bedroom to be simple and functional, so the colours are in soft, neutral tones; my son's bedroom has one black wall and dark brown pieces as he wanted something more masculine and grown-up."

Particularly striking are the **apartment's** bathrooms. Having been used to a lot of space in their previous home, the family wanted similar facilities in **Hong Kong** and Michael's brief to Leung was that he "needed to feel as though he was in a spa". Again, Leung didn't disappoint. He worked around a sunken bath in the master bathroom, a feature of every flat in the block, modernising it and incorporating it into a large shower stall rather than keeping it separate. Meticulous attention was paid to detail, to avoid spoiling the overall look with unsightly but necessary features. The shower drain is partially hidden but is still accessible for easy cleaning; light switches are positioned at mid-thigh rather than eye level. Leung also added soft-blue lighting to create a muted, spa-like mood and a semi-partition in the form of magazine shelving between the loo and the double sinks to give a degree of privacy.

"I spent a lot of time on the bathrooms, to make them look clean and peaceful but still functional," he says.

Leung says one of his main challenges was thinking up ways to configure the galley kitchen to make it usable. He lined it with custom-made cupboards, which were designed to be narrower than the norm so the kitchen didn't feel cramped but nevertheless provided ample work surfaces.

"The long kitchen took a bit of getting used to but it has a surprising amount of space and is very practical," says Lee.

Although she wanted white walls in the kitchen, she didn't want splashback tiling or glass. To stop drips and splashes marring the look, Leung covered the textured walls in paint typically used for outdoor areas because of its durability.

"I really use my home and I wanted us all to enjoy it, to be able to relax, work, entertain and live in it, without worrying about it. That is exactly what we have," Lee says.

1 Entrance

The Aboriginal painting, by Gloria Petyarre, was bought from an auction house in Melbourne, Australia. The side table was HK\$2,000 from The Hamptons (27/F, Horizon Plaza, 2 Lee Wing Street, Ap Lei Chau, tel: 2553 2888). The lacquered rice carrier was a hand-me-down from Joanna Lee's mother. The silver Puiforcat bowl (HK\$10,000) was from Exclusivites (1/F, Ruttonjee Centre, 11 Duddell Street, Central, tel: 2521 8626). The Eames DSR chair (HK\$2,300) came from JM Style (The Arcade, 100 Cyberport Road, Pok Fu Lam, tel: 2989 6520) and the cushion (A\$30/HK\$210) from Adairs (www.adairs.com.au), in Melbourne.

2 Living room

The light grey sofa (A\$4,000) and the olive leather sofa (A\$5,000) both came from Lounge Designer Furniture (www.lounge.net.au), in Melbourne. All the cushions were custom made for about HK\$200 each by Casablanca (231 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai, tel: 2758 8485). The coffee table (HK\$13,800) and white side table (HK\$4,200) were custom made by Kaviar Creative (67 Wong Nai Chung Road, Happy Valley, tel: 2504 5666). The rug (HK\$6,000) came from Kai Yip Curtain (93B Wong Nai Chung Road, tel: 2890 2715). The Eames LCW wooden chairs for Herman Miller (HK\$9,500 each) and the Spider floor lamp by Leitmotiv (HK\$6,000) were from Aluminium (36 Cochrane Street, Central, tel: 2546 5904).

3 Balcony

The outdoor furniture set (A\$2,000) came from Freedom (www.freedom.com.au), in Melbourne. The diffuser flowers (HK\$59 each) came from The Candle **Company** (11 Lyndhurst Terrace, Central, tel: 2545 0099). The replica antique water bucket came from a shop on Hollywood Road.

4 Dining area

The dining table cost A\$2,000 at Manning & Manning (now MCM House; www.mcmhouse.com), in Sydney. The Laurel Drive dining chairs, by Ralph Lauren (A\$1,000 each), came from Coco Republic (www.cocorepublic.com.au), in Melbourne. The lime-green cushions were A\$50 each from Adairs. The Chilewich bamboo-style floor mats cost HK\$7,000 for two from I.D. (Prince's Building, Central, tel: 2523 3006). The portrait, by Li Guijun, came from Schoeni Art Gallery, which has suspended operations temporarily (enquiries@schoeni.com.hk). The painting in the study is by Marcel Desbiens and came from Delshan Art Gallery (1185 High Street, Armadale, Melbourne, tel: 61 3 9822 9440). The four clocks in the study showing the time in **Hong Kong**, London, New York and Mumbai cost a total of HK\$1,460 from The Workshop **Company** (tel: 2838 9986), a sister **company** of Clifton Leung Design Workshop (tel: 3106 8384); both are at 3/F, 128 Wellington Street, Central.

5 Bathroom

The Nefertiti gold patterned vase (HK\$8,500) was from Lane Crawford (various locations; www.lanecrawford.com) and the gold candleholders were HK\$25 each from The Candle Company. The perfume bottle was a gift. The candle dish (A\$50) was from House (www.house.com.au), in Melbourne. The double sink (HK\$15,100) and the Toto toilet (HK\$4,670) and shower (HK\$2,320) were all from Home Stylish (12/F, Wing Tuck Commercial Centre, 177 Wing Lok Street, Sheung Wan, tel: 9301 113). The towel rail I was bought years ago.

6 Kitchen

The cabinets (HK\$335,000) were made to order by The Galley (3/F, 128 Wellington Street, tel: 3106 8384). The perspex stacking stool (HK\$2,640) came from Axis Collection (256 Hollywood Road, Sheung Wan, tel: 2858 6919).

7 Master bedroom

The Lees have had the same bed for more than 20 years. The Frette bedcover (HK\$28,000) came from Lane Crawford. The red silk scarf, from Dunhill (Prince's Building, tel: 2524 3663), was a gift. The leather-covered bedside tables were custom made by Casablanca for HK\$3,500 each and the Kartell Bourgie lamps were A\$500 each from Space Furniture (www.spacefurniture.com.au), in Melbourne. The vase was HK\$800 from White Contemporary Homewares (Prince's Building, tel: 2526 8482). The textured wallpaper (HK\$10,340 for a 116 square foot wall, installation not included) and the curtains (HK\$11,300) were from Cetec (18/F, Printing House, 6 Duddell Street, tel: 2521 1325).

Tried + tested

Ready to roll

The breakfast table on caster wheels (HK\$18,000 to order from The Galley, 3/F, 128 Wellington Street, Central, tel: 3106 8384) is the ultimate in practicality. It can be moved around easily and fits almost entirely into the space between overhead cupboards and standing units, making Joanna Lee's kitchen roomier. The perspex stacking stools (HK\$2,640 each) were from Axis Collection (256 Hollywood Road, Sheung Wan, tel: 2858 6919).

The painting, by Malaysian artist A.S. Kang, came from Masters A-Art Gallery (1 Utama Shopping Centre, 1 Lebuhraya Bandar Utama, Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia, tel: 60 3 7710 0966).

Styling Anji Connell

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