



HOME

Outside the box

A landscape designer has found creative ways to maximise space and minimise clutter.

Text Catherine Shaw / Photography John Butlin / Styling David Roden

Skylight views, a semi-open layout and a combination of warm wood tones and individual design touches are the vital ingredients that make architect Jerome Lee's Sheung Wan flat a home away from home.

"I am from Singapore, where I was used to living in a [larger] property, so the big issue for me in Hong Kong has been its limited space," says Lee, who moved to the SAR six years ago. "The constraints are such that efficient and clever storage becomes the primary concern, to keep out the clutter."

In 2011, Lee established Locus Associates, a design studio that creates architectural landscapes for residential, resort and other commercial developments.

When it came to his own home, he says he wanted to keep the 700 sq ft floor plan as open as possible, to take advantage of its park views. The one-bedroom

apartment has a small entrance alcove and an L-shaped living and dining area that leads onto a balcony.

"Luckily, I didn't have to alter any internal walls when I bought the apartment, in 2012, but I swapped the existing dining and living areas around because the spatial proportions and flow made more sense this way."

The interior is simple but stylish, and features a cool, neutral palette. Lee maximised every inch, installing in the living room bookshelves into niches and over the door, and a long bench that doubles as a shoe cabinet.

"The full-height wall shelves, which hold my collection of architectural and cookery books, incorporate a series of long, white lacquer storage cabinets to punctuate the space and retain a sense of scale, accentuating a horizontal movement towards the balcony. Otherwise it could be overpowering, with all the dark walnut, in a tall but narrow room," he says.

His Sheung Wan neighbourhood, with its art galleries, restaurants, bars and coffee shops, was an attraction, he says, but also a temptation.

"It's very dangerous, I have to stop myself every time," says Lee, referring to his penchant for buying lamps and other pieces he spots in the nearby stores.

The master bedroom has been reworked to maximise views of the park and Lee added extra-deep floor-to-ceiling wardrobes.

He says the newly installed cabinets throughout the apartment were selected to match existing doors. "I had to cover one window in the bedroom with a wardrobe or else I wouldn't have sufficient space for my clothes," he adds. "When you open the wardrobe doors, you can peel through the clothes hangers and reach the window. I thought it was a practical and flexible solution." >>

1 Balcony Landscape designer Jerome Lee (www.locusassociates.com) has cultivated a lush herb garden in a long white planter (HK\$500) from Lung Shan Garden (Hong Lok Yuen Road, Tai Po, tel: 2651 2782). The vintage kindergarten chair (HK\$850) and bench stool (HK\$420), which doubles as a small coffee table, both came from Mr Blacksmith (7 Gough Street, Central, tel: 2581 1110).

2 Entrance Lee designed an integrated wall unit (HK\$35,000, including bench, and constructed by JAS Design, 17M Houston Industrial Building, 32 Wang Lung Street, Tsuen Wan, tel: 3595 1535) to extend over the entrance. The Kartell Take white lamp on the long bench (which also stores shoes) was bought years ago in Singapore. The painting is by Filipino artist Max Balatbat, who is represented in Hong Kong by Floren Gallery (52 Po Hing Fong, Sheung Wan, tel: 6110 9706).

3 Living area Lee designed the built-in dining

pantry (constructed by JAS Design for a total of HK\$28,000) to double as a serving area and cocktail bar. The natural oak dining table (HK\$4,800) came from FrancFranc (various locations; www.francfranc.com.hk), while the black Ton Ironic chairs cost HK\$1,200 each at Lane Crawford Home Store (Pacific Place, Admiralty, tel: 2118 3398). The traditional Chinese solid elm bench (HK\$3,300), from Axis Collections (256 Hollywood Road, Sheung Wan, tel: 2858 6919), doubles as a coffee table. The sofa bed (HK\$8,800) came from Ovo Home (16 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai, tel: 2526 7226). The tartan cushions (HK\$100 each) were from Muji (various locations; www.muji.com). A William Warren Sunray chair (HK\$2,500), from Lane Crawford Home Store, is paired with an egg-shaped side table (HK\$2,800), from Karf (www.karf.co.jp), in Tokyo, Japan. The Anglepoise Duo chrome floor lamp with red cable (HK\$2,380) and the Aromas del Campo Teo table lamp (HK\$2,050)

both came from Homeless (29 Gough Street, tel: 2581 1880). The black-steel table lamp (HK\$450) atop the sideboard was from Paradise Road Gallery Shop (www.paradiseroad.lk) in Colombo, Sri Lanka, as were the black and white cushions (HK\$150 each). The vintage scale (HK\$900), used as a decorative planter, was found in Carpenter & Cook (www.carpenterandcook.com), in Singapore.

4 Living area detail The oak sideboard (HK\$15,750) came from Indigo Living (various locations; www.indigo-living.com). The oxidised brass candle stands (HK\$400 each) were from Paradise Road Gallery Shop. The abstract painting is by Balatbat. To the left is the door to Lee's bedroom.

5 Kitchen The modern kitchen was left intact, equipped as it was with luxury kitchen appliances by Miele (111 Leighton Road, Causeway Bay, tel: 2890 1018).

Lee left the modern kitchen untouched but in the dining room he added a countertop that multitasks as a cocktail and espresso bar, with drawers for cutlery. He says the storage here, both under the counter and overhead, was designed to be extra-deep again, to accommodate his winter wear and linens.

For a hint of nature, Lee added subtle touches of green throughout his home, particularly on the balcony.

"The main reason I bought the place was that it overlooks Hollywood Road Park. That makes it a good place to come back and relax in. I regularly have my morning coffee on the balcony."

Favourite decorative pieces include abstract paintings by Filipino artist Max Balatbat and an elegant oak egg-shaped side table. "I spotted this in Karf, a design shop in Meguro, Tokyo, and loved it so much I lugged it back to Hong Kong," says Lee, whose revamp took about a month to dream up and just two weeks to implement.

"It will never be complete," he says, laughing. "It may seem 'ready' to others, but architects are almost always restless with their own homes."



6 Bathroom The cabinets and countertop are original. The white Hakuji porcelain tray set (HK\$200), for toiletries, was from Muji.

7 Bedroom Lee created floor-to-ceiling dark walnut panels with hidden shelving (HK\$6,600; JAS Design) to frame the bedhead. The two Artemide Iolomeo bedside reading sconces (HK\$1,600 each) came from Aluminium. The ashwood double bed was from Muji and cost HK\$3,500. The red Kartell Componibili bedside storage unit cost HK\$800 from Space (www.spacefurniture.com.sg), in Singapore. Lee added custom-made throw pillows and an upholstered pad (HK\$1,500; all from Hutton Curtains, 1/F, Hutton Square, 28 Bute Street, Mong Kok, tel: 2311 8998) to the bay window to create a cosy reading alcove.



TRIED + TESTED

A study in contrast Jerome Lee inserted sleek white lacquer storage cabinets into a custom-made wall unit, providing a dramatic contrast to a backdrop of dark walnut bookshelves and the graphite-colour wall.

"It was a necessary detail to get right as I wanted to express lightness to something that would otherwise look bulky," says Lee.

The cabinets feature simple, slow-release hinges, making the compact space ideal for storing glassware and other utensils – a smart extension to the small kitchen.