



Room service

A stay in a stylish Florentine boutique hotel sparked the imaginations of two home buyers seeking a change of scenery.

A fashionable boutique hotel in Italy was the starting point for the transformation of a gloomy, stifling house into a modern, streamlined home. John and Kate Padgett-Koh (originally from Singapore and Britain, respectively) were inspired to go house-hunting after staying at the *Continentale*, an ultra-chic fashion hotel in Florence. Kate fell in love with the 1940s building and its design ethos. "This is our next house," she informed her husband.

On their return to Hong Kong, the couple looked in vain for months to find somewhere that had the potential to display the design, humour and sense of intimacy the Padgett-Kohs had experienced at the *Continentale*. "Then we found the perfect place in Clearwater Bay. It was ideal

for my plan." The only catch was the condition of the place. "What a dump!" So Kate called architect Edward Bilson of MAP (Metropolitan Architecture & Planning, tel: 2877 9280), who had worked on a previous property for them. "Ed knows our taste well," Kate says, "and somehow managed to sense and embrace our shift in genre from open in our first home to intimate in this one."

Bilson suggested a major overhaul to turn the 3,500 sq ft dark, enclosed space into an airy, light-filled environment with easy access to the exterior spaces. "The house is on the end of a row of six houses and there was a portion of the site to the south that was not being used effectively," he says.

To create a design scheme that incorporated light,

space, scale, drama and colour, Bilson first took the space back to basics. A big challenge was the fact the house is on a slope and the interior spans four main levels, each divided by a 1.45-metre height difference between front and back. "It is one module at the front and one module at the back, separated by the staircase," he explains. "It makes it difficult to run it together as one area."

He achieved continuity by opening up the house at the front, back and side. "The advantage of being on the end was that you don't have another house plugged on to you. Also, this house is only connected by about 25 per cent of its perimeter, it feels like a 100 per cent detached house." Bilson installed floor-to-ceiling windows on the

far side and added new windows on the south side. Now the house seems to extend seamlessly into the outdoor areas, which include an expansive ground-floor terrace at the rear, a landscaped garden complete with plunge pool to the south and a raised timber deck on the upper-roof level. Stairs run from the rear terrace down into the south garden.

On the ground floor, a huge travertine stone-topped kitchen bench runs flush along the right side of the house and extends onto the terrace to create a permanent bar/seat area. With the floor-to-ceiling glass doors folded back and the retractable awning in place, *True & Tested*, the area becomes usable in rain or shine and is perfect for easy entertaining. "The indoor-outdoor



1 For the walls of the master bedroom, Kate Padgett-Koh chose a bright, sunny yellow from Nippon Paint (units 509 Trade Square and 601 Cheung Sha Wan Road, Cheung Sha Wan, tel: 2479 9222, www.nipponpaint.com.hk). The bed, which has been positioned to face the sliding glass doors to make the most of green views, was custom designed by MAP (shop 136, Sun Hung Kai Centre, 30 Harbour Road, Wai Chi, tel: 2877 9280) and built by contractor Rose Paradise & Restoration (shop 1, 161 Puk She Wan, Tai Kung, tel: 2799 8960). The solid natural oak floor is from Equal Engineering (119, Broadway Commercial Centre, 29 Sugar Street, Causeway Bay, tel: 3881 7044).

2 A shot of bright orange Nippon Paint on one of the living room walls adds zesty to the space. Light is maximised by

large floor-to-ceiling balcony doors and light-reflecting silver-to-frequency floor tiles from Pacific Building Materials (shop 21A, Times Tower, 391 Jaffe Road, Wai Chi, tel: 2541 8876). On the wall are prints by contemporary artists including Sam Taylor-Wood, Chris Orr, Gavin Turk and Juergen Teller, all from Counter (66A Charlotte Road, London, tel: 44 20 7464 8888, www.countereditors.com). In the foreground is a large purchase at a shop (units 1-10) on Hollywood Road, Central.

3 The dressing room has calming blue walls. Large glass sliding doors with slim steel safety cables allow soft ingress of the great outdoors. The built-in wardrobes (15,150 each) and shoe and bag shelves were designed by MAP and built by Rose Paradise.



open kitchen is very practical and interactive. It works fabulously well for parties," says Bilson. Recreating that element of hotel luxe, materials are tactile and light in colour - oiled oak flooring, slate paving, sandstone, travertine marble and silver technoquartz ceramic tiles - complementing the external environment. The interior decor is clean and simple, with contemporary furnishings - both modern pieces and reproduction antique Chinese furniture. Bold colours, (Kate is a fan of colour) such as orange in the living room, turquoise in the kitchen and yellow in the bedroom, add energy to the otherwise neutral palette.

It is a dream space, with more than a hint of resort living, in which to enjoy the great outdoors. For Kate, the renovation is a resounding success. "When I arrive home and am either slightly outside or on the first stairs inside, it still takes my breath away."



4 The bathroom features two rainfall showerheads. The floor and walls are covered in technoquartz silver tiles from Pacific Building Materials, warming up the space. A circular rug with toning bronze motif from Ikea (I/F, Park Lane Hotel, 110 Gloucester Road, Causeway Bay, tel: 2125 0888; www.ikea.com.hk). The vanity unit features a natural sandstone top, which was custom designed by MAP and built by Rose Paradise.

5 A bright yet soothing shade of turquoise was used on a feature wall in the dining room. The shade perfectly mirrors a photograph by Mary Quinn (\$42,000 from Eyesorm, unit 8 Berkeley Way, Hudders, near Newcastle, England, tel: 44 191 4242242; www.eyesorm.com). The pair of Chinese chairs (\$5,000 for both) were sourced in Macao. They sit at a vintage colonial table from Singapore and beside a pair of bar stools (\$15,000 for the two) from Teputu Kala (I/F, Horizon Plaza, 2 Lee Wing Street, Ap Lei Chau, tel: 2877 3295; www.teputukala.com).

6 The kitchen sits neatly against the party wall. The counter-top, made of natural travertine marble, extends along the room and onto the terrace beyond. For the backsplash, MAP used stainless-steel tiles from Arnold Design Centre (1/15 Lockhart Road, Wan Chai, tel: 2945 0218; www.arnold.com.hk). Because the shiny tiles were impossible to lay totally flat, they reflect light differently, providing a polarized effect. The cabinets and stone counter tops, including those in the bar/terrace area, cost about \$200,000 from Essential Kitchens (shop 102, Chinachem Lighten Plaza, 27 Leighton Road, Causeway Bay, tel: 2142 1409) and Rose Paradise.

7 The raised roof terrace has a Moroccan resort-like ambience. It features a raised timber platform, glass balustrade and timber slatted wall. On the west side, the glamping privacy from a nearby road. The striped floor cushions were supplied by 2 Edward Boutique. Bamboo poles provide a temporary structure to support a fabric sunshade.

8 The plunge pool, which measures 1.6 metres long by 1.6 metres wide by 1.5 metres deep, is perfect for cooling down on after-sun days. It is concealed the edge of the pool so it is a central table top of an island barbershop guests from (not pictured). The pool is lined with natural Chinese sandstone slabs (3.75 square feet from Rose Paradise). The steps of the plunge pool is constructed with stone with epoxy finished edges, and from Rose Paradise. The wall behind has been clad with oiled oak slabs.

tried & tested made to shade

The Padgett-Kohs enjoy using their outside space. To enable them to take advantage of their rear terrace come rain or shine, Edward Bilson (tel: 2877 9282) installed an automated canvas awning that is divided into two four-metre-wide panels. The panels can be rolled in and out separately or as one large piece to cover the whole space.

Bilson believes the system is ideal in terms of cost and flexibility. It comprises an aluminum frame, which has been designed to pitch back towards the building so the awning's outer edge is not too low to the ground when fully extended. This also means the views are not blocked from the first floor and rain water does not cascade off the front of the awning (it empties into a box gutter). The awning cost \$70,000 from Best United Awnings (8at 2B, Joint Venture Factory Building, 76 Hung To Road, Kwun Tong, tel: 2344 9028; www.bestawnted.com.hk).

The terrace features an island preparation/eating area made with a travertine natural stone top on a concrete structure. The aluminum bar stools are from Designer Workshop (I/F, 5 Staunton Street, Central, tel: 2868 9311).

