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Mind over matter

A 'ghastly' apartment – which happened to have a desirable terrace – has been transformed into a spacious family home, thanks to the owners' imagination.

When it comes to finding the ideal home, it's vital to look beyond first impressions. Laurence Lloyd and his wife, Pat Yin Mei-long, did just that when hunting for a family-friendly abode. Topping their must-have list was outdoor space for baby daughter Amber, so when they found a 1,000-square-foot ground-floor flat in Pokfulam with a 1,300 sq ft terrace, they overlooked its "ghastly" interior.

Dark and poorly laid out, the apartment had chopped-up rooms featuring low ceilings, brown-tinted windows and a bedroom where the kitchen should have been. The couple were unfazed; the terrace was going to be worth the effort.

Lloyd, managing director of branding and communications consultancy Citigate Lloyd Northover, has a graphic-design background, so although he was visually savvy, he knew professional help was needed for such a major refurbishment. "When it comes to design, I work in one dimension. I don't think in 3D, so I needed someone to sort it out for me."

Lloyd was introduced to architect Ed Billson of MAP [Metropolitan Architecture & Planning, tel: 9384 0870] and the two worked on revamping the space. Lloyd's friend, and fellow architect, Paul Scroggie project managed the collaboration. >>

1 The bright, open living room at the front of the flat looks out over the terrace and utilizes white walls and ceramic floor tiles to create a backdrop to a warm textural combination of furnishings. The low sofa cost \$9,000 from Sberylia Curtain Company (shop 2, 1 Lyndhurst Terrace, Central, tel: 2525 4942). The colourful, graphic cushions on the floor came from Lane Crawford (1FC Mall, Central, tel: 2118 3388, www.lanecrawford.com). Adding extra comfort to the room is a large Gabbeh tribal rug from the Fars region of Iran (\$7,000 from Persian Arts, Vogue Building, 47 Wyndham Street, Central, tel: 2524 9101). The modern Gaudi-esque chair was sourced in Central from a shop now closed.

2 The pair of reproduction zitan-wood, horseshoe-back armchairs were received by Lloyd in exchange for designing a website. Between them hangs a calligraphy ink painting by Chinese artist Feng Feng – a gift from a friend.





The major refurbishment issue concerned the installation of an open kitchen off the living space to create a flexible living/dining zone looking towards the terrace. The open kitchen was key to the success of the interior and proved effective in creating space and modernity.

"The way people think about a home today is very different from 20 years ago," Lloyd says. "Back then, a kitchen was a wet area you would close off rather than open up." Today, things have changed.

"An open kitchen becomes part of the living room and, in this case, turned what would have been a poky room into a comfortable living space," says Bilson.

The new configuration also works well when entertaining. "We entertain a lot. Pat has a big family and we are both sociable people, so the outdoor area is perfect for that. The idea is that we live outside really," Lloyd says.

Bilson also reworked the "irrational" living space, which had beams criss-crossing the ceiling. "It wasn't good feng shui," he says. "So we suspended the ceiling in the living room to get rid of that and were also able to recess the lights. At night, this makes the room really beautiful."

In terms of decor, Lloyd wanted something modern and clean. "We looked at the furniture and decided we wanted to create a showcase for the furniture and artwork," says Bilson. "But other than that, Laurence had a very open mind regarding the design."

The furniture had been acquired by the couple over many years and has an emphasis on streamlined Japanese pieces, mostly sourced in Hong Kong. "Japanese pieces work well within a modern environment," says Lloyd, who employed a textural soft-furnishings palette of muted browns, oranges and earth tones.

In the living room, traditional Japanese items have been given a modern twist. Four pieces from



the early 20th century have been combined into an art installation. A cast-iron sake kettle is suspended from a hook with a fish motif, below is a traditional rice mill made from solid wood topped with a bamboo tray, a decorative item often used in Ikebana flower arranging. "The pieces do not relate directly to each other, although



all four may be found in traditional environments," Lloyd says.

"Work on the home is ongoing. 'There's still a lot of work to do,'" says Lloyd, who has big ideas for the terrace, including additional landscaping and even a prefabricated unit to provide extra living space.



3 The extensive terrace offers plenty of room for dining and for 16-month-old Amber to play. The eight-seat teak dining table (\$5,000) and Clester teak-and-synthetic-wicker chairs (\$2,500 each) are from Resource Asia (16/F, Horizon Plaza, 2 Lee Wing Street, Ap Lei Chau, tel: 2554 9088; www.resourceasia.com.hk). The large outdoor umbrella with adjustable canopy cost \$4,500, also from Resource Asia.

4 The incorporation of an open kitchen, which runs along one side of the living room, helps increase the sense of space. With an incorporated breakfast bar, it's ideal for entertaining. The Corian countertops and vinyl wrap doors are from Royal Kitchens (shop F, 3 Leighton Road, Causeway Bay, tel: 2573 3993). Making a decorative statement is a Japanese kettle, hook, urn and bamboo tray combination. The cast-iron kettle (\$5,000), traditional hearth hook

(\$8,000), wooden rice mill (\$7,000) and Ikebana bamboo stand (\$2,800) are all from Honeychurch Antiques (29 Hollywood Road, Central, tel: 2543 2433).

5 Over the sink hangs a wooden angel sculpture from the Philippines. The hand-made pale-blue glass tiles along the rear wall are from Fired Earth Tiles Hong Kong (2404 Dominion Centre, 43 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai, tel: 2861 3864).

6 The master bedroom benefits from an open bathroom in terms of space utilisation and convenience. Warm tones dominate the decor; the geometric ethnic bedspread is from Caravan Carpets & Textiles (65 Hollywood Road, tel: 2547 3821). The windows are covered with mahogany-stain slatted blinds and the

wooden chest of drawers is from China Gallery (62A Hollywood Road, tel: 2543 8023; www.chinagallery.com). The flooring used in the bedroom is white oiled oak by Huns Flooring (5980 a square metre from Equal Engineering, 12/F, First Commercial Building, 33 Leighton Road, tel: 2881 7044). The stool in the bathroom hails from the Ivory Coast and cost \$1,300 from Tao (458 Hollywood Road, tel: 2805 1121).

7 The vanity unit uses oak-veneer doors and a Corian top, both custom made by Charles Lam of Famo Ltd (unit 3, 18/F, block B, New Trade Plaza, 4 On Ping Street, Sha Tin, tel: 2642 0996). The Tonda basin (\$2,200) is from Classic Bathrooms (249 Lockhart Road, Wan Chai, tel: 2802 9328). On the walls are technoply stone-look silver ceramic tiles (\$480 a square metre from Pacific Building Materials, 22A Times Tower, 391 Jaffe Road, Wan Chai, tel: 2543 8870).



tried & tested turning japanese

Finding space for large pieces of furniture can be challenging. Laurence Lloyd used a corridor running from the living room towards the bedrooms and installed a massive 1920s Japanese *isho-dansu* (clothing chest) made of kiri wood. To disguise what would have been a blank wooden side and turn the chest into a decorative point of interest, he draped an antique *obi* sash from a Japanese kimono (also from the 20s) over the top and down the side – in much the same way as you would use a runner on a table. The chest and the *obi* sash (\$2,300) are from Honeychurch Antiques (29 Hollywood Road, Central, tel: 2543 2433).

The Japanese theme continues at the base of the cabinet, with a *tanuki* (a dog native to Japan) statue, found in an antique shop in Kyoto. According to Japanese lore, the *tanuki* has the power of transformation and this kind of "good luck" statue is often found outside restaurants and bars. The pair of traditional slippers are also from Japan.

