



# Spotlight on design

Charmaine Ng meets Hong Kong's leading interior designers

**W**ith the coronavirus rampant around Hong Kong and the world, many of us are taking precautions to wash our hands thoroughly, avoid large gatherings and work from home. This means a prolonged period of staying in, stressing the importance of an abode we feel comfortable in and are proud of. This month, we meet up with six interior designers based in Hong Kong and ask them about their profession and what self-isolation means for our homes and spaces we frequent during this pandemic-hit period.

Image credit: Graham Uden



**Rowena Gonzales**  
Founder, Liquid Interiors

Born in Montreal, Canada, with parents originally from the Philippines, Rowena Gonzales came to Hong Kong 14 years ago for adventure and to escape from the snow. Her father was very creative with building and an incredible DIY renovator, and she grew up doing whatever he did. He inspired Rowena to take up interior design in university and she graduated from the Ryerson School of Interior Design in Toronto. When she arrived in Hong Kong, she planned to stay only a year, but fell in love with the city in the process and even met her husband here. She eventually started Liquid Interiors, where she offers healthy and eco-conscious design services to her clients. [liquid-interiors.com](http://liquid-interiors.com)

**How did Liquid Interiors come about?**  
Liquid Interiors started 11 years ago after I had an opportunity to design my first eco-friendly office. I found an outlet to merge my creativity and passion for sustainability. I became a LEED AP and one of the pioneers in Hong Kong to

bring sustainable design practice to reality for everyday people.

Two years later, unfortunately, my nephew was diagnosed with leukemia. Through a homeopath, it was the first time I experienced what changes can be made in the home environment to boost the immune system. It was also becoming a topic where many other children in China were being diagnosed with leukemia with links to home renovation as well. It was evident that standard toxic construction in Hong Kong could be unsuitable for health. A developer liked our sustainability work and asked us to design their first healthy and sustainable show flat using the WELL Building Standard as he had personal concerns about cancer prevention. Since then, I became a WELL AP and infused healthy and sustainable practices together to bridge the gap between international building standards and residential interior design. I believe that your home is your sanctuary, a place to relax, rejuvenate and create memories with the people you love.

**How do you incorporate sustainability into your work?**

Sustainability is at the heart of every project we do. From renewable materials, water-saving, renewable energy, energy-saving techniques, growing your food, recycling food waste, managing recycling, where to donate old furniture and even a maintenance guide to remind you when to clean your air conditioners. We are carefully integrating this in every step of our process.

**How can Hongkongers make their home into a sanctuary?**

A sanctuary does not mean it needs to have expensive gadgets or materials. Firstly,



declutter and keep only the items that make you happy and give you meaning. Secondly, bring the outside in. Use natural materials, plants, and bring in as much sunshine as possible. Lastly, focus on what you need to rejuvenate. If better sleep is of concern, then focus on making your sleeping environment a dark, quiet, relaxing technology-free and low electromagnetic field space. The day time should be bright, light and refreshing.

**Oliver Corrin**  
Asia Regional Director, CADA Design

Oliver Corrin has been interested in design and interiors since he was 11 years old. At a young age, he was fascinated by the emotional response that certain spaces evoked. For most of his career, he worked in London, but around six years ago, he was asked to relocate to Hong Kong to oversee and manage the full renovation of the Hong Kong American Club for CADA Design. The project took two years to complete, and having taken a liking to Hong Kong during this time, Oliver decided to remain in the city, where he now works as the Asia Regional Director of CADA Design. [cada.asia](http://cada.asia)



**How has CADA Design developed?**  
CADA Design was established over 25 years ago in the UK. At first it started as a general design studio but when CADA was awarded the role of designer for the original Harrods food hall in London, which took over 10 years to complete, it took us from being a general to a specialist studio. Since then, CADA has become one of the world's leading F&B designers specialising in restaurant, food hall and supermarket design, we have worked with clients such as Fortnum & Mason, Dean & DeLuca, Disney, Lotte and Pret a Manger.

**Why did CADA Design choose Hong Kong as its first location outside of London?**

CADA was receiving more and more interest from potential clients within Southeast Asia as well as having increasingly more projects in the region. It made sense from this increased demand to establish an office in Hong Kong, so that we could better serve and be more responsive to our clients. We believe in the importance of having feet on the ground and giving our clients the right level of care and attention that is not just expected but deserved.

**What goes into designing a restaurant?**  
To create a successful restaurant in 2020, you have to look far beyond the surface design. It's not just a case of designing a pretty looking space – that may have an impact when someone first enters, but once they've sat down and taken it in, they start to look at the menu, how's it's presented, both its cover and the graphic design, then the service, the little touches that instantly set a restaurant apart from its competitors. We want people to connect with our spaces on a sensory level by considering the harmony of how the lighting, sounds, smells and textures are experienced within the space. What we aim to do is to create a destination, an experience that not only adds value to someone's life but creates an emotional connection and ultimately will make them want to come back for more.

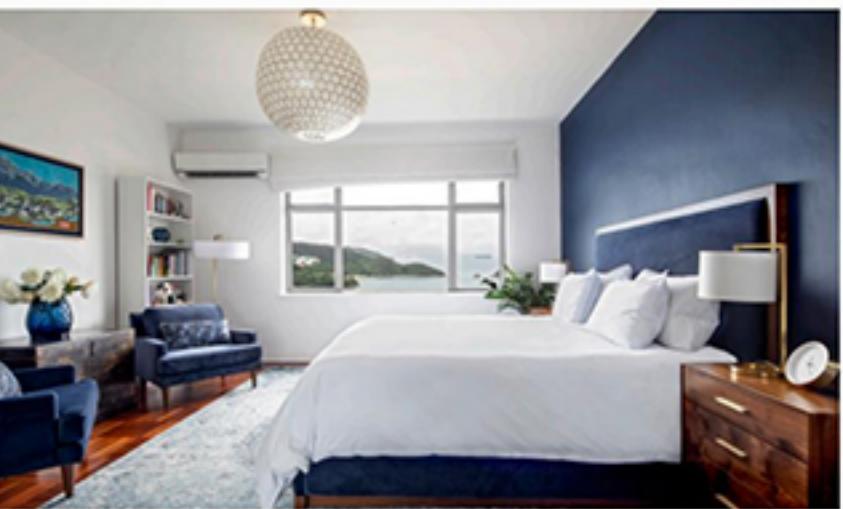
**What trends do you see dominating the next 3-5 years?**

From the trends already emerging, we are seeing F&B becoming intertwined into all areas of our everyday lives. Luxury retail brands such as Tiffany's, LV, Gucci and Ralph Lauren are creating restaurants which ultimately do not create profit for the brand but enhance the overall store experience. Hotels are investing far more into their food outlets with some hotel brands using them as key identifiers and selling points. One other big trend on the rise is 'entertainment' – this is where an entertainment concept such as bowling, virtual hunting, darts or ping pong is matched by a strong food and drink offer to create an overall unique experience.



**Britta Butler**  
Founder, B Squared

Britta Butler has a bachelor's degree in Biological Anthropology from Harvard University and received her master's degree in Architecture from MIT. She worked at a firm in Boston that specialises in building



Residential project by B Squared

affordable housing for several years, before moving to Hong Kong from the US 14 years ago. [bsquareddesignhk.com](http://bsquareddesignhk.com) and [brittabutlerdesigns.com](http://brittabutlerdesigns.com)

**How did B Squared Design come about?**

I founded the practice in 2014 when I saw a gap in the market for a full-service, boutique, residential design firm that could handle an entire project from conceptual design through to construction administration. B Squared stands out from other companies in the industry because we offer not only interior design services, but architectural services as well. We comprise a Cantonese-speaking project manager, trusted contractors and a full suite of handymen, carefully selected factories used to manufacture bespoke pieces and long-term cultivated relationships with furniture shops throughout the region.

**Do you have a particular interior style?**

I create homes that are beautiful and functional for people from all walks of life, that become their sanctuaries from the outside world. Each project is so individual depending on the client, but I have some overarching themes that run through all my designs: clean lines, contemporary spaces, and an attention to texture and colour. Over the years my style has organically shifted to include many more natural materials as a result of becoming much more aware of the environmental impact of my work. It's my true belief that we can build and design with sustainability in mind without sacrificing aesthetics, and my projects have increasingly shown this way of thinking.

**Tell us about your most memorable project?**

The project that comes to mind was a complex one. It had to serve multiple functions: being a 'home away from home' when the CEO was in Hong Kong; a meeting and hotel space

factories in design and manufacture. From her job, she developed an invaluable understanding of manufacturing processes and a respect for the makers, soft skills which she transferred to her second career in interior design.  
[hurlston-tsengdesigns.com](http://hurlston-tsengdesigns.com)

**How did Hurlston-Tseng Designs come about?**

A furniture shop in Horizon Plaza asked to use my background in textiles and colour to revamp soft furnishings and upholstery. This soon grew into buying accessories, designing furniture and travelling up and down to China for the workshop. I took some specific interior courses to complement my existing experience. Over time, customers and friends began to ask me to work on projects for them... and from there, it gradually evolved into my full time business.

**Do you have a particular interior style?**

Instead of a particular style, I like to create a particular feeling for my clients. I don't dictate but I try to guide their style journey. I believe interiors should look as if they have evolved over time, with clients' treasured pieces worked in to tell their own story. I love juxtaposing something unusual, a strong graphic shape or throwing in a bold colour. Colour, pattern and texture need to play off each other and create tension and friction – this could be creating symmetry or asymmetry... it just depends.

**How do you incorporate sustainability into your work?**

I always recommend Eico paints and my style is very much about layering and incorporating meaningful pieces one already has, which is a great start. I love showing clients how to make the best of a piece they have and they are often surprised and delighted with the outcome. Sustainability is something I feel strongly about but Hong Kong's not the easiest place to access green furniture, I would love to hear any readers' recommendations!

**What trends do you see dominating the next 3-5 years?**

Warmth and nature are key! There's an overarching feeling for more mixing and layering with colour, materials, texture and eras. Styles evolve for a reason – I believe this is a reflection of people's search for an individual identity, a longing for a home which has familiar pieces and also an awareness of being more eco-friendly and repurposing existing pieces.



**Emma Hurlston-Tseng**  
Founder, Hurlston-Tseng Designs

A Londoner originally, Emma Hurlston-Tseng graduated in Fashion from Saint Martin's School of Art before moving to Hong Kong to work with

**Aaron Chin**  
Founder, The Editors Company

Aaron Chin spent his childhood in Hong Kong and moved to the US for high school and university. Upon graduating, he returned to