



Rowena Gonzales

The award-winning founder of Liquid Interiors Rowena Gonzales explains how she combined health, wellness, sustainability and comfort in this signature project in Wan Chai.



What did the client ask for in this project?

Somewhere she could relax, so we gave her home a retreat feeling. We put a ecosmart fire in the living room, which burns ethanol

so there's no exhaust. The low beams didn't really work for the space, so we covered them with barn wood and veneer for a relaxing villa feel. For furniture, we chose things that didn't look new, but weathered - that choice of materials gives a lived-in feeling.

Tell me about yourself.

I'm originally from Montreal, but have been living in Hong Kong for ten years. I've had Liquid Interiors for eight.

How did Liquid Interiors begin?

When I first moved to Hong Kong, design was a lot more about luxury, and it was pretty soulless; I wanted to make a difference. I looked first at sustainability, but something happened a few years later which changed my whole career path. At age five, my nephew became a cancer survivor. Leukemia isn't hereditary, so the cause had to be environmental factors. My sister saw many different naturopaths, and I was surprised to find them all giving advice on how to change the home - how to reduce exposure to electromagnetic fields and make sure the water was pure. It made me realise how many things in the home can make you sick.

How did this event shape your goals for Liquid Interiors?

When the WELL Building Standard came out, I found that most of its criteria were the same things naturopaths were telling my sister to do in her home. So we started incorporating the WELL Building Standard in our residential projects. I'd never received such good feedback in my life - people were saying things like their respiratory problems had gone away.



so when they sleep at night, they're not just breathing the same stale air.

How did you style the home to her lifestyle?

We created the Den, which is a study room for the kids with workstations and cushions. There's also a TV, so they can play video games there and not in the living room. Behind the TV we put a hidden Murphy bed - when it's up, it just looks like a painting. Our client loves art, so we had to do something that makes sense for her.

One thing every home should have?

A lot of the times you come home, you go straight to the TV and turn it on. So I'd recommend the option to close the TV, turn on the fireplace, and just have a reading space.

How did you tailor the home for health and wellness?

One thing is the integration of fresh air into their ventilation system. Split type air conditioners just re-circulate the same air, so we installed separate fresh air ducts in the living room. All the bedrooms also have integrated fresh air systems





Best piece of interior design advice?

Make your home your sanctuary. If you can come home to a place that's relaxing, it's just better for your own well-being. It doesn't have to be big - think about your lighting and have a place for everything.

What is it like being a female designer in Hong Kong?

The interior design field is mostly female dominated. However, most interior design business owners are men, which is disappointing.

What would you tell aspiring female designers?

It's not easy. It's a profession that you need to be passionate about to do well. Expect a lot of late nights, but if you're passionate you will feel much more satisfied and fulfilled with your job than many of your friends.

What are your biggest design influences?

I travel to a lot of eco-resorts, and it makes me wonder why every place isn't like that. I really like the Alila Ubud in Bali. I love that style - modern but still natural.

