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SUSTAINABLE STYLE IN SINGAPORE
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High Life

A busy bachelor works with a designer friend to turn a Hong Kong box into a green eco-apartment to be proud of.



In Hong Kong's newest hip neighbourhood, Sai Ying Pun, a globe-trotting expat has made a home that brings together smart use of space and sustainable strategies. The unusually quiet street is lined with local shops and businesses as well as a few historic structures from the city's British Colonial history, and while it's not exactly in the centre of the city, Scott Clotworthy's new property enjoys a lack of height and density that is quite rare in

today's Hong Kong. The 35-year-old cameraman's renovated one-bedroom, 38sqm home takes full advantage of the flat's original wall-to-wall balcony with direct views of the island's iconic Victoria Harbour. Originally from New Zealand, where even the densest cities are far greener and more spacious than his new home city, Clotworthy made sure that he and his architect and close friend, Rowena Gonzales, a principal of Hong Kong design office

Liquid, made the balcony with its views over the site's low density surroundings, into the home's main highlight in line with their shared interest in sustainable living with a strong indoor/outdoor relationship.

As is typical of most homes in Hong Kong, the original apartment was what Clotworthy calls a "box-in-a-building" - namely, a space with tiny square footage and too many rooms - there used to be three bedrooms where there is

Story by JJ Acuna
Photos by Manyi Choi



now only one. Clotworthy and Liquid immediately gutted the spaces to start afresh, and when they had a blank slate, the ideas began to flow.

Clotworthy is a bachelor who is often out of town with his work as a photo-journalist, so his needs are quite simple. He needed a space that was flexible for all types of storage, was low maintenance, with a good spatial flow to allow the hosting of guests. He explains that he often has friends who visit or use the space when he is away, but when he is back in Hong Kong, the home has to feel like it is spacious and open enough to entertain. One of his main requirements was to have a combined entertainment centre embedded neatly within a wall. Rowena saw this as an opportunity to create a divider through the middle of the space that would have the dual purpose of holding the entertainment centre and wardrobe on either side, and become a visual divider, separating the home's living room and bedroom into two distinct zones.



The two-rooms-in-one-space concept allows both areas to share one balcony. Each room connects to the balcony, but has access via independent sliding screens, so the bedroom can be closed to the outside, while the living room is open to it. In terms of cooling, the unit faces north, diminishing the impact that direct sunlight would have on the space. Strategically located ceiling fans in the kitchen and the master bedroom aid in the passive cooling of the home when all sliding screens are open, which enables a natural breeze in the whole space. This is rare in Hong Kong, where aircon-choked apartments with no relationship to the outside world predominate.

Other sustainable features include a directional drop-down ceiling that runs the length of the home's public area from the entrance dining area, across the living room, to the balcony outside. This drop ceiling repurposes the flat's original parquet flooring as a feature finish, and is used to conceal spot and recessed lighting treatments, giving this public zone a feeling of added height and a bit of design flare at the same time. Other visible eco-features include the bamboo flooring, which ▶

**BEING GREEN:
SUSTAINABLE FEATURE**

- 1. Extensive green wall planting using local plant species
- 2. Rainwater catchment
- 3. Passive cooling
- 4. Low-flow fixtures



Clotworthy says it was a great investment, because the material is made from a renewable source, but with a texture and strength that "looks and feels great".

An extensive green wall-planting system lines the balcony's balustrade wall, with locally-sourced plant species picked out by the designer, Gonzales. To water the green wall, Gonzales and her team designed a rainwater catchment system outside

the unit, so that water naturally irrigates the soil and then flows down and through into a trough underneath the balcony's timber deck. To save on water usage and electricity, Gonzales installed a series of low-flow fixtures in the kitchen and bathroom and convinced Clotworthy to invest in a Master Switch system that allows all the electricity in the flat to be switched off after he has left the house (except for the fridge).

Clotworthy is pleased with the home's transformation. He is able to have a unit that fits him aesthetically and conceptually, since the home is underpinned by green and energy-saving features. "Selecting a space can be difficult and it can be quite demoralising when you see what your money buys you in Hong Kong," says Clotworthy of his renovation experience. "Ultimately the total cost was 20 percent higher than initially budgeted, so it was a great advantage to have the designers present options for materials. I knew that Liquid would only suggest materials that were environmentally sound and it saved me a lot of time finding materials on my own. The floor selection is a good example - I wanted to explore some less expensive options, but after looking at the bamboo Rowena presented to me, it was clear that her choice was by far the best choice." He stresses that clients should really take advantage of their partnership with their designer, and rely less on the contractor. "If you are buying and sourcing your own fittings," says Clotworthy, "you should be able to negotiate at least 10 percent discount off everything." ■

The bedroom is a simple, but stylishly functional space, with bifold doors that reduce the need for air-conditioning, and storage for a bike. Owner Scott Clotworthy (oppo-

site, centre, and above) loves to entertain friends including architect Rowena Gonzales (opposite, far right, and above).



BEING GREEN:
SUSTAINABLE FEATURE

- 5. Recycled parquet for feature ceiling
- 6. Bamboo flooring
- 7. Master switch