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Team spirit

Turning two flats into one is no easy feat but a couple's decision to each take on distinct design responsibilities helped keep the peace



Text **Charmaine Chan** / Styling **Anji Connell** / Photography **John Butlin**

Couples often make joint decisions when it comes to home renovations. Not Isobel and Antony Lee. To achieve their goal and maintain harmony, they decided to take responsibility for separate tasks. "We agreed from the beginning that he'd do function and I'd do look and feel," says Isobel. "If he made a decision about layout, I'd be fine with it."

So it was - and still is - in the 3,500 sq ft "very functional" Pok Fu Lam flat, which the couple created by acquiring the apartment next to the one they'd bought three years earlier, gutting both and fashioning distinct public and private zones. A transitional area segues between the bright, open living space of their former digs and the moodier, quieter side of the apartment, which now accommodates three en-suite bedrooms.

This "bridge" between light and dark is a study Isobel shares with her husband, a banker from New Zealand. It's this area that best displays her favourite styles (industrial, vintage and mid-century modern), examples of which she gave interior designer Richy Ng, of Box Design, in the stack of cuttings that accompanied the couple's brief. A rugged black-steel bookcase in the study is a thing of beauty, as are the tubular steel-and-leather Bauhaus chairs sourced through Artek, the company founded by modernist Finnish architect Alvar Aalto.

Continuity is achieved by an impressive engineered-wood floor throughout much of

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the flat.

"I wanted a look that was industrial but that felt a bit refined, hence the whalebone floorboards," says Isobel, a Hong Kong-born Australian design writer.

To achieve the look, she had Ng install what was the single most expensive design feature in the flat. But it was worth it, she says.

Another design thread stitching together the apartment is the bold anime-style artwork the couple have collected over the years. They commissioned an additional piece specifically for the doors of a cabinet in their movie room. The energy of the Japanese art heightens the dynamism of the vast living area, which contains large and small sitting zones as well as a bar, a dining area and the television room.

"We lived in Japan and you can see [that influence] in our art," says Isobel. That also explains the Japanese-inspired slatted sliding doors to the en-suite bathroom in the couple's master bedroom, which is as big as the temporary flat they inhabited for more than a year while their home was being renovated.

At about 800 square feet, it comfortably accommodates his-and-hers dressing rooms and a sitting area with a wall-mounted TV. In this room and elsewhere, furniture by Hong Kong-based American interior designer Candace Campos complements such classics as the Pelikan chair, designed by Finn Juhl in 1940.

"She consulted on furniture and I bounced ideas off her," says Isobel, who had Campos design the bedside tables, a console, groovy bar stools and a hefty marble-topped dining table with farmhouse legs.

Some pieces, however, were must-haves for Isobel, who, because of her job, receives regular updates of furniture sales. Having her finger on the pulse gave her a headstart in snapping up the Crinoline high armchair (B&B Italia's rope version of the famous Peacock chair), which lords it over a small area near the bar that proved difficult to furnish.

Instead of disguising the space, Isobel created a feature nook distinguished by dark, dramatic wallpaper.

It's in this area that you can see how Ng fulfilled an important part of his brief: giving his clients room to entertain.

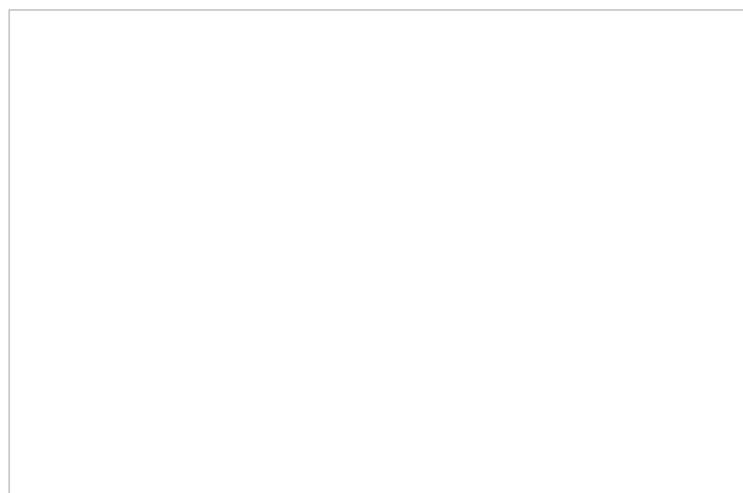
"We wanted a home where we could have people over for dinner, for drinks, barbecues; [one in which] we could divide the spaces and do all sorts of things in them.

"If I'm chilling out and Antony wants to do something else or if he's got friends over and wants to watch a game, they can go in [the movie room] and watch it," she says, demonstrating how the automated sliding doors, decorated with blackboard panels, close off the room.

And does the blackboard aspect hint at little hands scribbling in chalk one day?

"We designed for the possibility of kids," says Isobel.

Designing "functionality" into the apartment obviously included flexibility as well.



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Living area The open-plan living area boasts three distinctive spaces: the television

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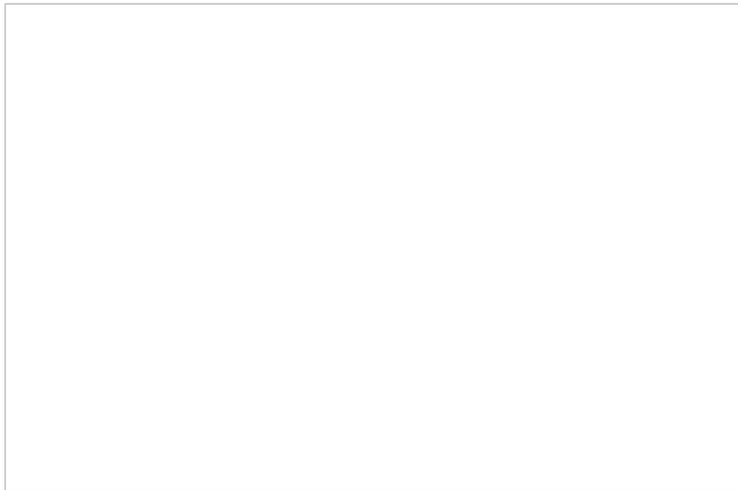
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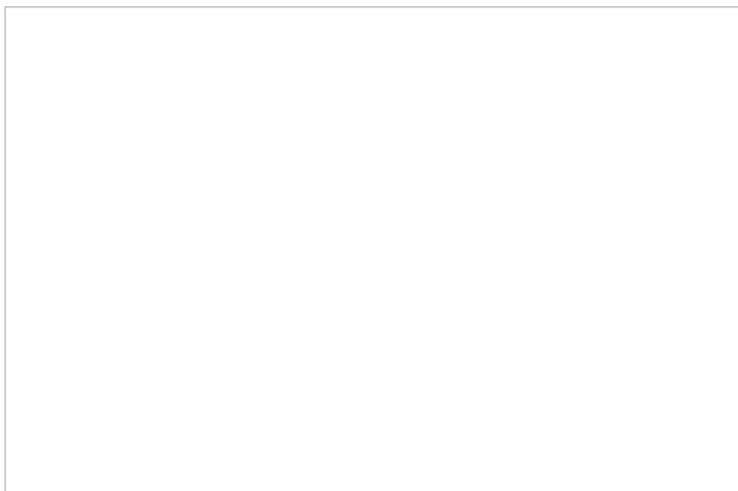
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room; the bar and cosy sitting area in the middle; and the sofa and dining area closest to the entrance. On the sofas, which were bought many years ago from Artura Ficus (15/F, Horizon Plaza, 2 Lee Wing Street, Ap Lei Chau, tel: 3105 3903), are cushions (HK\$695 each), by Tu Textiles, that are available at Tree (various locations, www.tree.com.hk (<http://www.tree.com.hk>)). The walnut-and-brass-trim coffee tables (HK\$10,000, large; HK\$8,000, small) and console (HK\$20,000) beneath the wall-mounted TV were designed by Candace Campos (www.idhongkong.com (<http://www.idhongkong.com>)). On the grey walls, which conceal a washroom, are an Andy Warhol original print acquired years ago; a photograph of Kate Moss, by Mary McCartney, bought through her studio (www.marymccartney.com (<http://www.marymccartney.com>)); and a René Gruau print bought many years ago at Manks (3/F, The Factory, 1 Yip Fat Street, Wong Chuk Hang, tel: 2522 2115). The floor lamp beside the bar was bought years ago. In front of the painted cupboard doors in the TV room is a pet Nestrest basket (HK\$7,610 and HK\$9,170, depending on size) from Dedon (248 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai, tel: 2529 7233).



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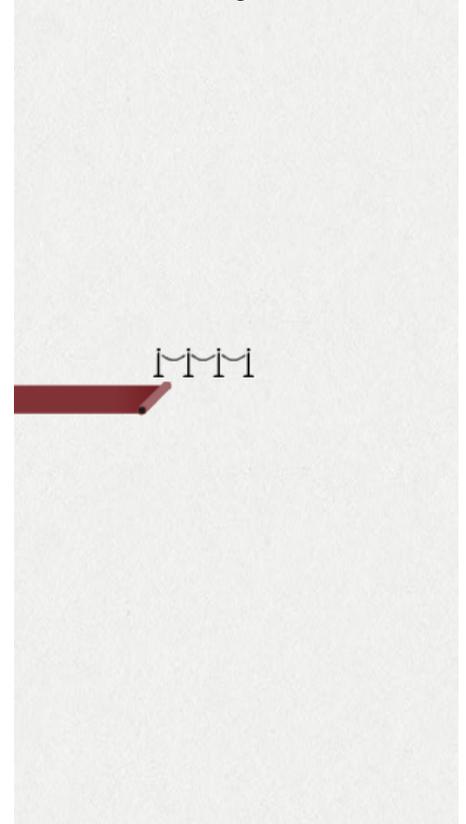
Dining area Around the marble and oak dining table (HK\$28,000), by Campos, are Thonet chairs bought online through Design Within Reach (www.dwr.com (<http://www.dwr.com>)) for US\$165 (hard seat) and US\$212.50 (mesh seat) each. Above the table are Lightyears' Caravaggio pendant lamps that came from a variety of sources, including Manks, Homeless (www.homeless.hk (<http://www.homeless.hk>)) and Nest in Britain (www.nest.co.uk (<http://www.nest.co.uk>)), where they range from £102.50 (HK\$1,360) to £212.50 each, depending on size. Beside the copper-plated main door, designed by Richy Ng of Box Design (21/F, Lucky Plaza, 315 Lockhart Road, Wan Chai, tel: 2573 3323), is a sideboard, also designed by Ng. Above it is a painting by Yoshitaka Amano bought through Art Statements Gallery (8/F, Gee Chang Hong Centre, Factory D, 65 Wong Chuk Hang Road, Wong Chuk Hang, tel: 2696 2300).



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En-suite bathroom Beside the Victoria + Albert tub, from colour.living (333 Lockhart Road, tel: 2295 6263), are tiles bought from Made a Mano (madeamano.com (<http://madeamano.com>)) and shipped to Hong Kong from Denmark. The bath and shower hardware, plus the taps, by Dornbracht, were bought online

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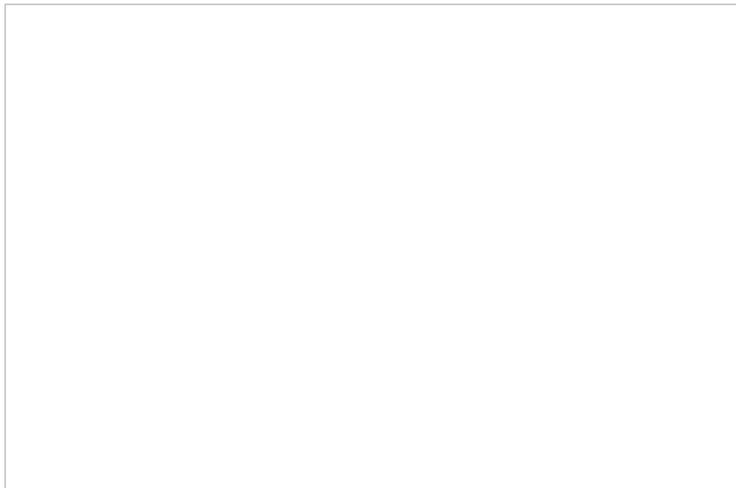


from Walton Bathrooms (www.waltonbathrooms.co.uk (<http://www.waltonbathrooms.co.uk>)). The basin units were custom made from granite.



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Bedroom The master suite includes two walk-in wardrobes, a sitting area and the en-suite bathroom. The four-poster bed (HK\$12,000) from Inside (12/F, Horizon Plaza, tel: 2873 1795) was given a new look with black lacquer. Campos designed the bedside tables (HK\$3,000 each). Flanking the bed are pendants lamps from Deem (252 Hollywood Road, Sheung Wan, tel: 2540 2011) that were originally sconces. The cockatoo picture was bought directly from Sydney-based photographer Leila Jeffreys (www.leilajeffreys.com (<http://www.leilajeffreys.com>)). The second artwork, by South African artist Carl Moore, came from ZZHK Gallery (3 Wa Lane, Sheung Wan tel: 3116 5595). The antelope fur rug and sheepskin came from Faux (3/F, Harbour Industrial Estate, 10 Lee Hing Street, Ap Lei Chau, tel: 2851 4040). The Finn Juhl Pelikan chair came from Roxy Klassik (www.roxyklassik.com (<http://www.roxyklassik.com>)) at a discount because it had been a showroom model.



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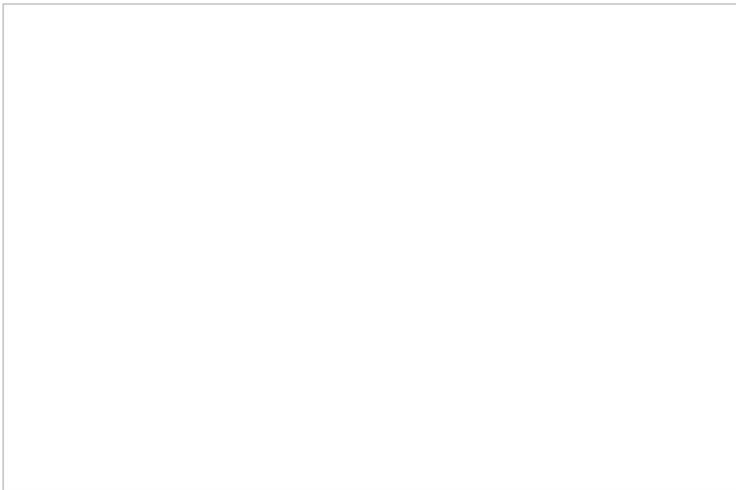
(https://www.scmp.com/sites/default/files/2014/07/25/designhometamsin_11002028_copy.jpg) **Nook** Closing off the TV room is an automated blackboard sliding door designed by Box Design, which also created the bar. The brass and leather bar stools (HK\$6,000 each) were designed by Campos and the pendant lights above (£90.80 each), by Lee Broom, came from Nest. Tucked into an area delineated with Cockatoo wallpaper, by Catherine Martin (www.catherinemartin.com (<http://www.catherinemartin.com>)), is a B&B Italia Crinoline high armchair and smaller armchair, both of which were acquired at a sale. The coffee table, by Finn Juhl, came from La Deux (6/F, The Factory, tel: 2955 7121) and the trolley was snapped up for a discount at the Circa pop-up store at The Space (210 Hollywood Road, tel: 9180 7716). The 1930s factory lights were bought years ago from General Store (41 Gage Street, Central, tel: 2851 8144).

Study Through the office are the bedrooms. The shelving and desks were by Box Design. The steel-and-leather Bauhaus chairs (HK\$7,000 each) came from Artek (12/F, Horizon Plaza, tel: 2515 2333). The whalebone flooring in engineered oak came from Admonter through Cartina International (21/F, Lucky Plaza, tel: 3105 0510).



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Cellar/kitchen The cellar, which holds about 300 bottles, is situated at the entrance to the kitchen. The Mater stools were bought in Denmark but are available in Hong Kong at Manks for HK\$2,090 each. Also from Manks was the Seppo Koho pendant lamp (HK\$8,920). The step stool (HK\$169.90) came from Ikea (various locations; www.ikea.com.hk (<http://www.ikea.com.hk>)).



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Off the wall Street artist Cara To (caratoes.tumblr.com (<http://caratoes.tumblr.com>)) from Belgium, created the artwork adorning the sliding doors of a cabinet in the TV room.

"Because we have all these women around [in other artwork], she wanted to do a warrior-princess type thing," says Isobel Lee. "The reason we painted a cupboard rather than a wall is so we could take it with us if we moved."

A Joan Miro print, sourced through ZZHK Gallery, hangs behind a sofa custom made by Box Design.

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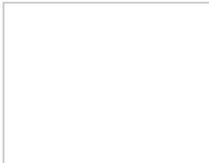
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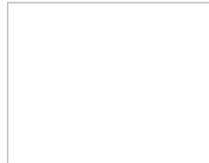
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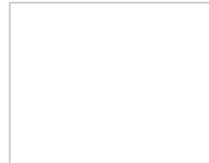
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