

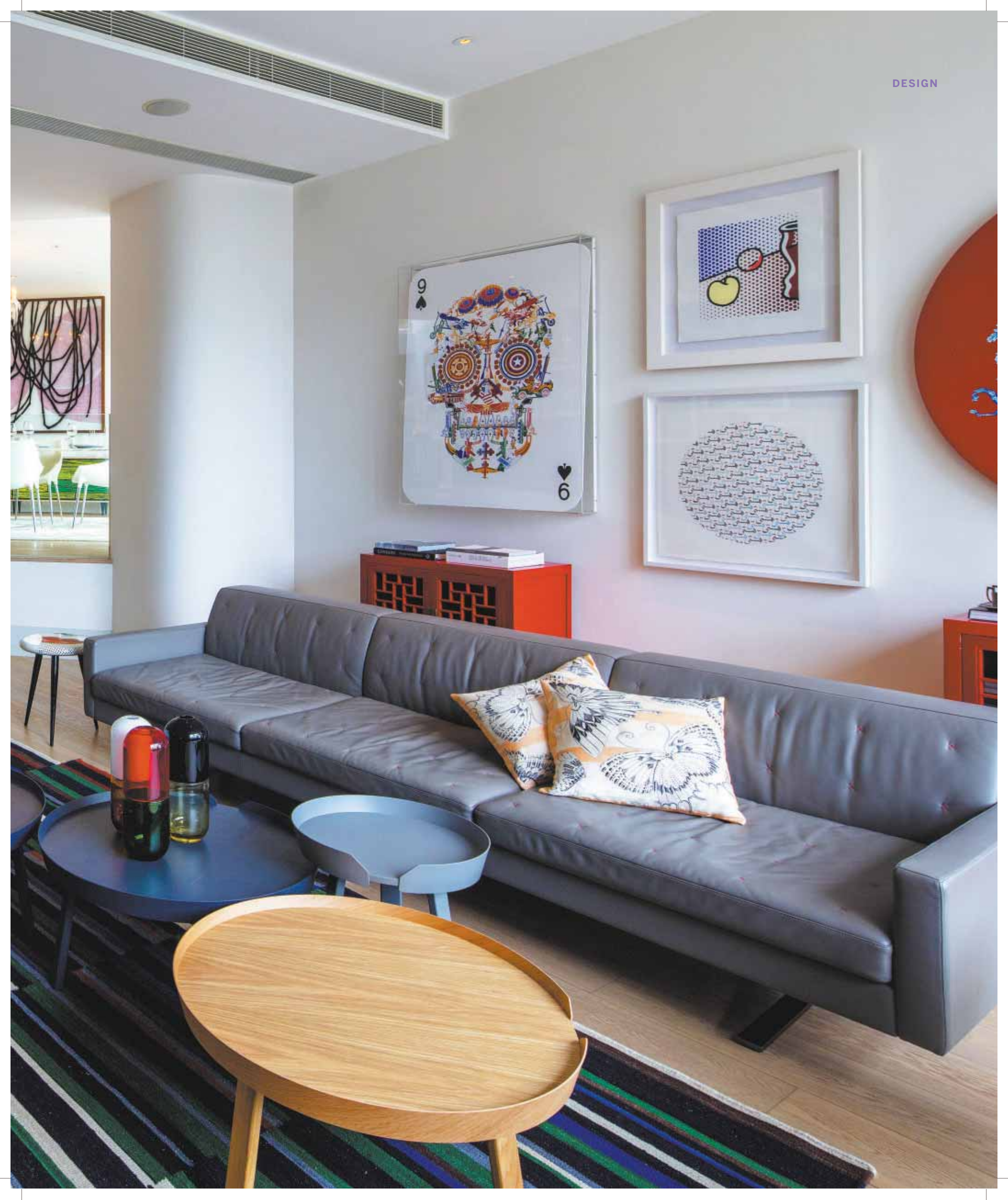
INTERIORS

Breaking the mould

A split-level house on The Peak spent three years unloved and unventilated until it was taken on by a family of four and transformed into a quirky home filled with jaw-dropping art.

TEXT **ADELE BRUNNER**
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Living room The Kennedee grey leather sofa and beige armchairs, all by Poltrona Frau, came from Farrington Interiors (farringtoninteriors.com) years ago. The Lattice 1 rug, by Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec, was from Nanimarquina (nanimarquina.com). The coffee tables were bought on sale (about HK\$40,000 for all) from Lane Crawford (lanecrawford.com). On one of the coffee tables are limited-edition Happy Pills vases, by Fabio Novembre for Venini, from Minotti (minotti.com). In the dining area, the *Grace* painting is by John Codling (artworkarchive.com) and the *Passion* chairs, by Philippe Starck, came from Cassina (cassina.com). The photographs on the dark blue-green wall are by Izima Kaoru (artnet.com/artists/izima-kaoru).





Dining area A chandelier from Moooi (moooi.com), no longer available, hangs above a Tulip dining table, by Eero Saarinen for Knoll (knoll.com). The graffiti art is by Julio Rondo (artnet.com/artists/julio-rondo). On the Wrongwoods sideboard (HK\$55,000 from Colourliving; colourliving.com) is a yellow vase, which was a gift.



When Shari Moss arrived in Hong Kong five years ago, she couldn't believe how lush it was. Her first flat, on The Peak, was surrounded by greenery and she was keen to replicate that after the redevelopment of their building forced Moss and her husband, Samuel, to move.

It is hard to believe now but the 3,500 sq ft house they eventually settled on, nearby, had been unoccupied for three years, and shut up without any ventilation or other means of combating Hong Kong's notorious humidity.

"There was mould all over every wall and you couldn't breathe for the smell," Moss says. "It was a health hazard – never mind unpleasant."

Samuel had seen the house on a previous round of viewings but had discounted it immediately because of its appalling state. The couple, both Brits who work in finance, revisited it only because they hadn't found anything else that came close in size and location.

"A lot of high-end rentals here come with an overload of gold and marble. I was the driving force behind our decision to take this house," says Moss, who describes her family of four as "nomadic" (before moving to Hong Kong, they lived in Britain and America). "I could see the house's potential – there were different rooms and levels that would suit everyone, big wall spaces and an abundance of storage – but I knew there was a lot of work to undertake."

Even though the Mosses rent the four-bedroom, four-

bathroom, three-split-level property, they were willing to invest in it emotionally and financially to make it their own. On went round-the-clock air conditioners, fans and dehumidifiers, and in came industrial cleaners, an army of tradesmen and interior designer Aviva Duncan.

"I had the inclination and desire to live in this house but I didn't have a clue how to tackle the interior – never mind all the mould," says Moss, too modest to acknowledge her own sense of style. "Every room is on an angle and, empty, it looked really daunting. Aviva added the know-how."

Together, the women transformed the ailing shell of a house into a dream home, without structurally altering a thing. They came up with unconventional ideas that included wallpapering the entire main bedroom with Fornasetti cloud illustrations, painting one wall in the living area deep blue-green, and making a large octagonal, custom-made rug the centrepiece in a basement play area for the children, aged eight and 10.

"We had high-velocity exchanges of ideas, often via WhatsApp," Duncan says. "Shari was very receptive to my quirky suggestions and it was so good to work with someone who had confidence in their taste and could make snap decisions."

Moss invested in a few big-ticket items, such as a new bed for the main bedroom and a set of coffee tables, but otherwise furnished the home with existing pieces, including a jaw-dropping art collection.



Playroom-cum-study

The Dédal shelves (£183/HK\$1,780 per unit), by Gubi, were from Nest (nest.co.uk) and the table (HK\$11,000) and bench (HK\$3,900) came from Tree (tree.com.hk). Dotted around the house are handmade African baskets, which cost about US\$85 to US\$100 each from Baba Tree (babatree.com). The octagonal rug (HK\$22,000) was custom designed by interior designer Aviva Duncan (avivaduncan.com). The Philippe Starck Ghost chair (HK\$2,850) was from Kartell (kartell.com).

Living-room detail (below)

Artworks include *War Skull (Nine of Spades)* and *Floral Dragon*, both by Jacky Tsai (jackytsai.com), *Still Life With Red Jar*, by Roy Lichtenstein, and an artwork with Arabic script. The red cupboards were bought years ago from a shop in Hong Kong that has since closed.



Entrance hall The Jackson coat and hat stand (HK\$14,600), by Dare Studio, came from Lane Crawford. The mirror next to it, from The Conran Shop (conranshop.co.uk), and the console table, from Nest, were both bought years ago, in London. A similar wall-mounted "hand" key holder, by Harry Allen, is available from Luminaire (luminaire.com) for US\$75. The fluorescent orange bench is a discontinued item from the Offcut collection by Tom Dixon (tomdixon.net).





Washroom Arance lemon and seafoam wallpaper, by Fornasetti for Cole & Sons (HK\$2,260 per roll, from Altfield Interiors; altfield.com.hk), brightens a washroom, which was otherwise left as it was.



“There is no rhyme or reason to how I choose art. It is mostly a reflection of my taste, but my husband has veto power,” Moss says. “I do the finding and he swipes right or left. He is more conservative and doesn’t appreciate a cacophony of patterns but I love a subversive element to design.”

That said, it was Samuel who hit on the idea of brightening a washroom off the dining area with unexpected wallpaper spotted with lemons.

The couple’s priority for their home was that it should be comfortable for everyone. Although their bedroom is more “grown-up”, they didn’t want any part of the house to be off-limits. The children were involved in the decor choices and allowed to pick out colours they wanted for their bedrooms (toned down on the quiet by Duncan). Consequently, the house bursts with life and style – a complete contrast to the state it was in when the couple first saw it.

“I have a lot of clients who are prepared to invest in the interior design of their rental property,” says Duncan, reflecting on how trends have changed in this respect. “These are people who want to be happy in their homes and don’t necessarily want to live with their landlord’s taste.” ■



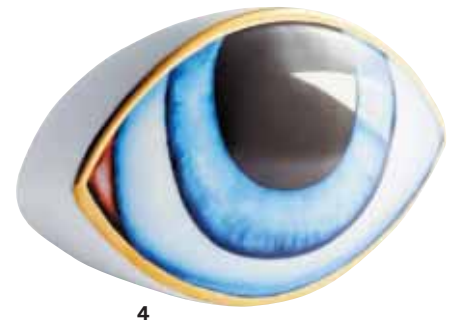
Daughter’s bedroom The bed (HK\$2,090) and bedside table (no longer available) both came from Ikea (ikea.com.hk). The neon-heart light cost US\$50 from the MOMA store (moma.org). The painting is by Nasser Ovissi (artnet.com/artists/nasser-ovissi). The tree bookcase (US\$999) is available from AllModern (allmodern.com).

TRIED + TESTED

Head over heels Shari Moss’ love (and abundance) of shoes led to the design and installation of wall-mounted shelves in the main bedroom. This would otherwise have been wasted space, and offers Moss instant and easy access to her favourite pairs. The angled shelves (HK\$11,000 in total), conceived and designed by Moss and Aviva Duncan, also afford instant gratification: you can see your shoes at a glance. The painting is by Ovissi.



Main bedroom The Nuvolette wallpaper, by Fornasetti for Cole & Sons, cost HK\$3,720 a roll from Altfield. The bed (HK\$75,000) came from Colourliving. The illustrations by Salvador Dali are from a family collection. The Star Silk rug, by Helen Amy Murray, was bought from The Rug Company (therugcompany.com) years ago. The two-tone English linen curtains, designed by Duncan, were made by Sun Sun Interiors (24 Fleming Road, Wan Chai, tel: 2511 2008).



OBJECTS OF DESIRE
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Heavy duty

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1 Anchor, €200 (HK\$1,750), by Bozarthfornell, from Daniel, daniel-edition.com. **2** Bird, €173, by Tapio Wirkkala for Kultakeskus, from Finnish Design Shop, finnishdesignshop.com. **3** Høglund Aqua Glass, HK\$700, by Kosta Boda (1960), from Manks, imanks.com. **4** Lito, £280 (HK\$2,727), from L'Objet, l-objet.com. **5** Rock Weight 2.5kg, HK\$2,000, from Tom Dixon, tom-dixon.net. **6** Jellyfish, HK\$259, from Zara Home, zarahome.com/hk.



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