



HOME

Hello sunshine

The tenant of a Stanley flat opted for a bright, tropical aesthetic to complement its stunning beachside location.

Text **Charmaine Chan** / Photography **John Butlin**

Interior designer Eve Mercier takes setting up home in her stride. Having moved 13 times in 20 years, she simply kicked into gear last year upon hearing her family would again be living in Hong Kong.

From London, Mercier, a Parisian mother of four, found an apartment in Stanley online.

With the help of floor plans and photographs, she designed the interiors to accommodate existing furniture and

art. That done, she custom-ordered a few extra pieces that would arrive the same day movers were scheduled to pack her family's belongings into a container to be shipped here.

Once settled in the 2,000 sq ft, three-bedroom rental apartment, Mercier made the schlep to Sham Shui Po, where she bought fabrics for items such as blinds and duvet covers. She knew the area because, during the late 1990s, when she first lived in Hong Kong, she had designed

fashion accessories and shopped for materials there.

Mercier says the airy flat, which is blessed with a bright, beach-holiday feel, was unlike her previous homes in France, Germany, Switzerland and, most recently, Britain.

"It has the sea, greenery, flowers, lots of sun; this place puts you in a good mood," Mercier says, explaining that she chose an aesthetic to complement the flat's location, overlooking St Stephen's

Beach. "I wanted a fresh California tropical look - clean, with a white background and strong colours."

One of four apartments in a low-rise building, Mercier's pad bears the handiwork of architects David Clovers, most strikingly in a feature wooden ceiling that sinuously connects the shared stairwell with the apartment's entrance. That area, by the door, segues into a bar counter wrapped with warm timber surfaces that are comfortably



2



4



5



3

rounded and angled but at the same time undeniably bold.

After making a few small changes to fittings in various rooms (a wardrobe in the master bedroom was removed; a bank of cabinets in the dining area was replaced with open shelving), Mercier mixed and matched, taking care not to fill the rooms excessively and pairing flea-market finds with designer classics. Among her keepsakes are an Eero Saarinen Tulip table, Hans Wegner

Wishbone chairs and an Ingo Maurer Poul Poul lamp that resembles a flower, with delicate stamens emerging from the centre.

In keeping with the tropical vibe, bunches of yellow dancing ladies and purple phalaenopsis orchids produce explosions of colour and continue a floral theme seen in accessories such as cushions and vintage lamps. A living room wall also pops with the primary hues of watercolour prints by Anish Kapoor. >>

1 Living area Davidclovers (1/F, 123 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai, tel: 6259 0433), the architects who undertook the restoration of the building and renovation of the four apartments within it, designed the open bar area leading to the entrance, using wooden surfaces that "leak" into the shared stairwell to connect public and private areas. The irregular-patterned rug, bought years ago in Marrakesh, Morocco, anchors a living area featuring a pair of slatted-back 1960s armchairs from London's Gallery 25 (www.gallery25.co.uk), and a 40s day bed, which was picked up at a flea market in L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue, Provence, France. Both were moved from Eve Mercier's previous home, in London, to Hong Kong. The Sori Yanagi Butterfly Stool is available in maple (HK\$6,999) and Palisander wood (HK\$7,999) from Aluminium (various locations; www.aluminium-furniture.com).

2 Dining area The Eero Saarinen tulip table (about HK\$70,000 from Lane Crawford, various locations; www.lanecrawford.com) is teamed with Hans Wegner Wishbone chairs, available in oak with an oil finish, for HK\$7,700 each, at Manks (3/F, The Factory, 1 Yip Fat Street, Wong Chuk Hang, tel: 2522 2115). The blinds, made with raw linen, came from Ming Tak Textile Trading (187 Ki Lung Street, Sham Shui Po, tel: 2398 7111). On the shelving are three large artworks: two Rina Banerjee watercolours, from Thomas Gibson Fine Art in London (centre and right; www.thomasgibsonfineart.com) and a Gary Hume print (far left) bought years ago. Next to the Hume print is an Ingo Maurer Poul Poul lamp bought years ago in Paris.

3 Living area detail Anish Kapoor watercolour prints, from Paragon Press in London (www.paragonpress.co.uk), add punch to the airy living area. Just before coming to Hong Kong, Mercier had the sofa made, for about HK\$40,000, by The Sofa & Chair Company in London (www.thesofoandchair.co.uk). The floor lamp, which came from her previous home, was picked up at a flea market in L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue. The 70s lamp with black shade came from the flea market at Clignancourt, Paris, and the bronze coffee table from Hubert Le Gall, also in Paris (www.hubertlegall.fr). The bamboo ladder (about HK\$200) is available from hardware shops in Hong Kong.

4 Garden The table (about HK\$2,500) and chairs (about HK\$3,000 each), all from The Conran Shop in London (www.conranshop.co.uk), sit in the communal garden overlooking St Stephen's Beach.

5 Twins' room The blue-and-white rug, from Madeline Weinrib in New York (madelineweinrib.com), cost about HK\$7,000. The bedcovers are made with fabric from Sweden's Svenskt Tenn (www.svenskttenn.se). The table and chairs came from a vintage-furniture dealer in Nantes, France, as did the bamboo mirrors. The floor lamp was bought years ago from Les Couilles Du Chien in London (www.lescouillesduchien.com).

Good life Design

In front of those, an irregular fishnet-patterned Moroccan rug teams up with a French day bed, on which Mercier rests while speaking about her ongoing design plans – not only for the flat, but farther afield, too. Those include installing, on a corridor wall, two-metre-tall teardrop-shaped mirrors (still being made at the time of our visit) and – somewhat more ambitiously – setting up the Insight School of Interior Design in Hong Kong.

“Everyone is crying out for good interior designers,” Mercier says, enthusiastically outlining how some aspects will be inspired by KLC, the school she attended in London, which led to a job at interior-design firm Candy & Candy.

“I had to follow my husband everywhere so every time I had to change career,” she says, struggling to remember the sequence of their many moves.

Her jobs have included writing for an art newspaper, working for art auctioneers, a move into fashion and then designing interiors.

Unsurprisingly, Insight, slated to open in November, will offer classes in art and design history. It will also try to instil in students Mercier’s own abhorrence for designer rip-offs.

“We will get contractors to take them to building sites so they can see good finishes,” she says. “And we will show them, for example, a real Hans Wegner Wishbone chair and one from Shenzhen, which won’t stand the test of time.”

No doubt students will also be shown how to shop judiciously.

“Not everything needs to be super designed and expensive,” Mercier says. “I’d rather buy less but buy right.”



TRIED + TESTED

Wonderful wicker Eve Mercier (tel: 5975 7111; www.evermercierinteriors.com) brought out of storage baskets she bought years ago in Cape Cod, in the United States, and used them to decorate a bare wall in the dining area. They hang simply on small nails.



6&7 Master bedroom The vintage armchair, by Ernest Race, that Mercier reupholstered in Pierre Frey fabric, was bought at Alfies Antique Market in London (www.alfiesantiques.com). The art on the wall also came from there. The side tables (about £350/HK\$4,250), one by the bed and another by the armchair, came from Chelsea Textiles in London (www.chelseatextiles.com/uk) and are part of its Mid-Century Modern Range. The 60s mother-of-pearl lamp, with raw-silk shade, was bought years ago from the market at Clignancourt. The blinds here and elsewhere in the flat were made by Curtain Supplier (1/F, 117 Queen’s Road East, tel: 2529 2727). The four-poster bed has moved with Mercier for the past 20 years and came from The Conran Shop. The stone-base bedside lamp came from the flea market at Clignancourt years ago. The cushions are covered in ikat fabric by Madeline Weinrib.

8 Balcony The master bedroom balcony is used as a lounge area, with a mattress and cushions covered in linen (HK\$20 per yard) from Kin Shing Piece Goods (189 Ki Lung Street, tel: 2390 2154).