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Tiny tree-house-inspired Hong Kong apartment takes its design cues from the forested hillside it faces

A young professional's cosy 370 sq ft flat in Kowloon – complete with elevated 'bunk bed' – blends seamlessly with its leafy surroundings

BY **CATHERINE SHAW**

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Big is not necessarily better, as Hong Kong architect Nelson Chow Chi-wai's design for a 370 sq ft home for a young client proves.

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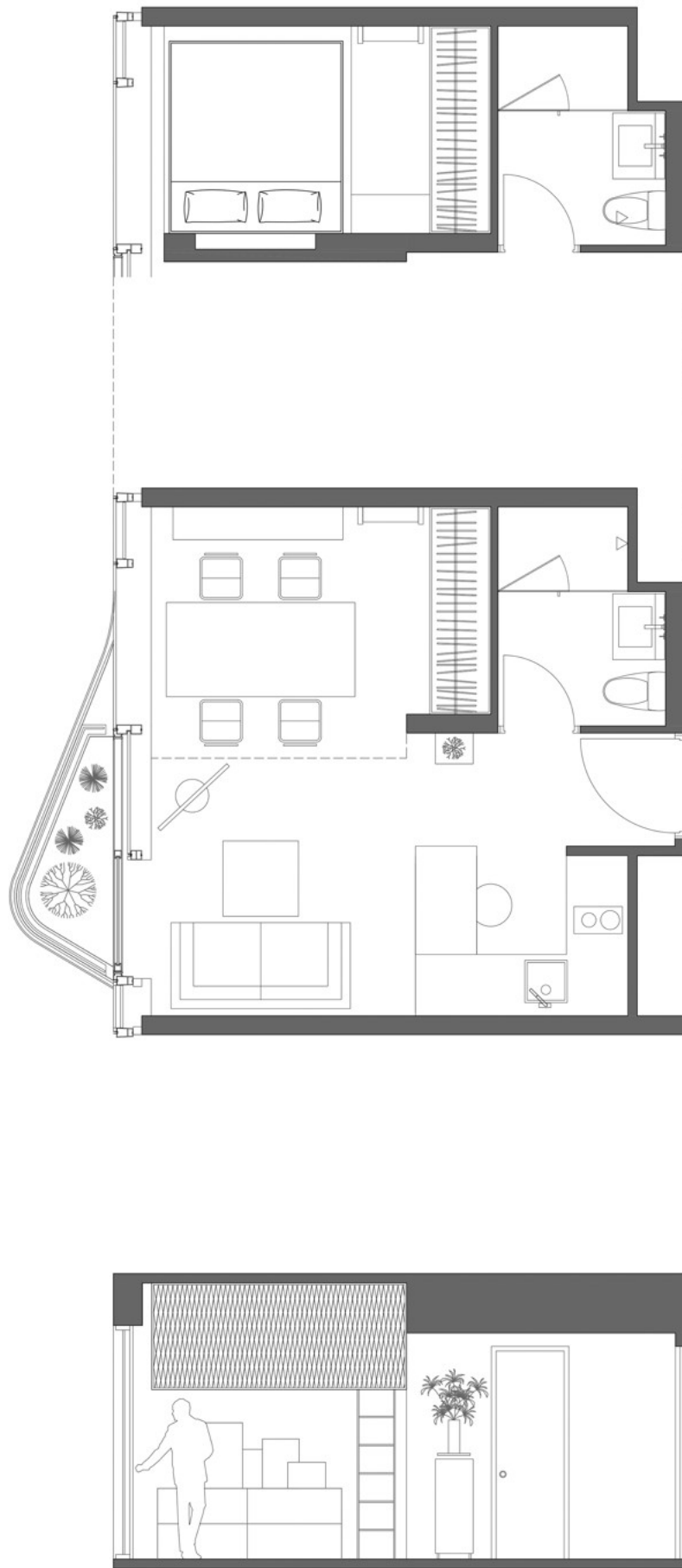
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“Thoughtful design is transformative even for the smallest of spaces,” says Chow, of NC Design & Architecture. “But it is more than simply a question of efficiency and functionality because a real home also needs to be cosy and should reflect the personality of the person who lives there.”

Consisting of a living area, kitchen, bathroom and an elevated double “bunk bed”, the playful tree-house design concept takes inspiration from the view through picture windows of a densely forested hillside in Kowloon.

“The apartment is very much a city-style loft but still feels like it is in the forest,” Chow says. “It was obvious that the interiors should reflect both its urban and natural settings.”



One of Chow's designs for the flat.

The apartment, in a new 30-storey building, originally featured a single-level layout with one bedroom. Removing the bedroom's wall and raising the sleeping space above the dining area opened up the living room, giving the home a more spacious feel.

The kitchen and bathroom, both featuring a sleek contemporary design, were left untouched. Keen to blur the boundary between indoors and outdoors, Chow painted the interior walls a dark moody blue and added a bougainvillea tree to the mini-garden-like, glass-sided deck, to draw the eye outside.

Spacious Hong Kong flat goes from traditional to futuristic

Preferring clean, uncluttered lines, the designer was similarly restrained with furnishings and accessories.

“I wanted to create a calm feeling that is best achieved with layers of natural materials like wood, stone and glass in subtle colours,” he explains. “The darker blue tone adds a nice touch of contrast to the white ceiling and lush green trees outside.”

Designers work magic in a 309 sq ft Hong Kong microflat

For storage, Chow introduced a bento-box-style shoe cabinet near the front door, while clothes and paraphernalia are stored out of sight in a large double-height cupboard near the dining area.

Making artful use of the arboreal theme, he clad the 40-sq-ft cloistered sleeping space in pinewood, adding a built-in shelf, reading light and a long horizontal window with a view of the hillside. A sturdy ladder attached to the wall plays on the idea of a tree house.

How clever design made 270 sq ft Hong Kong flat a spacious home for couple and dog

The open-plan living room and kitchen area now comfortably accommodate about half a dozen guests. Chow was also responsible for furnishing the new space, adding a collection of low-sitting modern and vintage pieces in an earthy palette.

“The apartment is flooded with natural light so it was important to keep the interiors airy and light, maximising sun exposure throughout,” he says.

Hong Kong interior designer makes son’s microflat fun, liveable space

When it comes to creating a home in a compact space, Chow says design should be about creating areas that feel unique and deliver a fresh, urban aesthetic.

“A home needs to be part of your identity, so it is worth being bold and taking a risk with reflecting your own personality and creating a one-of-a-kind retreat.”



Dark blue walls and a bougainvillea break down the boundary between indoors and outdoors. Photography: Dennis Lo

Living area The sofa was bought many years ago from a shop that has since closed. Nelson Chow, of [NC Design & Architecture](http://www.ncda.biz) (<http://www.ncda.biz>), had it reupholstered for HK\$6,000 at [bFelix](http://www.bfelix.com) (<http://www.bfelix.com>). The coffee table comprises a marble top (HK\$2,000) from Wing Ming Marble (160 Lockhart Road, Wan Chai, tel: 2598 8430) on a brass base (HK\$6,000) by Jottergoods, from [Archetypal](http://www.archetypal.hk) (<http://www.archetypal.hk>). The bougainvillea tree (HK\$6,500 from the Prince Edward flower market) is in a lightweight fibreglass pot (HK\$2,500) from [Ovo](http://www.ovo.com.hk) (<http://www.ovo.com.hk>). The BeoVision 11 television cost HK\$75,000 from [Bang & Olufsen](http://www.bang-olufsen.com) (<http://www.bang-olufsen.com>), while the Tom Dixon pendant light was HK\$2,600 from Archetypal.



The kitchen was left unchanged. Photography: Dennis Lo

Living area The kitchen and bar were designed by the developer and not changed. The Hans Wegner CH56 stool (HK\$16,000 for two) was found at [Amelie & Tulips](http://www.amelieandtulips.com) (<http://www.amelieandtulips.com>). The ceiling spotlights throughout the apartment are by [Oraled](http://www.oraledltd.com) (<http://www.oraledltd.com>) and cost a total of HK\$12,000.



Pinewood ceiling panelling distinguishes the dining area. Photography: Dennis Lo

Dining area Chow added pinewood panelling on the ceiling above the dining area to help distinguish it from the living space. The Drop Chairs (HK\$4,000 each) were from Lane Crawford. The Japanese ceramic tableware was sourced from [Klondike](http://www.the-klondike.com) (<http://www.the-klondike.com>) and the cutlery from [Cutipol](http://www.cutipol.pt) (<http://www.cutipol.pt>). The linear ceiling light (HK\$6,000) was custom made by New Bright Lighting Engineering (56/F, Everest Industrial Centre, 396 Kwun Tong Road, Kwun Tong, tel: 3188 4995).



Photography: Dennis Lo

Dining area The facade of the bed space features a lattice-like pattern made up of Mutina Tierras series wall tiles (HK\$7,000 in total), designed by Patricia Urquiola and bought from [Anta](http://www.antahk.com) (<http://www.antahk.com>). The Danish walnut cabinet was bought at a shop in Ap Lei Chau that has since closed. The B&O BeoPlay A8 stereo music system was HK\$9,000 from [Lane Crawford](http://www.lanecrawford.com) (<http://www.lanecrawford.com>). The ceramic-top dining table also came from a shop that has since closed. The glossy black bento storage drawer unit on wheels (HK\$6,000) and, above it, the marble shelf (HK\$2,500) were both designed by Konstantin Grcic for [Magis](http://www.magis.com.hk) (<http://www.magis.com.hk>). The Alvar Aalto-designed Iittala vase on the shelf cost HK\$2,500 from [Manks](http://www.manks.com) (<http://www.manks.com>).



The sleeping area. Photography: Dennis Lo

Sleeping area The bed space, made by Crownwell Contracting (6/F, Po Shing Industrial Building, 23 Tai Yau Street, San Po Kong, tel: 8101 6467) cost HK\$80,000, including the pinewood finishes, ladder and safety railing. The Rich Brilliant Willing-design wall sconces cost HK\$5,000 each from New York-based [Matter](http://www.mattermatters.com) (<http://www.mattermatters.com>).



Photography: Dennis Lo

Dining and sleeping area Chow painted the lower half of the cupboard the same Dulux dark blue (HK\$20,000 in total) as the living and dining spaces for visual continuity. To reinforce the cosy, Scandi-cabin aesthetic of the elevated bed space, the upper level is clad in matching pinewood.

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Tile work Nelson Chow created the artwork above the sofa with a black Gigacer tile (HK\$1,200) sourced from Anta and framed by Crownwell for HK\$4,000. The 5kg ceramic tile has a subtle bumpy texture that catches light at different angles and changes the appearance of the slab.



Photography: Dennis Lo

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