



# A Dynamic Design

BY REBECCA SIMPSON

## Finding green-spiration

So, who lives in such a precious premises? MICHELLE KOLLER, founder of Tequila Kola – she’s been in this Hong Kong apartment for 16 years now. In that time, it’s had many incarnations as a family home. Most recently, as both of Michelle’s children have moved on to university studies and careers abroad, it’s been given a new life.

The living room is resplendent with greenery. “The inspiration was to do a live wall, as in, all green. The problem with a live wall in a residential space like this is the drainage and the insects – it’s tough to pull off.”

So, how did they compromise? “We decided to have as much greenery in the cabinetry as possible. That way I can highlight and feature my favourite antiques and collectibles.”

This solution is a win-win for Michelle. She gets her green wall aesthetic but also the chance to showcase her collectibles. Over the years, she has amassed a beautiful collection, with pieces from Hong Kong, India and beyond. “It’s a dynamic design. I’m swapping things out almost every week. I have a similar cabinet in my office with a lot of my collectibles there too. I don’t like to get rid of anything! So, I rotate from my office to home.”

“You must hold on to the items that you truly love!”

## Old memories in a new context

Since moving into this apartment, Michelle has redesigned every few years. Throughout each of these redesigns, she ensures her most-loved items are stored, rather than sold. She enjoys bringing much-loved items out of storage, years later, to see old memories in a new context.

We visit a mountain retreat brimming with flowing greenery and indulgent fabric.

**H**ong Kong Parkview is something of an oasis – the perfect meeting point of convenience and calm. It’s an easy 10-minute drive to Causeway Bay, one of HK’s commercial pulse-points. However, walking into this apartment you really couldn’t feel further away from the neon explosion happening down the hill.

It’s calm. And so beautiful. The view from this home, and many others at Parkview, is an uninterrupted mountain panorama. Which sounds like a dream, but from a design perspective it can be a tough one – that view is a bona fide scene-stealer!

The design of this space contends equally with the view. It’s a luscious home where the greenery of that epic panorama is not only honoured but echoed in the interior. Greenery spills from ginger jars and shelving, luring mother nature off the mountain to nestle among the delicate accessories and sumptuous fabrics. It’s opulent and welcoming, all at once.





**How to capture your redesign inspiration**

If you're about to tackle a redesign, or you're even just incubating some ideas for a new look, Michelle recommends creating a mood board. "Mood boards are always good when you're trying to work through a redesign. Try taking photos of items you like or looks that inspire you and print them out. Create a collage with those printouts, or create one digitally on your computer." She suggests, "It's better to work with a visualisation that's bigger than your phone."

This tangible mood board should also feature fabrics and other samples you like. As you explore and uncover new textures and hues, these can be added.

"Some people get intimidated by the thought, but you can start with just about anything. Begin with an A4 piece of paper or two, and start collecting!"

Michelle also has some advice for deciding on your final room design. She says the best process for redesign is to "work from the floor up: start with rugs, then cushions, sofas, lamps and walls."



One of those items is her antique merry-go-round circus horse. The horse was purchased in Jaipur in Rajasthan many years ago. She says, "The original stand isn't perfect, but I like that. Imperfect is perfect."

"Everything is cyclic; you must hold on to the items that you truly love. Right now, I love that the 80s are back!"

The 1980s were a bold time, and that audacious spirit is reflected in the bold orange hues that dominate from the balcony through to the entrance. "My favourite colour is red, but I've exhausted red. Orange is still in the same family; they're related and it works as a transition."

The orange, purple and teal tones in the bohemian pure silk rug work as the perfect link from the gutsy lounge and dining area into the more subdued and sensual fourth bedroom. This room now serves as a media room, with a bifold wall that can be drawn to create privacy when guests come to visit.

**Choosing, upcycling, refabricating**

Michelle reflects on her sofa choice, a confident orange in an indulgent and richly textured fabric that compels you to touch it. "White looked good and was safe. But I couldn't bring myself to do it; it was *too* safe."

She shares some practical advice for choosing the right sofa hue. "A swatch can be hard to work with, so try to find a big cushion or have a floor cushion made in the fabric or colour you want." This block of colour will allow you to better understand how it will work in the space.

When it comes to redesigning or refreshing for a new season, Michelle urges us all to upcycle the furniture we covet. "You don't have to scrap things; try reupholstering first. You can save the base and give it a second life. Then it's custom made – no one else will have that piece!"

Her passion for reimagining furniture has been a life-long affair. "That's my background – pattern making and textile design," she explains. "Textiles are part of our DNA at Tequila Kola. Textures and textures are what set us apart."

One of her favourite items is a dome armchair (pictured). It's recently been reupholstered with five contrasting fabrics and stud detailing. "It's a great reading chair -like a cone of silence!"

Refabricating and reupholstering aren't just about aesthetics. Michelle explains that this type of treatment is the perfect way to give furniture a new lease of life – for example, if teenagers have treated something harshly. "Reuse, relive, recondition," she suggests.

It also sounds like a great way to get reluctant family members to agree to a revamp, especially if they're attached to a favourite sofa. "There's no need to give up favourites. In fact, they can be improved upon and given even more longevity with a bit of TLC."



**Creative apps that Michelle loves**

It's not only about old-school mood boards; Michelle can't get by without these apps.

**Pinterest:** "I use Pinterest a lot! I tend to collect references and items in colour schemes – so, I would collate references in oranges and raspberries together in the one scheme."

**Houzz:** This is a popular app that can help with anything from a full build to an aesthetic revamp. "I don't use Houzz as much but it's definitely worth looking at when you're in the process of a redesign."



*Michelle*  
recommends...

**Wattis Fine Art** | [wattis.com.hk](http://wattis.com.hk)

“The gallery in Soho is a treasure trove of beautiful pieces. He’s one of the best map collectors and curators in Hong Kong.” At this boutique artisan gallery, you’ll find recoloured antique sketches and interesting images of Hong Kong at the turn of last century.

**Eico Paints** | [eico.hk](http://eico.hk)

“Eico paints can mix any colour. I often bring in a swatch and they make the exact match. It’s a technical process; they start with white paint and can recreate your chosen colour multiple times. It’s perfect for touch-ups.”

**Designer Guild** | [designersguild.com](http://designersguild.com) | available in HK at Tequila Kola

Many of the indulgent fabrics and wall coverings in Michelle’s home have been sourced through Designer Guild. This stable of fabric designer labels includes Ralph Lauren and Christian Lacroix.

**Kare Design** | [kare-design.com](http://kare-design.com) | available in HK at Tequila Kola

The nest of tables in the sitting area is sourced from Kare Design, a brand that offers unique pieces for design lovers across an extensive range of furniture, accessories and lighting. “Kare Design bars are fantastic. They’re the perfect size for Hong Kong apartments and they come with lots of storage.”

**Plants**

“I love to help local businesses – it’s important to support our local industries and appreciate what we have domestically. I like to give my plant-purchasing business to local Wan Chai and Happy Valley flower markets.” *eu*

