

NEW LEASE OF LIFE

BY KATE FARR PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEWART SHAW

We revisit a reworked and revitalised Pok Fu Lam apartment that offers a family of growing teens a serene and stylish space that's great for work and play.



CHIRSTINE SMITH-MANN is a Hong Kong-born marketing and PR veteran who is renowned for her flair with interiors; in fact, her apartment featured in the launch issue of *Expat Living!* So, when she decided to remodel her home last year, we couldn't wait to take a peek at the new and improved look.

Christine first moved to Pok Fu Lam from the Mid-Levels nearly 20 years ago, and is yet to be tempted elsewhere. "We found our first proper Pok Fu Lam home in Upper Baguio Villas in around 1998 and I just loved it. The views, the space, the drive here and the supermarket – it ticked all the boxes." Christine loves the location so much, in fact, that she has lived in no less than four apartments within the development. "Originally, there was no Cyberport – we survived the entire construction period! It was worth it, because now we have a cinema, a beautiful park, a Starbucks, and restaurants all less than five minutes away, which is a huge bonus!"

For Christine, partner James and her teenage children Daniel, Christopher and Charleigh, that accessibility and consistency is a huge plus. "Our kids have known nothing other than Baguio, and their schools have always been within five kilometres of our home, which is really convenient."

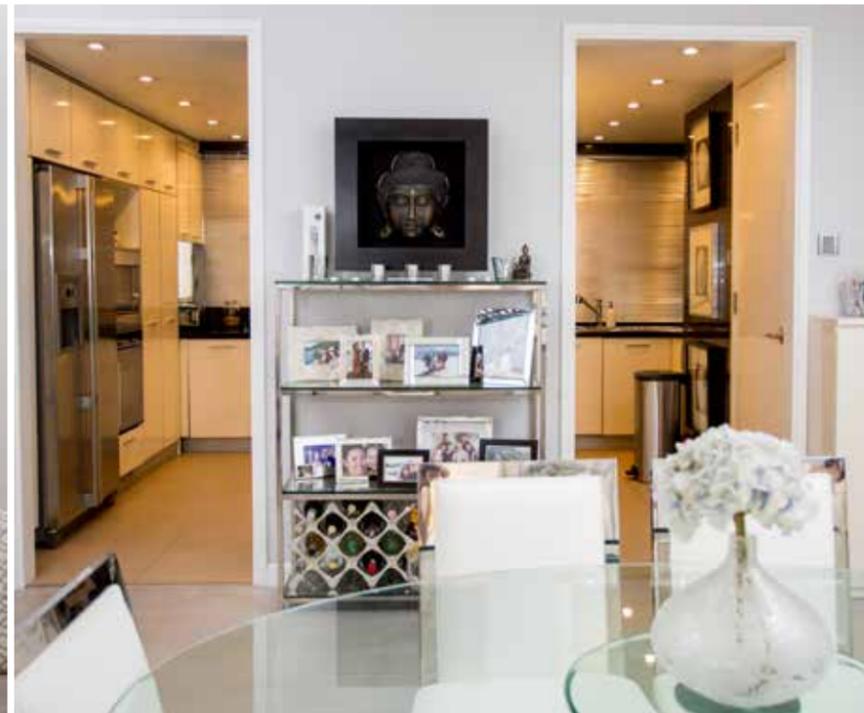
As the founder of two businesses – her eponymous PR firm Smith-Mann Communications, and party-planning business Eezy Peezy Parties – working from home is often unavoidable for Christine. But with five people sharing the three-bed, 1,300-square-foot apartment, she has been compelled to come up with some creative solutions when it comes to carving out a dedicated workspace. "I have a home office but I don't have the luxury of having a separate room for it. Instead, I designed and built a piece of furniture in the dining room that looks like a sideboard where I can hide all my office equipment." This smart design has hidden benefits. "When we have company, I just hide everything away and it doubles up as a splendid surface on which to place wine!"



When asked what initially triggered the apartment's extensive renovation, Christine cites her daughter as the inspiration. "For Charleigh's 12th birthday last year, I suggested that, rather than buy presents, we renovate her bedroom to bring it more up-to-date with her age. From that came the idea to make a few more upgrades."

This is something of an understatement; Christine actually had all three bedrooms plus the living and dining room remodelled, as well as significant work done on the flooring that runs throughout the apartment. "One thing that had always frustrated me was my decision to keep the original floors that were here when we moved in, which were a typical orangey-wood colour. For years, I'd wanted to sand them back and paint them grey or white, but the logistics of doing so while living here were too great." Fortunately, a well-timed holiday combined with the contact of a trusted contractor were the keys to achieving the "Hamptons beach house" look she had originally envisaged. "I decided to bite the bullet and go for it. Our contractor tried a little test spot in the corner but I'm really bad at looking at a four-inch sample of anything, so I took a huge leap of faith and instructed him to go for it!"

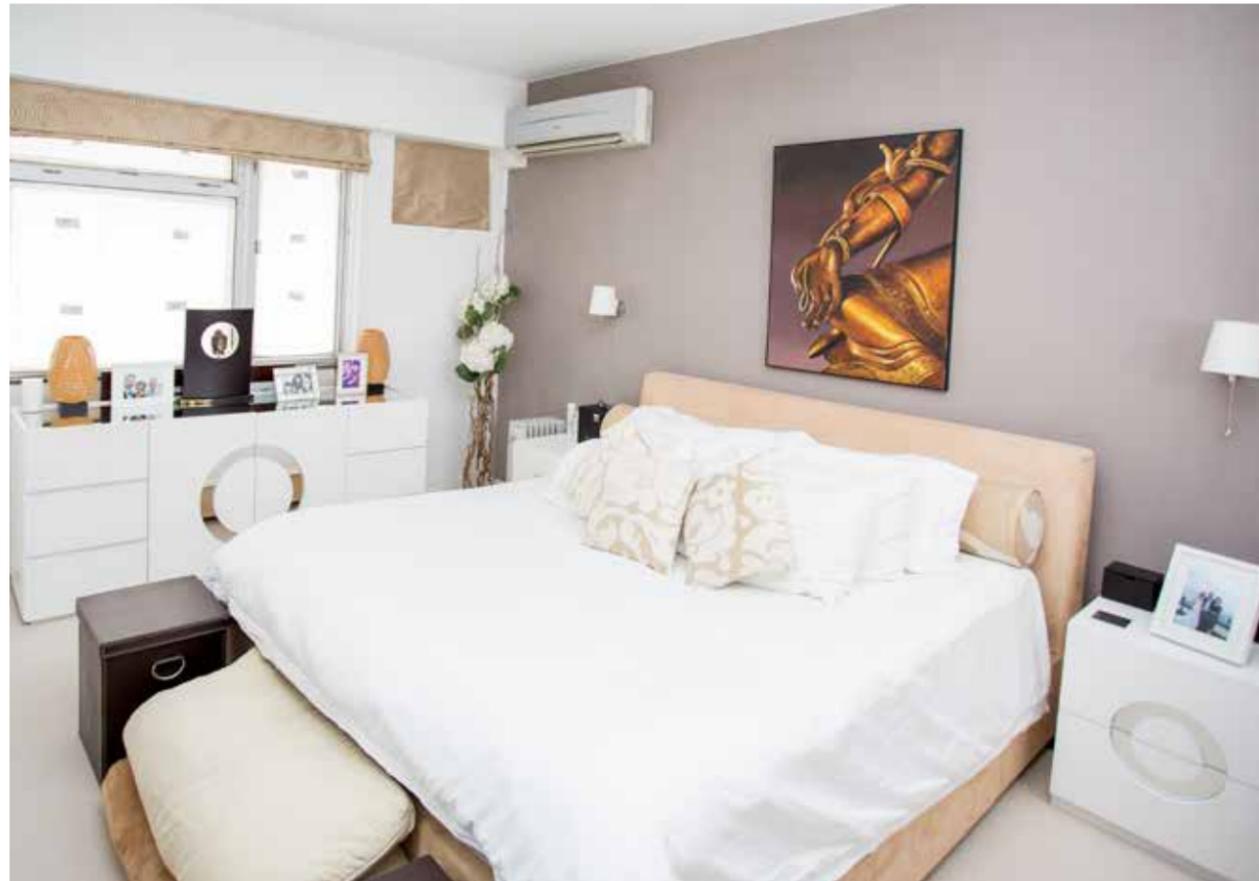
The gamble paid off, with the project giving the home the facelift that Christine had been craving. "The contractor was fabulous; he came up with some drawings for the kids' rooms and after a couple of alterations here and there, we went away for a month and gave him the keys! We literally let him do everything without us even being in the country



to monitor the progress. We returned home a month later to pretty much a brand new apartment – and I couldn't be happier." She adds that the decision to sand the floors back and repaint them was "the best I've made"; "It totally transformed the living space into exactly what I had always dreamed of."

Christine's daughter is equally as thrilled with her spruced-up room, which now boasts every teen girl's dream come true – a walk-in wardrobe. And Daniel and Christopher are also enjoying their room, which has been carefully planned to improve their shared and private space. "Both boys have their own 'cubbies', there is more storage space than we have ever had, they have a desk and there is still room for them to move around." She jokes, "On the basis that the kids go straight to their rooms and pretty much stay there until they smell food, I can only assume that they are happy and comfortable in their spaces!"

When it comes to significant pieces of furniture, Christine's collection has a story to tell. "My 'thrones' are practically antiques! I acquired them when the old Furama Hotel closed down in 2001, and they sold the entire contents. A couple of months ago, I reupholstered them in white leather to match the new refurbishment; they're still in great condition and are very comfortable."



As for her favourite spot in her beautifully revamped home, Christine thinks for a moment. "I would say the living-dining room, because aesthetically it's exactly how I want it now. When I get home, I genuinely feel a sense of relief, comfort and serenity in my surroundings." *a*

Christine's Recommendations

Bowerbird Home
8/F, Horizon Plaza, 2 Lee Wing Street, Ap Lei Chau
2552 2727 | bowerbird-home.com

Fink
20/F, Horizon Plaza
3520 2526 | fink-shop.com

Habitat
15/F, Windsor House, 311 Gloucester Road, Causeway Bay
2310 1964 | habitat.eu/shop/hk/habitat-hong-kong

Indigo Living
6/F, Horizon Plaza
2555 0540 | indigo-living.com

IKEA
U/B, 310 Gloucester Road, Causeway Bay
3125 0888 | ikea.com

Overstock
overstock.com

White Contemporary Homeware
Shop 245, Prince's Building, 10 Chater Road, Central
2526 8482 | whitehk.com

Zara Home
Harbour City, 25 Canton Road, Tsim Sha Tsui
2880 5068 | zarahome.com

