

LOFTY AMBITIONS

An open-plan Sheung Wan studio makes the perfect family home for creative collectors, the Stuarts.

By Kate Farr; photography by Suzanna Goodwin



As founder of kids' eco-friendly block company Unit Bricks (unitbricks.com), Tim Stuart is used to the concept of building something creative and unique from the simplest of materials.

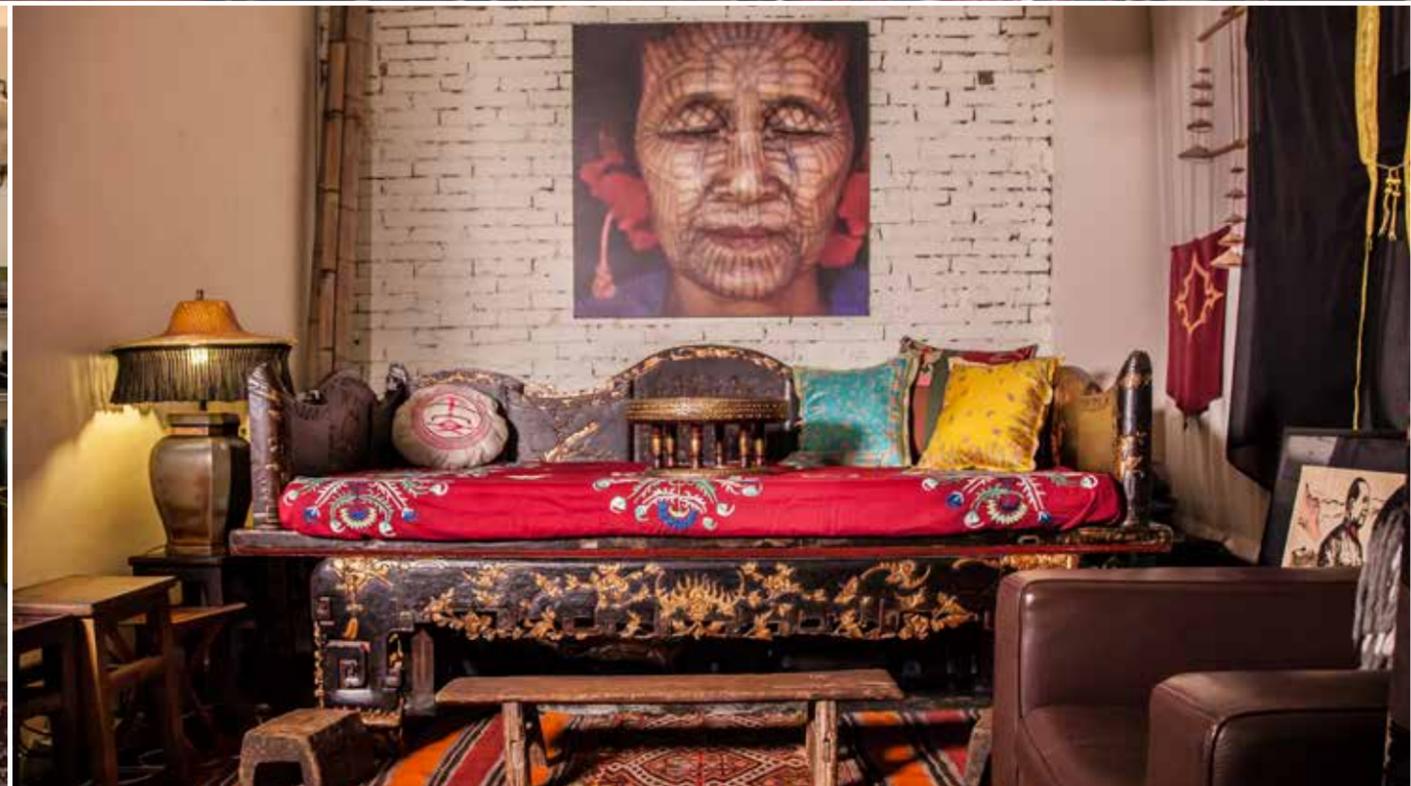
As such, when he first discovered the 2,300-square-foot warehouse space in Sheung Wan that he now shares with wife Asya, baby son Oscar, and teacup poodle Monkey, Tim immediately saw the potential of a blank canvas.

Think Big

Hailing from the US, but with family living in Hong Kong, Tim was already very familiar with the city when he made the decision to relocate here. "China was booming and it was the place to be. I've been here 10 years now, but have actually worked in Hong Kong for 17 years. I lived in both Los Angeles and New York and was constantly on airplanes – I was tired of the long flights."

When the opportunity to relocate here presented itself, he didn't hesitate. "Hong Kong is a great town and it was an adventure not to be missed!" says Tim. "I was living in a typical mega high-rise flat overlooking the harbour for a couple of years when I first came, but I traded up for the space. We lost the view, but couldn't be happier."

And it's easy to see why. Described by Tim as "a large studio on steroids", the Stuart family's open-plan home sits within a renovated factory space, boasting large windows and four balcony spaces on which to enjoy a barbecue with friends. Sheung Wan offers the perfect location for Tim and Asya, both of whom work from home, and the apartment itself was an instant hit with the couple. "It was an unusually large space for Hong Kong, reminding me of New York's warehouse flats. Moving here was a no-brainer as it meant I could spread my wings and work from home with a studio space to create."





Unique Chic

When it comes to decorating such a generously proportioned space, the Stuarts have embraced a collector's aesthetic. "There is no method to the madness, just making sure that everything we collect is practical or beautiful; my friend back home always joked that I had a 'nook and cranny' style."

Tim continues: "I came to Hong Kong with two bags and now we have a shipping container full of antiques, rugs and dust collectors from around the globe! You'll find thrift store items and bric-a-brac alongside my grandparents' art."

This nomadic approach has led to some fascinating finds. "We have a set of 1930s chairs from the US consulate in Ankara, Turkey, alongside a sofa from Ap Lei Chau. There are stools from every corner of Hong Kong and hangings from lost tribes in the hills of Myanmar and the streets of Delhi. The guest bed is a Chinese opium bed sourced in Zhongshan."



Home Comforts

While the kitchen table may be the focal point of many family homes, the Stuarts' *pièce de la résistance* is a little different. "It's all about our bed – we live there! The rest is beautiful, but the antique Chinese bed is the best part."

And when not relaxing in style with Mum and Dad, Baby Oscar is to be found "on a foam-lined area just near our bed. It's covered in Susanis (a heavily embroidered tribal textile from Dagestan. All his toys are there and we can lounge with him like sultans!"

The grown-ups may appreciate the beautiful antiques, yet Dad acknowledges that keeping both their collection and Oscar himself free from damage as he begins toddling will be no mean feat. "We're in the process of adding soft corners to everything – it's not a simple task!"

The flat also boasts a wooden Japanese soaking tub, though Tim admits that it might have been nice to have another bathroom with a tub.





Wide-open Space

The typical headache that comes with open-plan living is finding sufficient storage space. The Stuarts have easily solved this, thanks to Unit Bricks' adjacent warehouse, which offers the family plenty of room for both personal items and the company's inventory of toys. When asked about any challenges that they have faced with their apartment, Tim says, "The lack of walls is the only downside. We overcame this with Chinese screens, and strategically placed clothes and curtains." Along with the eclectic décor, this helps lend a distinct sense of drama to the apartment, which is often rented out to companies for photo shoots and product launches.

When asked if there was anything that they wish they'd done differently, Tim is emphatic. "We wouldn't change a thing. It's been an undulating work in progress. Nothing stands still and nothing is useless – everything we own is multi-purpose or can be re-arranged and still have beauty, and the space allows for us to try out new items and keep everything that we love without it being too cluttered."

What more could anyone hope for from their dream family home? 🏠

RECOMMENDATIONS

Zhongshan Antique Market
Gudu Ave, Sanxiangzhen, Zhongshan, China
+86 760 8668 627

Grand Bazaar, Istanbul
Beyazit Mh., Istanbul, Turkey
+90 212 519 1248

Cat Street Market
Upper Lascar Row, Sheung Wan

Horizon Plaza
2 Lee Wing Street, Ap Lei Chau

Sham Shui Po Fabric Market
Ki Lung Street, Sham Shui Po, Kowloon