



CLEAN, MODERN LOOK

Top: One wall of the master bathroom was knocked down and replaced with a large glass window that looks onto the sleeping area.

Above: Cayden and Cato share a bedroom as their parents believe this arrangement will foster closer brotherly bonding.

Right: Clyde and Sharon with their sons Cato (centre left) and Cayden. Below: Clyde's mini helmet collection.

PHOTOS BY JOSEPH NIAH



"You could tell they weren't just selling furniture, but were keen to share their knowledge such as how each product is made, and they patiently gave suggestions on how to better do up our home."

Clyde Lee on Italian salesman

personal space |

House of Milan

Clyde and Sharon Lee travelled all the way to Milan to shop for furniture for their Cairnhill home. By Tay Suan Chiang

WHEN it comes to furnishing the home, most people head to the local furniture stores. Clyde Lee and Sharon Yee went a step further. Last December, the couple spent a week in Milan, shopping for furniture to fill their Cairnhill apartment.

"We could have bought these pieces in Singapore, but there would be a longer wait as some of the items would have to be specially indented," says Mr Lee, chief executive of a real estate investment firm. Ms Yee, director at a financial services company, adds: "Sometimes it is difficult to really tell how a piece would look from the catalogue. It is much better to be able to see it in person."

The couple did research before they left for Milan by visiting the local shops here. They narrowed down several brands that they liked, such as B&B Italia, Minotti, Vitra and Poltrona Frau. "We like the styles of these brands," says Ms Yee. She adds: "We had no expectations when we left for Milan. If we found pieces that we like, that would be good, but even if we came back empty-handed, that would have been fine too."

The first four days were spent traveling the shops, and talking to the sales people. The couple say they were very impressed with the passion of the Italians. "They went all out to tell us about the different leather

grains, and how we should pick one grain over the other, because we have kids at home," says Mr Lee. "You could tell they weren't just selling furniture, but were keen to share their knowledge such as how each product is made, and patiently gave suggestions on how to better do up our home." One tip they received from the salesman at Minotti was to match their sofa with a Travetina wall. "Initially, we wanted to create a wooden feature wall in the living room, but the salesman advised us otherwise. Maybe he didn't want the wood to spoil the look of the sofa," quips Ms Yee. "But we are glad we took his suggestion."

Over the course of the trip, the couple would regularly take pictures of the furniture and send them back to their designer Denise Gan, from Creative Mind Design, to see if they would fit in with her design.

The trip was a fruitful one, and the Lees shipped back one container-load of furniture, including an L-shaped sofa from Minotti, a Grand Repos armchair by Antonio Citterio, and Murano glass lamps from Barovier & Toso. "The stores were closing soon for Christmas, and we had to decide on the spot," she says. Naturally, the couple were excited when the furniture finally arrived in April, and they could move into their apartment shortly after.

Most of the designer pieces are in the living and dining room. And with two young boys around, the Lees have set some house rules. "No food in the living room, and we try not to be too rigid, but the boys know that they should play in their own rooms," says Mr Lee. His brief to Ms Gan was a simple one. "We told her to do what she thinks is right," he says.

The look is clean, modern and timeless. "Nothing too trendy, but yet, the apartment would still look stylish even in 10 years," says Ms

Gan. The previous owner barely renovated the apartment, so when Ms Gan took over, the place was totally transformed. In place of bare white walls, a Travetina wall was installed, paired with wallpaper and textured panelling.

Cove lights were added to give the apartment a warmer feel. In the master bathroom, one wall was knocked down and replaced with a large glass window that looks onto the sleeping area. The wardrobe doors are clad with PVC, with stitching along the edges, and had Ms Gan not pointed it out, could easily have been mistaken for leather. "We were inspired by the rooms at the Fullerton Bay Hotel," says Ms Yee.

The couple travel frequently for work, and Ms Yee takes notes whenever she's staying in a boutique hotel. "I see how they decorate the place and I learn from them," she says. Case in point: the displays of candles, silverware, and orchid arrangements that dot some corners of the home.

Their two sons, Cayden and Cato, share a bedroom, because the couple believe that this is better for brotherly bonding. Another bedroom is their playroom, which will double as a study for them when they start school. The playroom is kids central, where the couple entertain friends and family. Otherwise, the family spend most of their time in the cosy living room.

The couple are shy about revealing how much they spent on the home, but say the sum has been worth it. They bought this apartment for its location - close to town, and to future schools. "We will be living here, at least, till both boys are done with primary school, so we will be living with this look for some time," says Ms Yee. tais@spsh.com.sg



STYLISH DECOR

Left: Most of the designer pieces bought in Milan are in the living and dining rooms including an L-shaped sofa from Minotti, a Grand Repos armchair by Antonio Citterio, and Murano glass lamps from Barovier & Toso. From top: A frog showerhead in the common bathroom; an eye-catching display of toiletries; an elegant arrangement of candles, silverware and orchids