

design anthology

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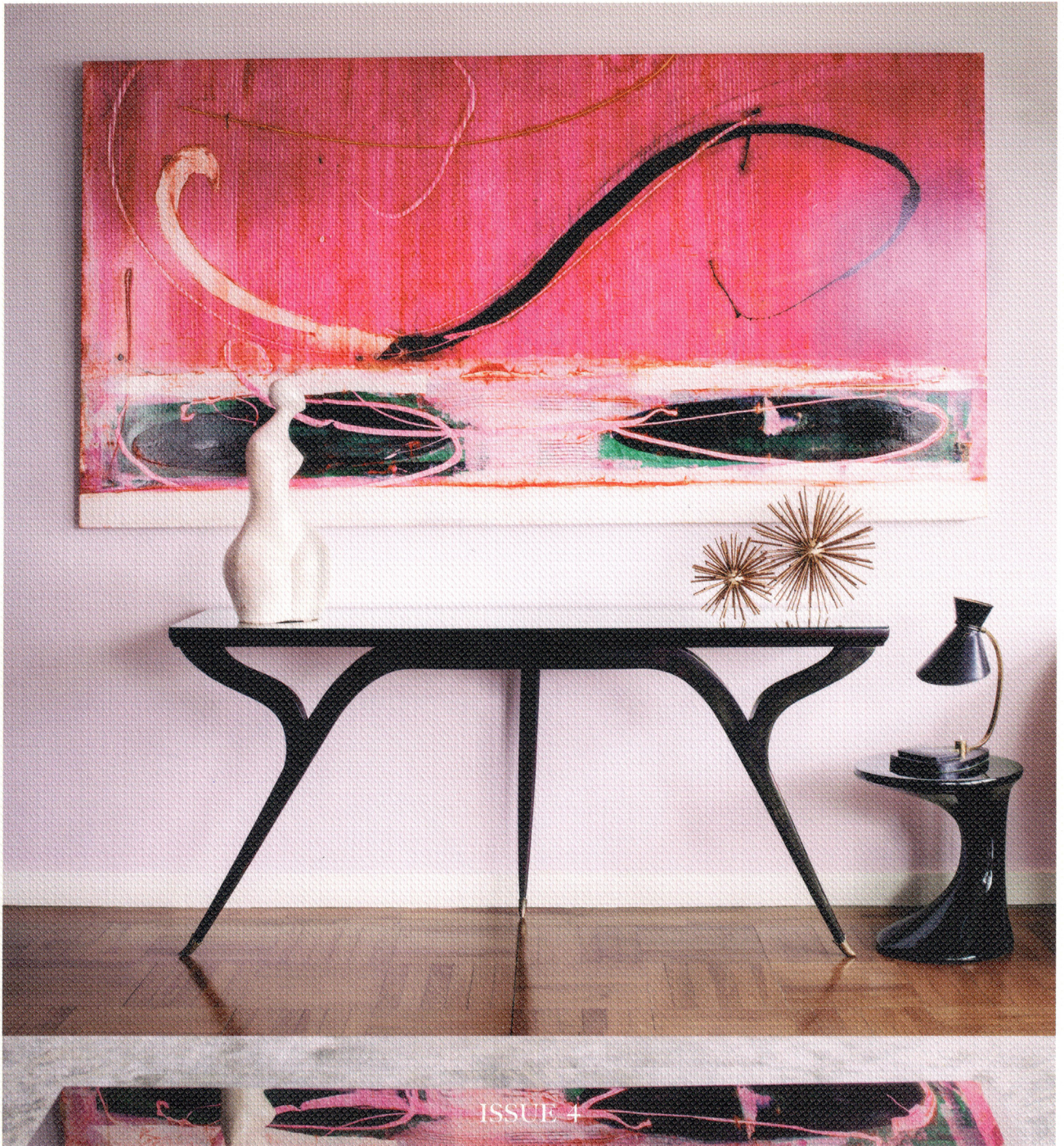
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Hidden Gem

Text & Images / Michael Paul

Folklore decrees that hidden treasure is unearthed in the darkest caverns, the deepest seas or buried chests. However, here in Hong Kong there's an exception to the rule. Stroll around the prestigious Mid-Levels residential district and you'll encounter a romantic 1950s apartment building that could take you by surprise. Ride the quaint cage-door elevator to the top floor and you'll discover the flamboyant home of Jenny-lyn Hart Boden: interior designer, collector, fashion stylist and all-round tastemaker. In this rare jewel sandwiched between the brutal architecture and the massive monoliths that form Hong Kong, Jenny-lyn has curated her prized collection of mid-20th century classic furniture, contemporary art and other cherished objects.

Arriving in London from Australia some 18 years ago determined to succeed in Europe's elitist design world, the stylish Australian seemed to have the gods on her side. Within weeks she secured a job with the celebrated designer-cum-art dealer David Gill at his landmark gallery on the Fulham Road.

'Working with David was an exceptional experience,' she says. 'His taste is second to none. I'm eternally grateful for all he taught me.' With her ambition to learn all she could about 20th-century furniture, her lifelong passion, it took only a few short years before she was established as an interior stylist with a distinctive look of her own.

A move to Hong Kong two years ago allowed Jenny-lyn to be closer to her clients based in Asia and Australia. And when she first viewed the Mid-Levels apartment she immediately saw past its rather dowdy interior. 'I thought I'd hit the jackpot with its spacious proportions, generous balconies and breathtaking views of the city. It was like a sleeping princess in need of a magic kiss to awaken its potential.' Within a few short weeks, she had transformed the space to her own seductive style, introducing an edgy palette that shows off her pieces while successfully coping with the architectural constraints of an older building.

Today there's a touch of 1950s Hollywood glamour to the penthouse-style space. This is no surprise when you learn that one of Jenny-lyn's early influences was Tony Duquette, an American design icon famed for his lavish room sets and star clientele. However, unlike her hero, Jenny-lyn uses a pragmatic mix of opposing pieces to create theatre and drama to highlight the individuality, elegant simplicity and bold graphic shapes of her furniture collection. On the one hand there's a distinct discipline to her approach that veers towards a sense of symmetry and orchestrated geometry; on the other she skilfully introduces witty touches that trespass into the realms of fantasy. A case in point — Emu feet side tables. 'Although my work has an exuberant mix of styles, there's a common thread that runs through everything I do — yet each space has its own identity,' she explains.

Previous pages: In the main living space, a comma-style sofa in a mustard velvet designed by Jenny-lyn is adorned with cushions in Fortuny and Rubelli fabrics. Behind is a bronze sculpture by Camie Lyons from Cat Street Gallery, displayed next to a 1970s copper wall sculpture. On the other side of the 1950s Ico Parisi console table, a 1950s American armchair has been recovered in Rubelli fabric. The artwork is by Richard Allen, also from Cat Street Gallery, and the rug from Fort Street Studio

This page: In Jenny-lyn's work studio, a 1940s French table from Faux Hong Kong used as a desk sits on a wool rug from Fort Street Studio. A framed 1960s scarf by Jim Thompson matches a 1960s ethnic copper mask, which is set off by a carved wood ram's head on a copper ceramic table from BGH Editions. Behind the desk is a 1950s Italian metal standing lamp, while a German bronze sculpture also from the 1950s is paired with a 1940s Fulham Pottery urn



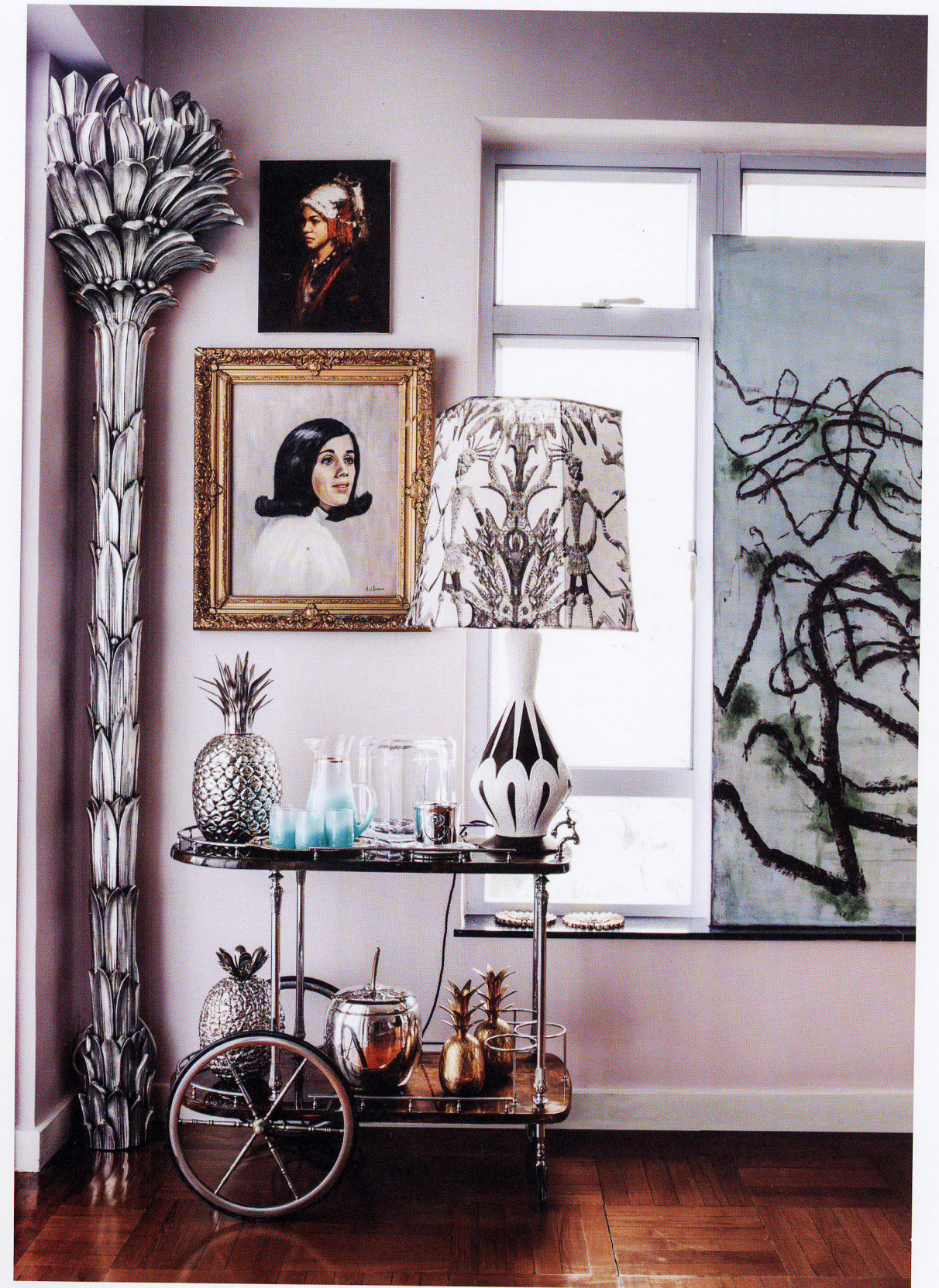
From the moment guests enter, they are confronted by the opulence of the emerald-green walls of her work studio. A large 1940s French wooden desk dictates the space, while a 1960s copper mask paired with an arresting ram's head displayed on a low copper and ceramic table work seamlessly with the ethnic shades of the 1960s Jim Thompson scarf framed on the wall. It's an edgy initiation that sets the tone for what's to come.

Jenny-lyn's sense of theatre is personified in the dining area, where an outrageously kitsch 1976 Ettore Sottsass multi-coloured desk from the Milanese Memphis group doubles as a dining table. 'This piece is great eye candy,' she says with a laugh. 'It defies the everyday, the very point Sottsass was trying to make.' A recurring theme in her decorative style is the palm tree, and this space is no exception. A large silver-leaf palm-shaped lamp stands in a corner replacing a conventional houseplant. Behind the desk, even more colour comes from a quirky 1970s orange and purple Perspex sculpture that immediately demands your attention. 'It's nicknamed the bong,' says Jenny-lyn. 'It's an extraordinary piece.'

More mouth-watering treasures feature in the living space, which is divided from the dining area by a rare 1960s Paco Rabanne screen. 'I bought it from a secret warehouse on the outskirts of Milan,' explains Jenny-lyn. 'It's based on Pythagoras's theorem — such a brilliant concept. I'll never part with it.' She feels the same way about the unusual three-legged console table fashioned in the 1950s by Ico Parisi and bought in Clignancourt, Paris. 'J'adore this piece,' she quips. A funky comma-style sofa designed by her adds more upbeat colour and wit to the space, while the perfectly proportioned 1960s Marco Giovannelli stainless steel coffee table reflects the Richard Allen artwork on the wall.

Jenny-lyn's jewel of an apartment with its glamorous mix of styles and trophy pieces is a tribute to her exceptional taste and passion for glorious things. However, like any good designer she avoids a signature style or slavishly following frivolous fashion, instead employing a flexible and open-minded approach to each project. 'I try to create decorative fantasies that mirror my clients' personalities yet also give a sense of the unexpected. I'm even designing a minimalist interior for a Hong Kong client this year.' Whatever the future holds, we can be sure that she will continue to surprise us with her rich imagination and originality.

A 1950s German rosewood and ceramic lamp with a shade in Tony Duquette fabric sits on a rare lacquered goat skin and silver-plated metal 1950s trolley by Aldo Tura that holds a collection of vintage pineapple ice buckets. The trolley is flanked by a 1950s French carved wood and silver-leaf palm-tree lamp and an abstract painting by Tim Summerton from Cat Street Gallery



A collection of 1960s modernist Unicorn chairs by Chromcraft Sculpta is grouped around a colourful 1978 Memphis desk-cum-dining table by Ettore Sottsass, while behind the desk more colour comes from a quirky 1970s orange and purple Perspex sculpture and a 1970s painting by Brian Sullivan. The head is by London-based artist Oriel Harwood, as are the columns and horned mirror, while the brass screen on the walls is 1970s Italian



A 1940s Swedish sofa re-covered in Rubelli fabric is adorned with cushions in Rubelli and Fortuny fabrics. On either side, modern brass lamps sit on bronze Emu Feet metal tables, both from Jenny-lyn's new JL Collection. On the scratch rug from Fort Street Studio a 1960s polished stainless steel coffee table by Marco Giovannelli displays a collection of prized objects, while a 1950s Danish brass and glass ceiling lamp hangs above



In the corner of the main living space sits a pair of 1940s Swedish armchairs re-covered in a Rubelli fabric. Between the chairs is a 1970s French metal light-up table, while on the right a 1950s German ceramic lamp with a Rubelli fabric lampshade from the JL Collection sits on a bronze ceramic table



Jenny-lyn Hart Boden on her terrace with views over central Hong Kong wearing a vintage turban and jewellery paired with a design from the JL Collection in a Tony Duquette malachite print that matches the cushions, also from the JL Collection. The table is from Faux





A 1920s Italian armchair covered in a vintage fabric sits in front of a 1950s Italian metal console. Above is an artwork by Thomas Darnell from the Cat Street Gallery and a 1978 sculpture by C. Jeré that stands on a modern bronze Emu Feet metal table from the JL Collection

In the bedroom with its mid-bronze green feature wall, Jenny-lyn has used a vintage fabric from Hong Kong for the headboard and valance which contrasts with the Rubelli fabric cushions from the JL Collection. The two retro chests of drawers are styled with a modern brass sculpture in the style of C. Jeré and an abstract photograph by Kate Davis from 1999. The 1950s ceramic lamp is German

