

Natural Vibes

This light and airy family home on The Peak offers space, a sense of calm and some beach-retreat style for the Garner family.

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As founder of used kids' clothing boutique **Retykle** (retykle.com), Canadian SARAH GARNER spends her days helping Hong Kong parents to find the potential in children's outgrown outfits; an outlook that has clearly influenced her approach when it came to setting up a family home on the lower slopes of The Peak. "Our block is unique because they are government flats, so it's a case of 'take 'em as you see 'em'. This means they are bare bones when they're handed over. The upside is that you get a bit more space for your money." And the downside? "You have to install every utility – every A/C unit, the fridge, stove, everything. It's a challenge to get set up, but once you've put some muscle into fixing them up, they have character."



And character is what this apartment, home to Sarah, husband Luke, two-year-old Henry and baby sister Olympia, has in spades. The airy, 2,000 square-foot, three-bedroom apartment achieves a stylish, yet laid-back feel, with Sarah drawing heavily on the family's travels for inspiration, "I was aiming for a relaxed environment that veered on the side of a vacation home. I like the use of palm prints, plants and rattan to evoke a sense of a tropical escape." She adds, "We like natural colours and materials with accents of orange, which is Luke's favourite colour, and blue, which is my favourite." The beach-retreat vibe is further reinforced with a charming family tradition; "We collect sand from each beach we visit and store it in a mix of glass containers in our bathroom. Each one reminds us of the different corners of the earth we've touched together."

Sarah also drew on her heritage when decorating the apartment. "For Henry's





room, we wanted it to be whimsical and also have a bit of a 'Canadiana' feel." It has subsequently become Sarah's favourite spot in the apartment. "I love the whimsy of the wallpaper, and it makes me happy to see him play in his various nooks. I especially love our comfortable reading chair." She adds with a laugh that Olympia – typically of a second child – has a room that is "multi-functional". It currently houses the piano of classically-trained pianist Luke – "and it's not yet quite 'done'!"

Although the Garners' home is clearly a well thought-out and stylish space, Sarah admits that finding unique pieces for value in Hong Kong is a challenge. "I wish we had more variety and quality at a good price, rather than the astronomical price tags that often accompany the items that catch our eye." Mindful of this, the family's key pieces earn their space in the home, and most have a meaningful story to tell. "We try to collect things that have sentimental value, especially items we find during our travels. For example, the rug under the dining table was bought during our honeymoon in Morocco in a remote village in the Atlas Mountains where women do hand-dyeing





and weaving.” She adds that the dining room hutch is from Galle, Sri Lanka – “from an amazing vintage furniture store full of Dutch relics. It took a while to sail its way to Hong Kong, but we love it!”

A more unusual acquisition is the vintage brass and glass coffee table that has pride of place in the living room, “It has a unique design feature, in that it has a hole on one side. Many drinks have almost gone plummeting through the table when guests go to rest them down in an empty space! It’s actually meant to hold flowers, which is quite a beautiful effect, but we don’t always have fresh flowers in there, hence the confusion!”

Even the Garners’ hallway is home to striking, and meaningful, design elements. “The architectural prints in our hallway are of buildings designed by my great-grandfather, who my son is named after.” Sarah adds that the hallway wallpaper is from Anthropologie: “They ship to Hong Kong, and it’s great for a rental as you can peel it off without damaging the wall upon removal.”

Of course, a key selling point for any Hong Kong home is outdoor space, and the Garners’ apartment comes with a spacious balcony from which the family can soak up the surrounding green views. “We eat breakfast outside with the kids when it’s nice weather and, post-kids’ bedtime, we try to sit and have a glass of wine on a nice evening. There are hundreds of black kites that circle right in front of the balcony at around sunset every night; it’s quite a beautiful sight.”

In addition to the balcony, the apartment is perfectly situated next to the development’s own playground, which really sealed the deal for Sarah. “Renovated kitchens and bathrooms are no longer top of our list! Outdoor play spaces beat out the rest – it’s a HK dream with young kids, as it requires no planning, no transportation and is a built-in daily play-date with plenty of other kids.”

Noticeably absent from the apartment is the typical avalanche of brightly-coloured plastic toys that are the bane of most Hong Kong parents’ existence. Sarah explains: “We kept our living spaces quite ‘adult’, but comfortable enough for the kids to enjoy too.” This laid-back attitude has enabled the Garners to strike a perfectly stylish balance between a warm and welcoming family home and a grown-up aesthetic, rich in thoughtful detail. *u*

Sarah’s Recommendations

Anthropologie
anthropologie.com

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

Etsy
etsy.com

Lane Crawford
88 Queensway, Pacific Place
2118 2288 | lanecrawford.com

Oriental Home
20/F, Horizon Plaza
3542 5336 | facebook.com/
orientalhomehk

Pottery Barn
potterybarn.com

Wai Kee
G/F, 37 High Street, Sai Ying
Pun
2522 3605 | wai-kee.com.hk