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# HOMIES

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# MOUNTAIN MAGIC

*The newly designed penthouse apartment at The Morgan gets the best of both worlds, with views of the Peak and the Harbour. Designer Robert Cheng tells **Tamsin Bradshaw** how he used the light, bespoke elements and those views to create a luminously beautiful home*

Photography **MOSES NG**  
Styling **CHRISTIE SIMPSON**

**VERDANT VISTA**  
*The penthouse features several outdoor areas, including this expansive, mountain-facing terrace*





**A LIGHT TOUCH**  
*Clockwise from above: The shimmering pastel wallpaper in the living room helps elevate the space; the grand dining area features a contemporary, 72-piece, aged-brass chandelier by Apparatus; and a bonsai tree in the reception area draws attention to the forest outdoors*

One of the most striking things about the penthouse at The Morgan is the way the space changes as the light shifts. Arriving at this apartment, which occupies the entire 30th floor, it's a dark, thunderous day, and the rooms feel spacious yet cosy, rich yet relaxing—the perfect foil for the drama of the views and the clouds outside. Later on, as the clouds lift, so too does the light. Sunlight glints off the metallic elements of the wallpaper in the vast living space, shimmering as it hits the sparkling accents on cushions, rugs and tables in this room.

The building itself was designed by Robert A M Stern Architects for Phoenix Property Investors, and is located at 31 Conduit Road in a green, quiet and convenient corner of Mid-Levels. The 3,962sqft penthouse

apartment (which also features several terraces) was designed with a discerning, worldly collector in mind and was recently sold for HK\$344 million.

“We’ve created a penthouse that is different from any out there, one specifically designed for a sophisticated owner who collects and treasures beautiful things,” says Robert Cheng, founder of Brewin Design Office, the architecture and design studio behind the penthouse’s interiors.

Cheng, who worked with Jean Nouvel and Tsao & McKown Architects before setting up his own studio, brings an architectural approach to the five-bedroom penthouse.

“Proportions, detail, natural light, timelessness—these are all important factors in our projects,” says Cheng. “Our approach can be considered understated, so Samuel [Chu, founding partner and chief investment

officer of Phoenix Property Investors] said, ‘You’re going to have to dial it up. We need some sparkle in there.’”

For Cheng, this was a new challenge, one he addressed with balance. “In my head, it was always about keeping a balance between our DNA and attracting the right buyer,” he says. “So we substituted your typical shiny chandeliers with a play on abstract wallpaper, like the one in the living room.”

Splashed with shimmering pastels, the wallpaper in the living room helps elevate the space, giving it the airiness Cheng and his team sought. They also varnished the floors again and again, “using lime wash to give the yellow oak floors that milky colour.”

The wallpaper runs all the way along the back wall of the 1,200sqft space, which encompasses a family room—where you could sit and watch TV, for example—a







**SINGULAR STYLE** Clockwise from top left: A bookshelf takes up one of the walls in the study, adding some colour and texture to the suede-clad room; the study has a day bed and doubles as a bedroom; the Japanese-inspired bedroom features tatami-mat flooring and a futon-style bed set on a platform



vast, formal sitting room, and a grand dining area finished with a contemporary, 72-piece, aged-brass chandelier by New York lighting company Apparatus.

Windows reaching from the floor to the 4.5m ceiling run along the front wall, offering harbour views framed by the towers of Mid-Levels, which are in turn framed by the vertical, white-oak fins that hug three walls of this space. “You should feel cocooned by this necklace ... it’s an installation that will distract you from the foreground, but that will also pipe your view. You can tilt the fins so you don’t have to see the other buildings; they’re really light filters,” says Cheng.

The views from the rooms at the back of the home—the entrance hall, several of the bedrooms and the study—are also powerful, in quite a different way. From this side, the steep slopes of Victoria Peak rise up dramatically, the dense jungle so close you can almost touch it. A bonsai tree in the reception area—which leads onto the main terrace—brings the forest in; meanwhile, a huge picture window in the Japanese-style tatami suite shows nothing but green.

“You see three walls, and one wall is missing: it’s basically the mountain,” says Cheng. “We’ve almost collapsed the mountain onto the window.” This was the starting point for the Japanese-inspired bedroom, which features tatami-mat flooring and a futon-style bed set on a platform and looking straight at that view. “It’s an interesting perspective; when you turn on your side in bed, you see that view. That’s why we thought we would create something Zen-like.”

The bedrooms each have their own character: there’s the warm, suede-clad study, which doubles as a bedroom; the light, lovely and feminine terrace suite, which faces the harbour and is decked out in golden tones; and the guest suite, which has a terrace looking onto the mountain and references this through green accents. The master suite, meanwhile, also defers to the mountain with its accents in sand and olive hues, through bespoke silk wallcoverings, a rug custom-designed by Tai Ping, silk throws and the warm brass of the Tassel pendant bedside lights by Apparatus.

“It was really more about creating an



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#### NATURE AND NURTURE

From left: The master bathroom offers more views of the mountains; the master bedroom features bespoke silk wallcoverings, a custom-designed rug by Tai Ping, silk throws, and the Tassel pendant lights by Apparatus

experience for the user than about creating an interior theme,” says Cheng, who clearly put careful consideration into every element in this home, including the furniture. Each piece was chosen with care, from the organically curved DRDP chair by Roberto Lazzeroni for Ceccotti in the entrance hall and the volcanic lava-stone side table by Christian Liaigre in the living room to the Gio Ponti armchairs in the master bedroom and the 1959 Dinamarquesa armchair by Jorge Zalsupin in the family room. Not to mention the lighting by New York designers Apparatus and Lindsey Adelman.

But as Cheng says, “We started to crave being able to customise things rather than just going on a shopping spree. So we custom-designed the 12-place dining table, the coffee tables and some other pieces. We said, ‘Let’s

model this piece up. Let’s think about the texture of the stones.’ These were almost miniature projects in themselves.”

This combination of bespoke designs and carefully collected items speaks to Cheng’s vision of a sophisticated collector. “I wanted something that would be tuned to people’s habits,” he says. “It’s a collection of small things that may be eclectic, and that’s curated,” all within a light and lofty space that, combined with the expansive, mountain-facing terrace, is really quite rare indeed. “There are only two other cities that are sandwiched between mountain and sea: one is Monaco, the other is Rio. In places like this, you’re going to find these strange typologies—these massive terraces right up against the mountainscapes. Just to own that and to be right on the mountain is really a pleasure.”