

HOME

SOCIETY

SLOW-HOME ADVOCATES CALL TIME ON CLUTTER CREEP

The '100 Thing Challenge' aims to help people get back to basics, and a few believers are keen to see the idea blossom in shambolic HK

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Take an inventory of the things in your home, and you'd likely lose track at the wardrobe alone. Imagine, then, limiting your domestic possessions to just 100.

Dave Bruno, an American digital marketing teacher, threw down the gauntlet after he looked around his home one day and realised how much his possessions were weighing him down. Thus began his 100 Thing Challenge, a blog about it (guynamed-

all North American dwellings, he claims), Brown reasons that a "lack of attention to the fundamentals of good design makes a fast house difficult to live in and hard on the environment".

His "12 steps to a slow home" design premise is based on set criteria such as location, size, orientation and stewardship.

Meng Koach felt he was a victim of "clutter creep". "Overwhelmed" by the amount of stuff in his life, the graphic designer from New Zealand resolved to cast out all but 100 possessions when he moved to Sydney, Australia. Admittedly, the cutlery drawer didn't count—as a student in a shared house, there wasn't much of that—but he did pare back shoes to three pairs, jeans to two and electronic devices to the bare minimum.

Koach had wanted to downsize, and the 100 Thing Challenge gave him a target. Surprisingly (to him), the final count came to just 82. He found it hard to "be brutal" in the cull, but ultimately, immensely liberating.

Personal organiser Lindsay Faber, a slow-home proponent and founder of Sorted (www.getsorted.com.au), has a compelling argument for downsizing: getting rid of clutter can reduce housework by up to 40 per cent, she says. "Not to mention the time wasted looking for lost items and the costs saved by not buying duplicates of things you know you already have but cannot find."

Though she's Sydney-based, Faber says the living environments of her clients are not so different to Hong Kong. "Our inner-city apartments are also small, with limited storage space," she says.



As the world around us becomes more complicated and out of control, people feel the need to organise, declutter and simplify their homes. Faber offers this sobering thought: we use 20 per cent of what we own 80 per cent of the time. The rest is just clutter—so why hold onto it?

But while Australians and Americans seem to be embracing this trend with fervour, it's hard to find evidence of it in Hong Kong. Designer Monique McLintock (www.moniqueinterior.com) says: "The slow movement has not yet hit Hong Kong."

One Hong Kong company encouraging the concept is Provest Holdings ([\[ings.com\]\(http://ings.com\)\), a company founded by managing partners Henning Voss and Christophe Bannerman, both originally from Germany. The firm is building its first "slow home" show flat in Sheung Wan, aiming to launch the concept this year.](http://www.provesthold-</p>
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Voss says slow-home fundamentals are especially relevant to Hong Kong, where developments and renovations are often rushed without paying attention to detail. "Apartments in Hong Kong are small and thus it's even more important to take your time and custom design a space for the people who will eventually live there," he says. "We go one step further and say that a home

should also be a conduit to better health."

The Sheung Wan concept incorporates health in the form of air purification, water filtration, light therapy and third-party-certified green building materials. The kitchen, designed to promote healthy food preparation, has an integrated herb garden, ultrasonic food washer (that supposedly generates ozone and ultrasonic waves to kill germs and extend the shelf life of food), wheat-grass station and juicer as standard. All appliances have the highest energy efficiency rating, of course.

It is not easy to fulfil all 12 criteria of the slow home movement in Hong Kong, Voss says. "For example, as one normally rebuilds existing structures, rather than building a new home, it is impossible to redirect an apartment towards the sun [orientation criterion]. Yet it is possible to increase the amount of daylight coming into an apartment."

Hence, when considering a renovation, Voss suggests choosing: large, double glazed windows that support noise reduction and allow for natural light; light, VOC-free paints; and mirrors to reflect light. "Make smart use of fans; don't waste energy on air-conditioning," he says.

For the finishing touches, McLintock would use as few materials as possible. "The bathroom could be of just polished concrete, so no need to use tiles," she says. "The flooring would be bamboo instead of wood. All fabric in the curtains and sofas would be of organic cotton that came from a local supplier."

Overall, a slow-movement-designed apartment would feel spacious, organic and calming, says McLintock. "From the moment you walk into the door, you slow down and start to reconnect with yourself and the environment."

[Bad] design makes a fast house difficult to live in and is hard on the environment

CANADIAN ARCHITECT JOHN BROWN

dave.com) and a worldwide collective light-bulb moment that Yes! this is what I've been yearning for: a simpler, less consumer-focused, clutter-free existence.

The slow-home movement—a term ostensibly coined in 2006 by Canadian architect John Brown (slowhomestudio.com)—begins with basic design. Just as slow cooking is the antithesis of fast food, so the slow-home approach is considered, calm and intuitive. Railing against what he views as a tide of badly designed housing (which is 57 per cent of