

Two in one

A seamless layout allows a Sheung Wan apartment to morph from office to home.



Henning Voss is no stranger to the Hong Kong property market, having bought old flats for conversion into handsome bachelor pads for rent or sale. So when it was time to create his own nest, which would double as an office, he had a firm idea of what he wanted. He adopted the look he and his business partners had chosen for their investment properties and designed the flat so it could accommodate a handful of employees during the day and be turned into a private refuge at night.

With Newton Concepts' Jennifer Newton, who designed his other apartments, Voss transformed a 900 sq ft shell

in Sheung Wan into a practical but stylish flat with personal and public space. In the middle of an open-plan living area, the work surface turns into a dining table at night. At opposite ends of the room are the lounge, which is fitted with an overhead projector and pull-down screen, and a functional kitchen that pairs raw brickwork and gleaming stainless steel to stunning effect. A roomy bedroom with an en-suite bathroom leads from the shared space and can be closed off during work hours.

"I wanted it to be loft-style, which was the reason

behind the brick walls," says Voss, who runs Necesity, a free, daily e-mail-based lifestyle guide for men.

Tactile, textured wood has been used liberally: to cover ugly beams, in the guest bathroom, inserted into concrete flooring and, most effectively, to create the double-purpose table.

"Jenny told me she had these teak railway sleepers," says Voss. "They're 50 years old and she said she could make a very cool table with a steel frame."

Raw concrete has been a feature of all three of Voss' flats. In his home, the material was used for, among other >>



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1 The main item of furniture that allows Henning Voss' flat to function as an office is the large steel-frame table (HK\$25,000), designed by Sydney-based Jennifer Newton. Her company, Newton Concepts (tel: 61 44 962 0046; jennifer@newtonconcepts.com, www.newtonconcepts.com), had the table made with old Balinese railway sleepers by Kodec Contracting (e-mail Alan Ip: alanemailhk@gmail.com). The rectangular black silk lamp (HK\$8,000) above, and dining chairs (HK\$1,650 each), part of the Newton Collection furniture range, are available through Newton Concepts. The eye-catching bookshelf (HK\$8,000), featuring grey laminate shelves and a black steel frame, was designed by Newton and Ip, and built by Kodec Contracting. The beams are clad in walnut wood.

2 The L-shaped sofa cost HK\$30,000 from Bricks & Stones (97 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai, tel: 2520 0577). The granite and stainless-steel coffee table is part of the Newton Collection and cost HK\$6,000. The lamp on the floor cost HK\$1,500 from Aluminium (1 Lyndhurst Terrace, Central, tel: 2546 5904). The black flower pot came from the flower market in Mong Kok and cost HK\$600. Challenge Pacific (tel: 3101 5064) supplied the walnut wood flooring in the lounge at a total cost of HK\$18,200.

3 Grooves in the wood on the dining table-cum-desk may make writing directly on it difficult but the rawness appealed to Voss, who decided against covering it with glass.



The good and the ugly

Good: Homeowner Henning Voss could have followed the suggestion of his designer, Jennifer Newton of Newton Concepts, and closed off the lounge and bedroom from the kitchen and dining room-cum-work area. But he's glad he didn't divide the space and not only because of the roominess the open-plan design affords. "It's really nice when you sit on the sofa and look across to the kitchen," he says. "It feels really homey."

Ugly: Concrete is de rigueur in industrial-style flats, where beauty is found in the contrast between rough and sleek. But although concrete floors may look rugged and give the appearance of low maintenance, Voss says the reality can be different. "It's not that easy to clean because it cracks and stains," he says, adding that his floor took "a long time to get relatively right." Cracks in the concrete sink of his bathroom also caused problems, which is why, he says, it's important to find a contractor who knows what he's doing.



things, the countertop and sink in the master bathroom but, unlike in one of his other apartments, not for food-preparation surfaces in the kitchen.

"I wanted granite here because it's much more sturdy and doesn't stain very much," he says.

To complement the wood and concrete, Voss chose matte, muted hues for his walls and furnishings. But matching blinds, walls and couch, he realised, veered towards bland. The taupe back cushions of his new couch were reupholstered in grey to counter the effect.

At one point, another item made specially for the flat looked as though it, too, would have to be altered, but not for aesthetic reasons.

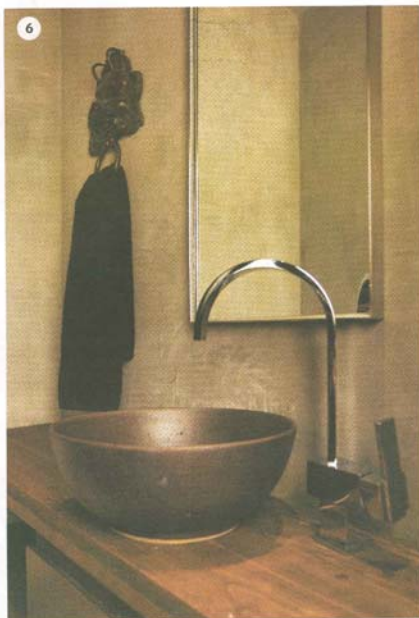
"I have a super king-sized bed. But we couldn't get the mattress into the flat," Voss says, explaining that

it didn't even fit through the windows. Eventually, it was folded and forced into the flat. "It took a while for the mattress to recover but it's all right now," he says.

Everything else proved to be a perfect fit, including a striking steel bookcase and a large floor mirror in the living room, which makes the most of the light that comes through windows on three sides of the building.

To enhance his view of the busy thoroughfare below, Voss had many of the windows enlarged (and fitted with noise-blocking double-pane glass). He lived in SoHo before moving to Sheung Wan and says he prefers his new environment for many reasons.

"I love the smelly dried-fish vendors and things like that," he says. "I feel that I'm more in Hong Kong here than I was before."



4 The master bathroom features a concrete countertop and floor, into which Newton inserted wood planks for visual interest. Beneath the counter is a bed of pebbles, covered in glass. The waterproof television (see *Tried + tested*) gives the room a hip-hot feel.

5 In the master bedroom, the bed and silk-clad headboard were made by Kodec Contracting for HK\$12,000.

6 Elm wood was used for the counter in the guest bathroom, which features a basin (HK\$3,500) from Thailand available through Newton Concepts. Kodec Contracting made the mirror for HK\$2,000 and sourced the tap (HK\$600) from the mainland.

7 Granite countertops, stainless steel and rough brickwork create a handsome kitchen, built for about HK\$60,000 by Kodec Contracting. The bar stools (HK\$1,600 each) were from Aluminium.



Tried + tested



News splash Rather than have a television in the bedroom, which Henning Voss says would have cut into his reading time, he installed a waterproof one in his en-suite bathroom so that he can catch up on the news while performing his morning ablutions. The water and fog resistant wall-mounted mirror with integrated TV cost HK\$9,600 from Genius Concord (239 Lockhart Road, Wan Chai, tel: 2877 7287; www.gc.com.hk).