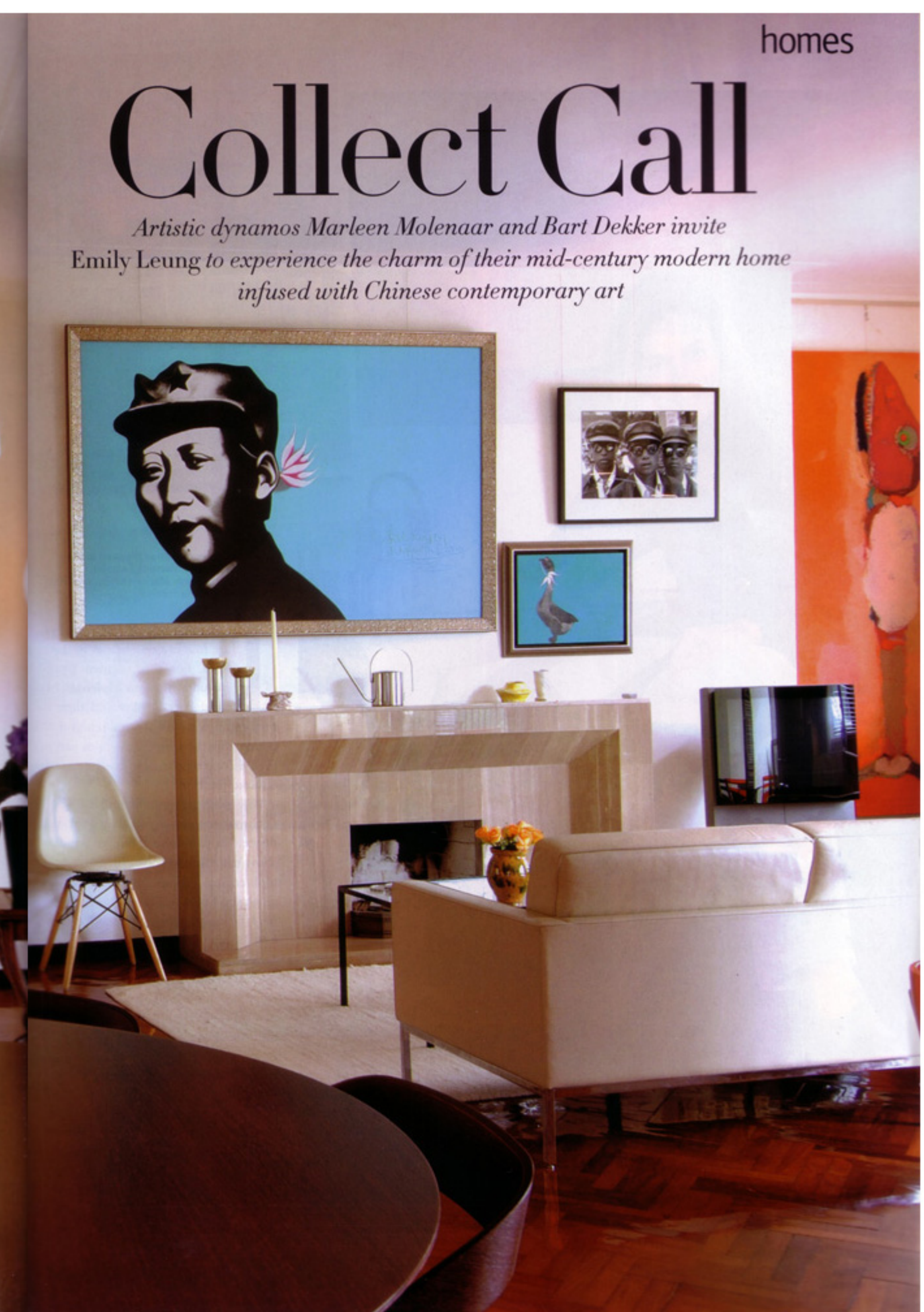


Collect Call

Artistic dynamos Marleen Molenaar and Bart Dekker invite Emily Leung to experience the charm of their mid-century modern home infused with Chinese contemporary art



The superb framework of the flat is built up with artwork and collectibles in vibrant colours



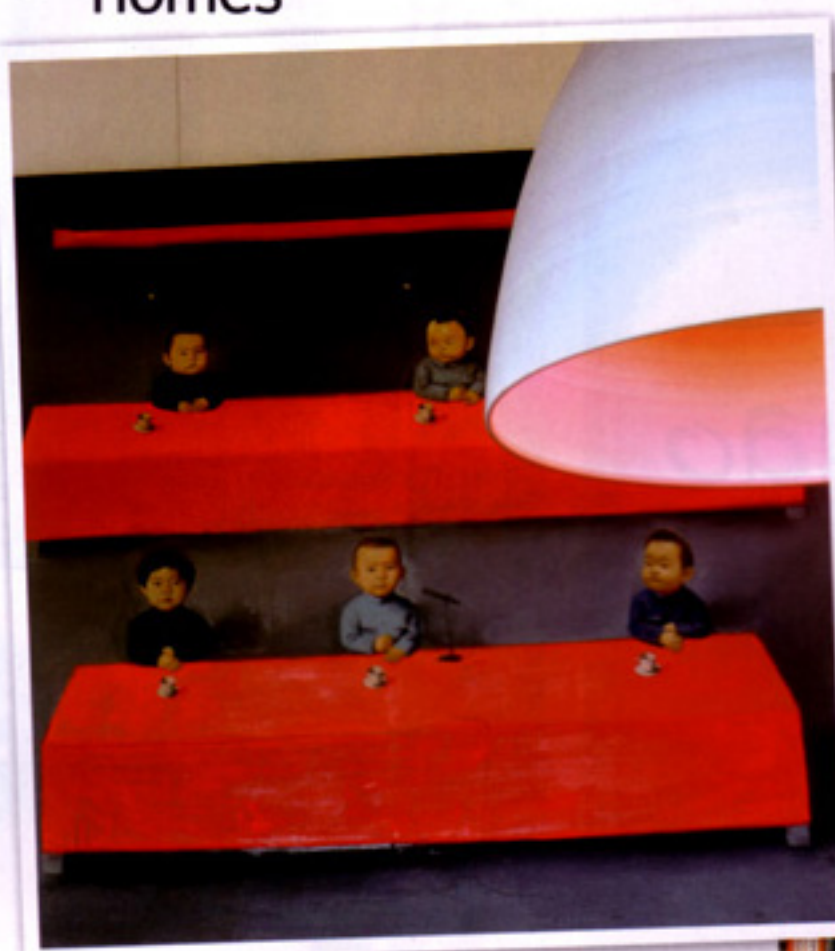
Top: Warm hues of orange are used in the children's play den above the kitchen
Left: Creative maven Marleen Molenaar strikes a pose in the living area

It's hard to be conventional when there are four creative beings in the household. For this talented family that includes Marleen Molenaar, her husband Bart Dekker and their daughters, eight year old Faye and ten year old Lili, building up the perfect home was part of their lifestyle, and all the right components simply fell into place.

"We loved the layout of the flat," says Marleen of the first impression of their Peak-side residence. "In particular, the huge windows that allow natural light to stream through and the high ceilings," appreciates Bart, "as we Dutch aren't small people. There's also great feng shui here, facing straight south and looking at the back of mountains and vistas of the sea."

With the brilliant framework already in place, renovations weren't necessary apart from repainting some walls and doors of the apartment. Possessing a penchant for colour coordination, Marleen headed this task, choosing a warm brown for the rear wall of the master bedroom, bright fresh hues of yellow and orange for the upper kitchen wall and girly pinks for her daughters shared bedroom.

From there, the couple built up the rest of the décor with artwork, vintage furniture and designer lightning. In the living room, unique pieces include a tan leather sofa designed by Florence Knoll, placed alongside a glass-topped vintage coffee



Top: A large Nur ceiling light by Ernesto Gismono for Artemide is suspended over the dining table, in front of a painting by Tang Zhi Gang
Right: Bart Dekker loves reading a good book on the cowskin lounge chair, below a piece by Chiu Ya-tai

"To me, contemporary art reflects the incredible changes China is going through," says Bart Dekker

table from Holland and an armchair by Carlo Mollino.

Off on the side is where the man of the house likes to spend most of his time, relaxing on a cow skin lounge chair from Le Corbusier while devouring good books, which a white bookcase by Stefano Giovannoni accommodates. In the dining area, a Ferruccio Laviani oval shaped ufo dining table takes centre stage, together with Chu Wei's Statues painting. DIY maven Marleen turned a pair of shell shades she purchased from Lane Crawford – reminiscent of classic Vernor Panton fixtures – into table lights to spice up the credenza.

It is often the case with most couples that the design work is left to the female force but for the Dekkers, the effort was mutual. Marleen applauds their perfectly complementing tastes and is quick to commend her husband's great eye for sourcing exceptional pieces, especially in the arena of contemporary Chinese artwork. The managing director of OCRA Worldwide, Bart runs Asia-Pacific for the global services provider, where business travels frequently





Top: Hanging from the ceiling of Lili's study is a Norm 69 lamp from AO2
Left: The contemporary living room is peppered with designer furniture

takes him to China. "It's difficult to live in Hong Kong and not be fascinated by China. To me, contemporary art reflects the incredible changes the country is going through," he concedes. From a large Mao pop art painting by Li Shan above the fireplace, to works by Qi Zhi Long, Zhang Fa Zhi, Chiu Ya-tsai and Yang Shao Bin, Bart explains, "Somehow, I can relate to the artwork and simply buy what I like. But for someone who doesn't collect for financial gains, the current skyrocketing prices isn't a good thing." Having been approached by Sotheby's all over the world to sell his collectibles, Bart stands firm in declining. "Our daughters protest very strongly too," laughs Marleen, "since they've grown up influenced by the art in the house." As it turns out, Lili is an excellent artist whose talents encompass portraiture to pottery and textiles. Faye is equally creative, and at her recent birthday party at Art Jam, she was the only one who experimented with an abstract painting. "Her father was proud that she even knew what an abstract was," Marleen continues.

Influence from environment may be one contributing factor, but the aesthetic genes that run in the family is certainly another. Marleen spent the bulk of her career on the fashion and design front after graduating from Amsterdam's Academy of Art, eventually proceeding to a fulfilling role in Esprit that brought her to



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Top: The expansive balcony overlooking beautiful greenery is a private oasis for the Dekkers
Left: A blow up size office lamp by K Design illuminates three Mac computers on the glass table by Reinhard

Hong Kong. It was in 2004 that she decided to utilise her 20 years of experience to set up her own business, Marleen Molenaar Sleepwear, made for children. Sold at large department stores like Seibu and Sogo, the designer states happily, "Sales are doing very well especially during festive seasons and now, I have much more time for the girls."

And more time for ensuring style and practicality in the home, too, it seems. Cleverly utilising space, the talented lady transformed a previous storage cupboard into a compact work-station, after installing some storage units, a small computer desk and chair. "Luckily the room also has a small window, and Lili loves the privacy of the small room," Marleen explains.

The large covered balcony overlooking a huge green lawn and billowing oak trees



This photo: Above the Natalie Bed by Vico Magistretti hangs a nude by Zhou Guobin in the master bedroom

Bottom: Above the fireplace hangs a large Mao painting by Li Shan from The Rouge Series 1994, from Schoeni Art Gallery

Duddell Street. "We also like Aluminium for special pieces and we tend to look out for new young Dutch, Belgian, Italian and French designers," Marleen confides. So is there anything that's still high on their wish list? "My favourite furniture designer is Franco Albini," she continues. "We saw the most amazing chair by him in the south of France, but we don't own it yet ..."

While this home would be every collector's haven, it is in no way restrictive nor uncomfortable. Warmth radiates from every cornice, illuminated by the abundant use of colour and the affection of the family. "I don't think we did anything that wasn't necessary and I'm really happy with how everything worked out," Marleen concludes. □

