

## DESIGNERS PROVIDE INSPIRING APPROACH TO LIFESTYLE IN LOFT

Christine Brun | Copley News Service | Apr. 16, 2005

Over the past decade, interior designer Hannah Lee and her architect husband, Clarence Chiang Jr., have completed dozens of projects in Hong Kong. Because apartments in that city are notoriously tiny, their work is instructional.

I ran into examples of their entertainment-room solutions and furniture designs for small environments at NeoCon West, held at the March LA Mart. Some of their solutions, for example, addressed the fact that in Hong Kong it's not considered good feng shui to display a television set in the living room. "It's both visually unappealing and undesirable," Lee said.

Her designs combine traditional and contemporary Western and Chinese elements to solve this problem in situations where the living room is the only area with space for a TV. She and her husband formulated panels that reflect the Chinese custom of blending wood with ivory, which is in the center of the panels, and serve as a screen when the TV isn't on. The panels begin at \$6,000. To see Lee's and Chiang's work, visit [www.teamhc.com](http://www.teamhc.com).

The design challenge showcased at LA Mart, "Fine Living: The Loft Life," was a case-study installation that interprets the contemporary live/work lifestyle of today's urban loft dweller as expressed by downtown Los Angeles' emerging loft phenomenon.

Los Angeles-based Shimoda Design Group designed a space dedicated to living, dining/kitchen, bath and sleeping, serving as a testament to a contemporary lifestyle. A cross section of design professionals and manufacturers collaborated to present insights and concepts to the design community.

Other state-of-the-art products and furnishing ideas were displayed at this year's market. Armani Casa, Artemide, Brayton International, InterfaceFLOR, Maharam, Studio Nova, Sharpe Interior Systems, Steelcase, Toto and Vetro Mosaico joined presenting sponsor Bulthaup Kitchen Architecture to create an environment dedicated to living/working, dining/kitchen, bath/sleeping.

Loft spaces often have high ceilings, but when divided, the spaces present the same challenges as other small living spaces.

"This limited-space project was perfect for Bulthaup. It's a prime example of how good design and good quality can be symbiotic, regardless of size or situation," said Chris Tosdevin, director of West Coast sales, Bulthaup Los Angeles. "Bulthaup is familiar with the challenges of limited-space design in contemporary architecture, whether residential or commercial, since we are a European company, after all. Applying good design to the interior architecture of a small space can produce very cutting-edge designs."

The mock-up loft unit used 20 Bulthaup System free-standing mobile pieces, which are ideal for a small project because they are made with a transitory client in mind. It's for cooks who want to invest in high-quality items but don't want to have to leave them behind when they move. You can see more of their designs at [www.bulthaup.com](http://www.bulthaup.com).

It is common in Europe to own the kitchen cabinets. The concept of modular kitchens first came to the United States in the 1970s, and it has gained in popularity.

"The idea of a loft is really an attitude about how one desires to live. It becomes a choice," said Joey Shimoda, principal of Shimoda Design Group. "This version of the loft life is an effort to maximize the experience of living in downtown Los Angeles. Our interest is in the creation of architecture within a tight configuration of space."

He sees the essence of loft life as a blur among activities, a seamless use of space for multiple purposes. Observing the loft experience provides ideas for any small home.