

text Charmaine Chan pictures John Butlin styling David Roden

Art of glass

A clever investment in Kennedy Town doubles as a mini gallery and peaceful crash pad for its peripatetic owner.

Jules Lambe is proud of her one-bedroom, 520 sq ft apartment in Kennedy Town. It may not be in a prime location (yet) or have all the trimmings – not even a lift – but it certainly beats the small, noisy serviced Mid-Levels flat she lived in for four months before buying it.

Working at her gallery, Gaffer Studio Glass in Aberdeen, during the day and frequently travelling for business, Australian-born Lambe wanted a relaxing crash pad in a quiet but convenient spot. Her limited budget put Mid-Levels out of reach so she looked farther afield and bought a flat in an area that will, in a few years, be served by an MTR station. The odd shape of the building did not deter her because she could envisage maximising usable space once interior walls came down.

"I designed the layout with a bit of help from Rocky [her contractor] and friends," she says, describing how she enclosed a small balcony and moved the kitchen that had previously overlooked it. "The interior has been opened up as much as it can be, although I kept the separate bedroom."

Lambe installed roomy floor-to-ceiling wardrobes in her bedroom. On the other side of the room is a false wall with inset shelves neatly accommodating her audio-

visual equipment. Covering most of her walls is art collected over the years, including glass works displayed on the type of shelves she originally made for art fairs (see *Tried & Tested*).

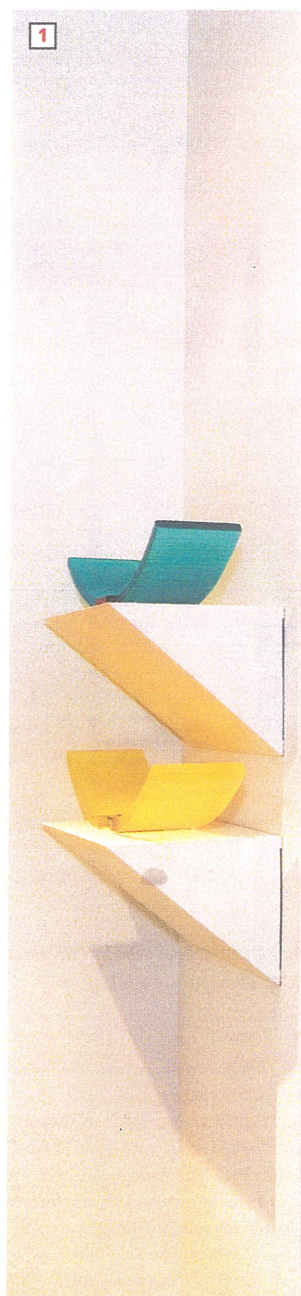
In an awkward space beside the entrance, where the flat's previous occupants had placed a dinner table, is the open kitchen, complete with an island doubling as a compact breakfast bar. A glass-topped table, where Lambe works and eats, inhabits an area that was once the balcony.

Lambe had a false ceiling built along one side of the flat to accommodate downlights that illuminate the space and act as spotlights on her art. "I didn't want to lower the ceiling everywhere," she says. "Now I wish I'd put more downlights in."

She bought ready-made furniture in Wan Chai at prices that helped her stick to her budget. Refurbishing her en suite bathroom and kitchen, she says, accounted for the greatest expenses. The bathroom stayed where it was, but now boasts a tub, ceiling heater and sizeable basin area, replacing the compact original.

As in the rest of the apartment, the colours in her bedroom are neutral, allowing a painting above the bed to





1 Nelson Kao, of NK International (tel: 2866 8854), designed the kitchen, which was installed by contractor Rocky Lai, of Hip Lee Professional Engineering (tel: 2947 7075; hiplineinfra@yahoo.com.hk). The island and countertop are made from Corian and the backsplash is back-painted glass. Deep drawers provide ample storage space above and below the counter. The stools came from Elegant Kitchen (12 Morrison Hill Road, Wan Chai, tel: 2573 2013). The stainless-steel fridge cost HK\$5,500 from Broadway (various locations; www.broadway.com.hk). The blue cast-crystal bowl is by Simon Butler and the blue and yellow pieces on shelves are by artist Kirstie Rea. The pendant lights (HK\$6,800 each) above the island are from PLC Lighting (50 Morrison Hill Road, tel: 2838 0256).

2 Owner Jules Lambe's bed cost HK\$8,900 from Wing On Department Store (www.wingonnet.com). The blind was made by Kelly Blinds Manufacturing (12 Po Tuck Street, Kennedy Town, tel: 2548 2266). The painting is by Australian artist Jane McKay (www.redgriffinart.com).

3 Lambe fitted a tub (not shown) into the existing bathroom, in which she also installed a generous sink (HK\$6,500), from VIA (1A Electric Street, Wan Chai, tel: 3102 0808). The tap is from colour.living (333 Lockhart Road, Wan Chai, tel: 2295 6263). The wooden shutters came from Kelly Blinds Manufacturing.

catch the eye. "I'm not into wallpaper or painting walls a certain colour," says Lambe. "My walls are all off-white or light grey. Also drawing attention in the bedroom is a glass bedside table that doubles as a display for several pairs of striking stilettos. "I ran out of room in the cupboard and I saw something similar in Australian *Vogue Living* and liked the idea," she says, adding: "I do wear the shoes."

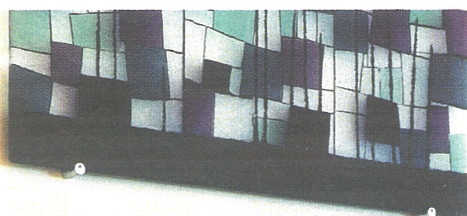
Owning a flat has given Lambe the freedom to enjoy carpet. "I like the feeling on my feet," she says. Soft carpet in the living spaces contrasts with a tiled floor in the kitchen and entrance area.

"This is not an apartment for entertaining guests," says Lambe, but its peaceful location helps her sleep well at night. That aside, it was bought as an investment and with her peripatetic lifestyle in mind.

"Who knows how long I'll live here," she says. "I've never lived anywhere too long."

4 Lambe built a false wall for neat storage. Above the television is artwork by Lisa Cahill, who is represented by Gaffer Studio Glass (unit 6, 17/F, Hing Wai Centre, 7 Tin Wan Praya Road, Aberdeen, tel: 2521 1770). The carpet in the living room and bedroom was sourced by Lambe's contractor and cost HK\$28,000.

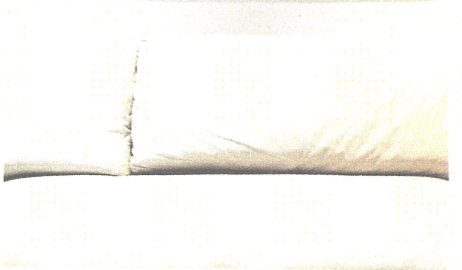
5 The glass-top table was designed by Kao. The steel-frame chair with grey cushions is from Sincere Living (248 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai, tel: 2285 8366). The work chair cost HK\$600 from Ho Ba Ning in Shenzhen (tel: 86 755 8429 3859). Flanking the table are Philips speakers (HK\$8,000) from Broadway. The red abstract painting is by Hong Kong artist Yolanda Yeung. Between family photos is a blue and yellow glass sculpture by Noel Hart, who is represented by Gaffer Studio Glass. Also represented by Gaffer is Gerry King, whose *Semblance* series sculpture sits on its own shelf by the window.



tried & tested on the shelf

Jules Lambe built in her flat shelves similar to those she uses to display works at art fairs. They slot onto horizontal wooden beams mounted on the wall. "They physically pop off," says Lambe. The shelves can be removed from the beams, which, if painted the same colour as the wall, are unobtrusive when not in use. "They support more weight than ordinary shelves and don't take up much room," says Lambe, owner and director of Gaffer Studio Glass (unit 6, 17/F, Hing Wai Centre, 7 Tin Wan Praya Road, Aberdeen, tel: 2521 1770).





6 Above the sofa (HK\$9,000), from Sincere Living, is a painting by Didik Nurhadi that was bought at the Sovereign Art Prize auction dinner last year.