

Home displays rotating collection of contemporary Chinese art

Patsy Yang

On the top (fifth) floor of a 1930s apartment building on leafy Wuyuan Road, Nunzia Carbone's 140-square-meter apartment has plenty of white walls and a lighting system to showcase her rotating collection of striking contemporary artworks.

By name, the interior designer and her visitors enjoy works by contemporary multi-media artist Lee Kit, photographer Massimo Bartoloni, Lu Chunsheng and artists Yang Zhenzhong, John Arnleider, Jiang Zhi and others.

Before moving to Shanghai in 2006, Carbone lived and worked in New York and Milan. The founder of Dodo Design Shanghai (www.dodo-design.com) had come to Shanghai to supervise a project, fell in love with the city and decided to make her home in China.

The Italian designer knew what she wanted: a house with an interesting and unusual view, and good light.

"What I love most about this old apartment is the good energy of the space," she said, noting that every room has at least two large windows and the central open space has a perfect north/south double exposure. "During the day, the light is warm and intense and at night, the view of old houses and tall buildings that surrounds me is very exciting."

She radically changed the layout, created an open-plan living, dining and kitchen room, as well as a Zen-like study. She added a second bathroom, re-designed and re-fitted the large windows to make them energy efficient, while preserving the patterns of the older frames. Floor heating was installed underneath restored wood planks.

Because the color brief was all about

serenity, Carbone paid more attention to construction details, light effects and surfaces. She has an eye for detail, so she was proactive in a lot of material choices, often selecting strong materials like wood, cement and iron.

When designing a private house, Carbone likes to play with spaces that have a certain personality in daylight while at night become more mysterious and sensual.

"I wanted to preserve the original spirit of the house while adding comfort, functionality and a 21st century Shanghai elegance," she said. The result is a contemporary space that's pleasant for domestic living and entertaining. Harmony and simplicity are key principles. She combined rational elements including clarity of lines and functions with more emotional elements, such as humor and memory.

"In terms of home decoration, I like to surround myself with interesting and unusual objects, both contemporary and old, and with lots of artworks," she said.

She mixes contemporary furniture with a few older items and has created many other pieces, including cabinets, tables, the tatami room, and benches. Other furniture comes from Chinese and Thai designers.

Each space in this apartment is in dialogue with another. "I connected them with lines of light and transparency. But there is also a sense of the 'public' and 'private' part of the house," she said.

Carbone loves all sorts of lights and lighting fixtures and she often thinks about new designs. She also advises the works of light technicians and photographers.

Her contemporary version of a classic crystal chandelier hangs over the dining room table. Designed with a former business partner in 1996, it features Swarovski crystals

hanging on a long, straight metal bar, "which creates a dramatic effect without being heavy or overbearing."

"At the time, it was quite a thing to do. 'Deconstructing' the chandeliers," she said of the work titled *Celada* and is produced and marketed by Anthologie Quartet.

Modern figures work well with a collection of old Chinese statues, tea pots and a huge Buddha statue she has collected over the years.

"I enjoy the harmony, the colors and shapes of Yixing teapots. I love drinking Chinese tea and tea, just to appreciate it. I find the statues very beautiful and a powerful expression of Chinese creativity and cultural history," she said.

She also follows contemporary Chinese art and since 2008 has collected works that she feels "connected to," like those in her house. "They give me emotions and inspiration for my own creative process," she said.

Video art has interested her lately. The director of SH Contemporary 2011, Massimo Troigiani, asked her to design key areas of the fair, such as the entrance, the VIP area and the magazine display area of the exhibition center.

Her concept was based on the principle of not designing anything that would be thrown away after a few days. Her approach was to save energy, not only electricity for Shanghai and the planet, but her own energy.

"I didn't want to generate any waste. I wanted to rent something already on the market for the duration of the fair and then return it to the seller, ready to be used again."

She displayed elements such as trees with attached rooms, cardboard packaging and a Mongolian tent what she called "a poetic and unusual way."



Homeowner Nunzia Carbone mixes contemporary design furniture with a few older items in her living room. — Deng Jun

THE DESIGNER

Who is he?
Fu Haijun is general manager of Camerich Furniture and leads the entire international R&D team. He has been working in the furniture industry for 23 years.



Designer Fu Haijun is what I follow.

Is there a work you are especially proud of?
So far, I would say there is no such work that I am most proud of. As a designer, the greatest accomplishment is always the next one.

What are you working on?

Over the past months, the whole Camerich design team had been busy with our cutting-edge concept show held at the China International Furniture Expo from September 14 to 17. The show was our global debut and its design inspiration originates from in-depth consideration about the future relationship between humans and space, humans and environment, as well as humans and furniture. It represents the cutting-edge furniture philosophy of Camerich through visualized works.

Describe your design style.

I pay most attention to the sense of design and vitality of products. Our furniture philosophy is to abandon senseless details. To maintain the best that cannot be taken away by time is the soul of our design, with fine selection of materials, simple design and Oriental and Occidental essence.

Do you have a favorite or most inspirational designer?

There are many designers that I look up to or admire, such as Gio Ponti, one of the most important Italian modernist designers, Leoh Ming Pei (also known as I.M. Pei) the world-famous architect, and Peter Behrens, the founder of German modernist design. Their masterpieces are greatly influential.

My personal design style is mainly modern simplicity. Hence the design of Gio Ponti has great influence on me. His design philosophy is against ornate details and for simple production and processing with beauty and this

What do you collect?

Nowadays so many people would like to collect some mahogany furniture, while as for me, I prefer to "collect" some design philosophy and represent it through my own hands. Of course, very soon I will own some good collections, that is, the series of the concept works from our concept show. And those works mean a lot to me.

What does your home mean to you?

Home is not only a place where I can relax, but also a place where I can demonstrate myself, and showcase my innovative ideas. In a home, furniture is not simply a pragmatic product, but where the soul lives, an old friend that can be mutually interacted with, and a living thing.

Where do you most like to go in Shanghai?

Shanghai is full of innovations and modernity. You can get new insights each time you go. If time permits, I want to go to many places like M50 Creative Park and the Bridge 8 Creative Park, which assemble creativity in Shanghai and are believed to be landmarks of fashionable creativity.

What's the next big design trend?

I always believe that design shall meet consumers' demands for high-quality life. The future design trends to emphasize innovative design of products, emotional interaction with humans, internal vitality of products, especially quality of products. These philosophies are blended well in the Shanghai concept show. Our series of concept furniture represents high-quality life with the integration of imagination and time elements.



1. The art piece "I Love China" displayed in the bathroom is by artist Yang Zhenzhong.
2. Carbone likes the harmony, colors and shapes of Yixing teapots.
3. Artwork "I Want to be a Gentleman" by Lu Chunsheng is hung above the console table in the living area.



1. Homeowner Carbone designed the dining table and the suspension light which features Swarovski crystal pieces hanging on a long straight metal bar.
2. Carbone designed most of the pieces for the tatami room with harmony and simplicity as key principles.
3. The original feel of the house is well preserved in the bathroom.
4. The bedroom features a chandelier by Phay Malasackda and art by Jiang Zhi. The chair and cabinet were designed and made in China.



Fu Haijun's furniture features high-quality materials and simple designs that blend Asian and Western influences.