



The living room walls are painted in Lamp Room Gray by Farrow & Ball. The sofa, by Francis Sultana, is adorned with cushions in Bruno Triple fabric and others by Ulrika Lilyedahl. Above hangs artwork by Austrian photographer Sophie Von Hanua. To the left, the lacquered table is from Habitat and the side chairs are by Christian Liaigre



Grey Matter

Text / Michael Paul

Images / Michael Paul / Living Inside

Selecting the right shade of grey might sound simple enough — but according to interior designer Florence Lim, it requires careful thought and much determination to get it absolutely perfect. When it came to choosing the colour scheme for her new two-bedroom *pied-à-terre* in Belgravia, one of London's most exclusive areas, Lim and her architect Voon Wong relentlessly experimented with numerous shades of grey until they were totally satisfied that they had the correct colour. 'What I was looking for was more of a Swedish Gustavian low-key grey against which I could contrast other deeper, moody shades to create the right vibe,' she explains. Lim finally settled on Farrow & Ball's 'Lamp Room Gray' for all the main living areas of the apartment; the shade has provided the perfect blank canvas against which she has added different colour layers and soft furnishings.

The end result is simply beautiful. Throughout this elegant apartment there is an understated appreciation of good taste, timelessness and a sense of real calm. Through her unique talent for interpreting the essence of a space, Lim has created a serene haven in one of the smartest parts of town. Her style can probably best be described as 'contemporary 20th-century meets classic Far East'. Many of Lim's influences and sensibilities are rooted in the East, but she also loves contemporary 20th-century furniture — and uses it to great effect. Yet the Eastern aesthetic she has introduced blends seamlessly with these contemporary pieces to add colour as well as a hip ethnic feel to the more muted tones chosen. In particular, the large grey carpet in the living room that features a tasteful yet playful gold Chinese cloud pattern sets the scene for the chic Far Eastern theme and *objets d'art*.

Against one wall Lim has positioned a long, low daybed covered in light grey pony skin. The piece is by the celebrated Danish designer Poul Kjaerholm, and is both stylish and dramatic. Its appearance is enhanced by a neon art instalment entitled *Long Live Romance* directly above it, which was created by the London-based performance artist Franko B especially for the apartment. The only piece that came from Lim's previous London home is a large and comfortable taupe-coloured sofa in the living room designed by Francis Sultana for David Gill, the well-known

art dealer and close friend of Lim. Now adorned with silver Ulrika Lilyedahl cushions as well as others from another friend, artist Grillo Demo, it has a completely new lease of life. All other furniture was sourced especially for the apartment, from the two stylish Christian Liaigre chairs that face the sofa to the rustic, loft-style coffee table that was chosen to add a note of informality.

The dining room is a tribute to both Lim's and Wong's ability to orchestrate geometry. The large, drum-based round table was designed by Lim and made by Wong to fit the room. It is set off with classic but slightly quirky black Eames dining chairs that complement the bold, graphic statement of the table. A circular, gilt-framed Porta Romana mirror on one wall is perfectly matched with a beautiful '60s French brass pendant light from Birgit Israel in London. The *pièce de résistance* that really heightens the drama in this already stunning space, however, is an installation along one wall of 'narrative text' artworks by the New Zealand artist Elliot Collins, sourced from the Tim Melville gallery in Auckland.

Although Lim has skilfully worked her special blend of alchemy on this apartment, she is quick to acknowledge the contribution made by the Singaporean-born Wong, from VoonWong&BensonSaw architects London. 'I needed a quick turnaround, and thanks to Voon's vision and hands-on management of the project it took only six months from purchase to completion,' she explains. One of the initial attractions of the apartment to Lim and Wong was that the rooms were already well-proportioned, meaning the space required few structural changes. Although some walls and doors were moved, this was mainly to create a more rational alignment rather than to radically change the layout.

This is the third project that VoonWong&BensonSaw have recently completed in London for discerning Asian clients, all of whom have benefited from strong currencies against the pound when buying into the buoyant, high-end London property market as investments or occasional homes. 'This was the perfect choice of apartment to re-design,' explains Wong. 'By adding an interesting choice of finishes and some bespoke design features, we have been able to add real value to this property, as well as help create a beautiful home.'



The Christian Liaigre-designed chairs are adorned with cushions in Bruno Triplet fabric



A table-scape consisting of Far Eastern artefacts, votive candle holders and other *objets d'art* by Alexander Lamont



A petrified tree trunk creates an unusual side table. The small glass lamp is by the Nordic designers MUUTO and the silver cushion was designed by Florence Lim using a Bruno Triplet fabric



In the hallway, an antique Chinese elm console table is flanked by two antique Chinese rosewood chairs. The lamps and other objects are from Porta Romana, and the mirror was purchased from Alfie's Market, London

long live romance



A pony-skin covered daybed by Poul Kjaerholm sits below *Long Live Romance*, a custom installation by London-based artist Franko B



In the dining room, the lamps and black lacquered vase are both by Alexander Lamont. The circular gilt-framed mirror is from Porta Romana, and the 1960s French brass pendant light was purchased from Birgit Israel, London



Here I give thanks
that beautiful
people are terrible
in bed.

Here I give thanks
for telling me
the truth.

Here I give thanks
for being subtle
and cool. Two things
of which, I am
convinced, I am
correctly grateful.

Here I give thanks
for sand in the
shower.

Here I give thanks
for being generous
every day.

The lacquered, drum-based dining table was custom-made by the architects Voon Wong & Benson Saw to the homeowner's design, and the black dining chairs are by Charles and Ray Eames



Flanking the bed are wall sconces by Fontana Arte, and on the floor is a rug by The Rug Company, London



The club chair is covered in a Jim Thompson silk fabric, and the floor lamp is by Moooi



In the guest bedroom, the cotton bedspread is from The White Company and the and the lamp is by FLOS



The bathroom is clad in travertine, with fittings by Axor