



# Putting funky into function

**C**lever design concepts, flexible living spaces and functional fixtures are hallmarks of the modern apartment. We asked some of the most prominent designers about the latest and most creative ways of making apartment interiors more functional.

## **Bianca Hung, senior associate at architecture firm Hayball**

When space is at a premium, every space has to work harder and smarter, says Bianca Hung. “With a lot of scrutiny around apartment sizes, it is vital to consider how those spaces can perform multiple functions and be used for various purposes.”

Hung and her design team carefully consider the arrangement of rooms “at a macro level” and how they connect with other living spaces. At a “micro level”, the team creates functional storage solutions “so there is a place for absolutely everything”.

## **FLEXIBLE ROOMS**

Hung points to Bravo, a multi-apartment development in Carlton. “We designed it so the two rooms which joined the main living area could be adapted to suit various uses. Occupants could use both as

bedrooms or use one as a bedroom and the other as a study or extra living room. We used floor-to-ceiling timber veneer sliding doors that could be opened to extend the living room, creating a continued flow of space free of visual barriers.”

## **STORAGE SOLUTIONS**

Hung says the idea that everything has to work harder and have dual functions extends to storage joinery and decorative items. She says developers are increasingly seeing the value of providing built-in storage units.

An example is Bond Quarter, a large apartment project in Spencer Street, West Melbourne. “We provided a study nook with built-in desk and overhead shelving in the entrance hall as well as shoe racks in the entry linen cupboard.”

Hung says it was planned in “an arrival sequence”. You walk in the door and there is a place to put your keys and mail, stow your shoes after you slip them off and hang up your coat.

## **Adele Bates, director of Adele Bates Design**

Interior designer Adele Bates says there’s a rising trend to treat joinery as an aesthetic feature rather than being “purely functional”.



“The range of finishes and materials available to designers is constantly evolving and expanding,” she says. “Designers are increasingly pushing what is possible in apartment design when it comes to joinery detailing and material palettes. Bespoke details such as leather handle pulls, matt textured cabinetry, timber veneer accents and feature tapware are finding their way into the multi-residential industry.”

Innovative storage is becoming the norm, Bates says. “It is no longer enough to merely offer linen storage. Simple considerations for items such as bikes and market trolleys are now expected.”

#### THE LATEST LOOK

Bates says “tactile” and natural-looking materials are highly sought after.

“Matt and brushed surfaces are taking precedence over chrome and highly polished tapware and lighting fixtures. Timber, concrete, natural stone, hand-glazed tiles and artisan light fittings and fixtures are popular.

“Elements more commonly found in house design applications are increasingly being used in apartment design to achieve a real ‘home feel’.”

#### David Hicks, director of architecture and interior design firm David Hicks

“When designing an apartment, we always try and maximise the space either physically, visually or both,” David Hicks says. “It all starts with clever planning.

“Then we consider the services to try and integrate them in such a way as to maximise ceiling heights.

“This may involve concealment of ductwork above joinery.

“The views and natural light are also very important and are key in assessing where living and sleeping areas should be located. Luxury is about space, light and functionality of the layout.”

#### ALL IN THE PLANNING

Hicks was appointed to head the interior design for a boutique Tim Gurner apartment project in South Melbourne.

“With 74 Eastern Road we were lucky enough to work with a developer that understands what true luxury is. It is not just the finishes that are important, but

also the planning. The integration of larger living areas and higher ceilings were key to the success of this development. We spent a lot of time on the planning and layout of the apartments.”

#### MAKE EACH SPACE WORK HARDER

“With some of the one and two-bedroom apartments at 74 Eastern Road we incorporated dining tables in the stone island benches. This is very European and efficient, providing the opportunity to have a large living space with no need for a table.

“Elements like this are what makes the design considered and utilitarian.”



**The Union in Brunswick: Adele Bates Design used timber floorboards and joinery accents to give the spaces a warm feel while the black tapware, track lighting and tiling add a graphic element to each apartment. The design is clean and minimal with refined embellishments.**



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**From top: David Hicks' luxe touch is evident in this Tim Gurner apartment project; Hayball used floor-to-ceiling sliding doors that can be opened to extend the living room at Bravo.**