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THE MELBURNIAN

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5 MINUTES WITH ALEX HOPKINS OF STUDIO TATE

Define your style / what is your point of difference?

We create spaces with personality, looking at the big picture right down to the smallest detail. We believe that interior architecture doesn't stop at the doorway – our spaces integrate with landscape and architecture, to create integrative, immersive environments that capture the imagination.

We produce original solutions with enduring appeal, but what we offer is so much more than the end result. It might not be visible to the naked eye, but each of our projects is a series of small chapters that together form a story of collaboration between our team, our clients and the talented people we work with. Design is a process of interpretation – we create visual interpretations of our clients and their briefs – translating their own distinctive qualities into the spaces where they live, work and play.

What was key in the brief and how did you satisfy the client?

Studio Tate completed this comprehensive penthouse renovation in the Melburnian complex on St Kilda Road, overlooking the Shrine of Remembrance and the botanical gardens. Our client have always loved living at The Melburnian. The proximity to Melbourne's CBD as well as South Melbourne has provided our client with a relaxed and comfortable lifestyle.

Our brief was to improve the internal spatial layout, in particular improve the dining area by creating a larger space to cater for the extended family. We considered how both of our clients used the space whether together or on their own, and made changes to ensure they could really get the most out of their living spaces. Naturally, we looked to maximize the exceptional views at each opportunity.

Major spatial reconfigurations included transforming the second bedroom into a study/den area, as well as alterations to the kitchen and meals area. We reconfigured the interface between the dining and master bedroom to give extra amenity and storage in the master ensuite and walk-in robes as well as improve the dining area to facilitate a custom table to seat 10 people.

Integrated outdoor cooking and dining on the terrace was also introduced.

Our client is delighted with their new penthouse which is their city home during the working week. They use the space to entertain both friends and family. On occasion, the second bedroom is home to one or two of the grandchildren. At other times, it is just one of them at home while the other enjoys time away at their beachside property. The new design provides flexibility to host a cocktail party with friends or assemble the family together for takeaway on a Sunday!

What did you enjoy most about the project?

Looking for a refreshed and opulent look, we introduced the design concept of 'LA glamour' – a sophisticated and bold concept that uses form and feature materials to evoke a sense of understated luxury with a classic Hollywood vibe.

Picking up on our client's love of black and white, we made this a central theme throughout the apartment, such as the chevron marble tile with black stone border in the master ensuite. Other special touches include the powder room with sumptuous pink-veined green marble, pink pendant lamp and bronze mirror trim. Custom features are found in the wall panelling in the dining and living areas, detail on the ceiling strapping which we introduced to further enhance the classic Hollywood hotel vibe complemented by distinctive lighting choices.

Through selecting a palette that is visually stimulating without compromising the natural light penetration, we have been able to refresh the penthouse and reinvigorate our client's love of their penthouse at The Melburnian.

Each element of this project was an exercise in detail. We think of it like the clasp on a luxury handbag – subtle notes of luxury that speak volumes. The original fit-out was a neutral design without much character, we have been able to inject a sense of individuality to the completed interior ultimately reflecting the personality of our client. With each project we undertake, it is important the end result references the original design concept.

We were fortunate to have a client who was willing to integrate the design concept to all elements of the project including wall and ceiling panelling, joinery design, finishes and furniture/artwork. So there are many favourite design elements!

What inspires you today?

Looking at the big picture, right down to the smallest detail...

We are strong advocates of the power of interior architecture. Our approach is far from superficial: we look at the spatial, structural and functional elements of all of our projects, as well as the wider context.

The detail is crucial – the little moments of discovery and excitement in any space – and this is something we love bringing to life in our projects. Our design team has the right mix of skills to work from the big picture to the fine grain.

Do you have any rules?

Making taking risks look easy! The design process is like any relationship, it requires trust and taking risks and the best ones challenge both people.

We understand that for some this can be a scary prospect, but at Studio Tate we have the right ingredients to calm people's fears: a proven track record in delivering projects, sound business structures, and a complementary team who can bring the best out of any brief. We work with our clients to make brave decisions when needed, no matter at what scale.

Design is not just about what gets built, it's about the collaborative journey of countless small steps towards that end result.

