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Landmark living



Combine the architectural pedigree of Foster and Partners with the design savvy of Andrea D'Cruz and you have a home that's truly world-class.

STORY MARK VENDER PHOTOGRAPHY TONY POTTER STYLING JUDITH BIRNBERG

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PREVIOUS PAGE: Travertine floors extend throughout the apartment, and in the loggia area built-in drainage allows residents to open it to the elements. The tripod lamp in the corner – with sheer fabric shade and polished chrome stand – is from Coco Republic.

ABOVE: The perfect place to collaborate the view – the champagne rests on a polished-chrome coffee table topped with black glass.

RIGHT: The dining table is finished in ebonised-timber veneer and the chandelier behind it is encased in a mirrored-drum shade from Spacio Furniture, providing both a focal point and definition between kitchen and entry hall.

Could Sydney's CBD finally be delivering on its promise of sophisticated living? Standing on George Street gazing up at the new Lumière apartment buildings on the corner of Bathurst Street, it seems like it. For many years this precinct was synonymous with kebab joints, video arcades and malodorous cinemas, now it's dominated by Lumière's sleek, towering facade. And, if the council's ambitious plans come to fruition, it will soon boast wider footpaths and a large park opposite Town Hall and the QVB – which would make it quite a neighbourhood.

The owners of this apartment on level 35 – with two bedrooms plus a study – obviously thought so. Now in their late 50s, the couple traded an empty nest and some of their investments for smaller homes in better positions in New York and Sydney. What they were after here was a stopping-off point for business purposes that they could lock up and leave at a moment's notice. Lumière fitted the bill – and they are finding increasingly they use it more for pleasure.

They also needed a place in which they felt at home, and that's where Andrea D'Cruz from Sydney interior-design firm BLDesign came in. "It was pretty much a blank canvas," she says. "The floors were in and the walls white, the kitchens and bathrooms completed, and the carpets and the stone floor tiles down – and that was it. We came in and furnished it."



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The chrome on the coffee table sparkles in the lounge area while the patchwork rug – real fella, dyed jet black from the NSW Leather Co. – provides serious texture.



The look of luxury extends to the kitchen with its mirrored glass.



A CUT ABOVE

Of course there are blank canvases – and then there are blank canvases – and when your starting point is an apartment designed by Foster and Partners, the firm behind modern architectural wonders such as the new Reichstag in Berlin and the ‘gherkin’ building in London, you’re already some considerable way towards a masterpiece. The bathroom includes travertine floors with heating built-in, and basins and toilet suites specially designed by Duravit are teamed with onyx and colour-backed glass to give a striking finish – and a seamless, easy-to-clean surface. The kitchen boasts similar finishes with Miele appliances as standard and the entire apartment was designed to make the most of the floor plan. “Some architects we work with get it and some don’t,” Andrea says simply, “but Foster and Partners are a team who do understand how spaces work. They planned it extremely well so there were a lot of great alignments and junction points that were easy to deal with. They certainly got it right.”

ABOVE: The bedroom – naturally – is all about touch, with a faux-fur throw and wall panels in French metallic-weave fabric.
RIGHT: A Canadian fabric from the Michael Weiss Collection extends the full length of wall in the guestroom and the Vitrol pendant light is an Italian import from Murano, Italy.
LEFT: The third bedroom was converted into a study and it echoes the mix-and-match of styles used throughout the apartment.



There were, however, a couple of important changes to make. A third bedroom made way for a study, for that occasional bit of business, and the storage space in that room was linked to the master bedroom and converted into a his-and-hers walk-in robe – for the spoils of shopping trips, what else? Andrea's team also had to decide how to make use of the loggia, which has bi-fold doors and broad windows so it can be treated as an indoor deck. However, they chose to incorporate the area into the apartment as, if the owners crave open spaces, there's always Club Lumière, stretching over two levels in the building with ample outdoor areas and a 50-metre swimming pool.

THE LOOK OF LUXE

For all the benefits, there were also challenges – and top of the list was the clients' request for an atmosphere of restrained opulence and glamour. "If you're looking at what the Foster and Partners brand stands for traditionally, it's fairly minimal and hard-edged," Andrea explains, "so we had to transform this apartment into something that was really luxurious." They achieved this mainly through the diverse range of materials like velvet, textured linen, silk-effect wallpaper – even faux fur in the master bedroom – and these tactile items make the place more inviting.

The variety of forms in the furniture, too, softens the occasionally 'stern' lines of the apartment. The living area buzzes with the decorative dialogue going on between the ornate Louis chairs, the mid-century-modern coffee table and the industrial tripod lamp in the corner. "That was the idea," Andrea beams, "to mix a couple of styles and to have some fun with it!" Patterns of natural forms on the upholstery and cushions also lend understated warmth.

GIN AND TONIC

At first, the predominance of black and white may seem to work at cross-purposes to all this, but a New-York-style palette was another 'client requirement', so subtle accents were employed in shades of champagne and cognac. "There's a certain sophistication and well-established feel about it," Andrea declares, and adds that the tradespeople who worked on the job referred to it as the 'gin-and-tonic' apartment.

"It's deep and moody," she admits, "which isn't typical of how we live in Australia. In Sydney, in particular, we're actually very light and breezy, while this takes on more of a Manhattan air." There are some local touches in the original works by local artists such as Robyn Kinsela and Ruth Levine, but when asked what qualifies as typically Australian here, Andrea pauses. "It's very much an international apartment," she says. "When you look at the cross-section of design, and you look at international work in comparison to Australian work, it's really difficult to pick who is the international designer." Perhaps it's also further confirmation of Sydney's place on the world circuit of architecture, design and centre-of-the-city living – and Australia's too.

TIP: Sheer luxury in travertine, onyx, glass and Duvatil, the bathroom is not only visually stunning, it's also practical – with no grout between tiles to keep clean.

EDITOR: Yes, that is a mirror in the shower! "You get a bit of a shock when you step in," Andrea admits.



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Scene Styles

With its bold black & white palette & sophisticated look this apartment has the feel of a luxurious Manhattan penthouse



Ornate Louis-style chairs offer a whimsical mix of styles and add to the sense of opulence. The Chartes chair from Coco Republic has beautiful lines.



The reflective surface on the base of this lamp captures the light and adds a warm glow to a bare corner.

The rug from the NSW Leather Co was dyed black to team with the decor and it also adds intriguing texture on the floor.

The polished-chrome coffee table captures the glamour of the 1950s. A similar one is available at IKEA.

Soft taupe shades on the walls relieve the stark black and white palette and strengthen the urbane feeling.

Clever idea! Deep white borders draw the eye to monochrome artworks in simple black frames. This well-balanced group make an eye-catching centrepiece. For a similar look try this one from UR1 International.



The modular lounge has a warm and inviting feel, its simple lines enhanced by cushions in dramatic prints and appealing textures. Get the same effect with this striking cushion from IKEA.