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THESE PAGES The expansive sitting room, where the eye is immediately drawn upon entering the apartment, maximises views and allows a seamless transition between indoors and out. "Tall, floor-to-ceiling windows and built-in shelving elements are a mix of oak, birch, maple and ash, and about six look-capturing 'designer' lamps, wall-to-wall by Helen Krasula. The coffee table, a custom piece by RLJ for the penthouse. The adjoining balcony, with integrated, cantilevered beyond left is one of the home's most striking spaces. White-on-White leather chairs (in background) are from 'by design'.

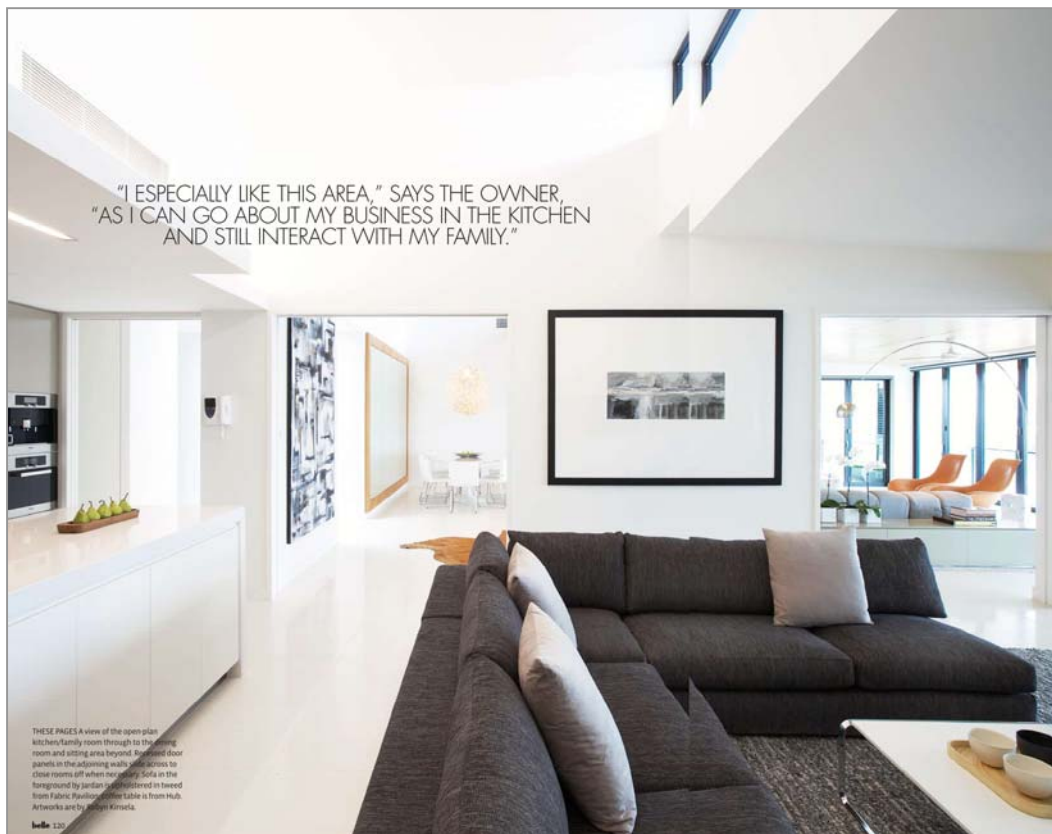


NEW ORDER

Room to entertain, privacy and plenty of storage were the key priorities for this seamless and sophisticated penthouse in Brisbane.

PHOTOGRAPHS TOM EVANGELIDIS PRODUCTION + WORDS JEAN WRIGHT

"I ESPECIALLY LIKE THIS AREA," SAYS THE OWNER, "AS I CAN GO ABOUT MY BUSINESS IN THE KITCHEN AND STILL INTERACT WITH MY FAMILY."



THESE PAGES A view of the open-plan kitchen/family room through to the dining room and sitting area beyond. Bi-fold door panels in the adjoining walls provide access to close rooms off when not needed. Sofa in the foreground by garden (off-camera) is from Hub. Artworks are by Julian Kinnala.

hella 120

It was a time of change in more ways than one when the James family – Christy and George, their two teenagers and new-born baby – moved from a large family home to this brand-new riverfront penthouse in Brisbane, which they bought off the plan in 2007.

The starting point was "a really big clean out," says Christy. "We sold lots of old things on eBay." Then she began working with an interior designer, Andrea D'Onofrio from RLJ Design (RLJ) in Sydney, whom she'd met at the launch of the residential complex in which she now lives. (RLJ was responsible for the interior design of the development.) Christy had never worked with an interior designer before, and initially had reservations about putting her trust in one person ("probably deemed a normal response", she says). She also had concerns about how much give and take there should be, and how her vision would be interpreted. They met each time Andrea visited the site, and commenced working together in 2008. "Andrea listened to our brief very well," says Christy. "With teenagers and a toddler, we needed the home's spaces to be flexible, so we all could come together or have privacy when required."

"There is always a connection, or a connective point," explains Andrea, describing how the sitting room links up with covered balconies, as well as the family room and kitchen. Custom-made panels that can divide the kitchen/family room from the sitting room retract into walls to permit a seamless flow between the rooms. A study nook in the centre of the home, used daily by Christy and George, opens up to the entrance hallway but can be cordoned off with a large sliding door when necessary. The key to this functional working space, however – and for the apartment in general – is storage. All working tools are hidden but accessible in cupboards that run along a wall in the adjoining hallway.

"I have more storage here than I've had in any of my previous homes," says Christy. "This is due to a combination of having an early plan/design (which was modified to gain maximum storage) without compromising the floor plan) and wanting the same amount of storage you'd expect to find in a large home."

Every centimetre of the apartment's floor plan is utilised. Balconies are used for breakfast, dining and casual entertaining; the family room is where the owners and their children gather to share the day's events. "I especially like this area, as I can go about [my business in] the kitchen and still interact with my family," says Christy. The main sitting room, where the eye is drawn when you enter the home,



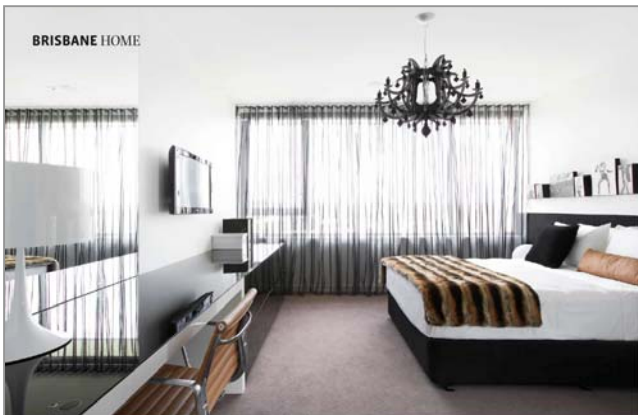
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"WE NEEDED THE HOME'S SPACES TO BE FLEXIBLE, SO WE COULD ALL COME TOGETHER OR HAVE PRIVACY WHEN REQUIRED."

THIS PAGE A view across Brisbane river from the living area. OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP TO THE dining room, two chairs. In the living area, a large hand-crafted Euro Saarinen dining table surrounded by white leather chairs. Opposite page, mirror is framed in marble. BOTTOM The sleek contemporary kitchen, featuring functional work spaces and high-quality fixtures, was designed not only for easy entertaining but also to complement the adjoining living space. KNOX stainless steel doors. Artwork is by Claire Storing.

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THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP THE owners' daughter wanted a glamorous yet edgy bedroom. The room was fitted out accordingly, and features the Stamp 'Ginetta' chandelier and her favourite fashion images, which the interior designer had reproduced on canvas. In the study, walnut shelving is set against a wall of textured wallpaper (Barenscor 'Topaz'). Working tools are kept out of sight in cupboards in the adjacent hallway. The main bedroom ensuite with marble-encased bath enjoys tranquil views. OPPOSITE PAGE The main bedroom features a play on symmetry. Panelled wall is covered in mahar velvet by Kvadrat.

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doubles as a place to entertain guests as well as a spot for television-watching. Andrea's pet hate is "seeing the television as a dominant feature in a room", and the large television here is designed to disappear behind panels that sit flush with the wall. In the family room, plywood panels are situated either side of the television, cleverly turning it into part of a linear wall feature.

The fit-out is high-end but not precious (ceilings are simple plywood for one), with materials used being mostly practical and serviceable – resilient leather for occasional chairs, salt-and-pepper veneers for sofas. The colour scheme is basically monochromatic, with touches of tan used for warmth.

The main bedroom is a play on symmetry. A panelled wall in charcoal moirai sits alongside soft sheer curtaining, while a white rectangular bedside table is paired up with a black round vintage version – all are reflected in a mirrored wall. "I especially love the mirrored wall, which not only opens up an already large space but also reflects the beautiful river and city views," says Christy.

Each child's bedroom reflects their individuality. Steph, 17, loves fashion (her favourite images were reproduced on custom posters), and knew what she wanted – "a glamorous space with an edge feel", a black chandelier and a black-and-white colour scheme. At 13, Nick was less forthcoming. "His room was the hardest as he gave us little to work on other than his love of sports," explains Christy. A feature shelf above the bed is taking shape slowly and may well change with his differing interests over time. For Hunter, now two, a room was modified and visually scaled down, with furniture (a bed, desk and play tent) simply positioned around a circular rug.

Asked if she enjoyed working on this project, Andrea says: "The whole family has been wonderful to work with. The energy between the clients and designer made it an absolute joy."

SPEED READ While the concept of this sleek, minimalist waterfront penthouse was pleasing to most, here from a large family home their prime concern was storage. Another preoccupation was expensive living spaces that could be opened up for entertaining or closed off for privacy. Working with interior designer Andrea D'Crux from B.Design in Sydney, the owners' goals were met. With a mix of drama and practical contemporary pieces, the home is a scene of laid-back sophistication – just perfect for entertaining.