

SMART DESIGN

Small spaces merge with big ideas

As apartments shrink, every millimetre matters, writes **Isobel King**.

As apartments become smaller, designers are compelled to think bigger, creating the illusion of space. They take advantage of every millimetre to create multi-function, light-filled, storage-rich spaces.

Take Smart Design Studio's answer to the 42-square-metre, one-bedroom suites (in essence studios) of One Central Park West, one of the twin residential towers forming part of stage one of Frasers Property's Central Park development on the edge of Sydney's central business district.

The \$2 billion project, which is under construction, will create a new commercial, residential and retail precinct on the site of the old Carlton & United Brewery in Chippendale, comprising 1900 apartments and a public park.

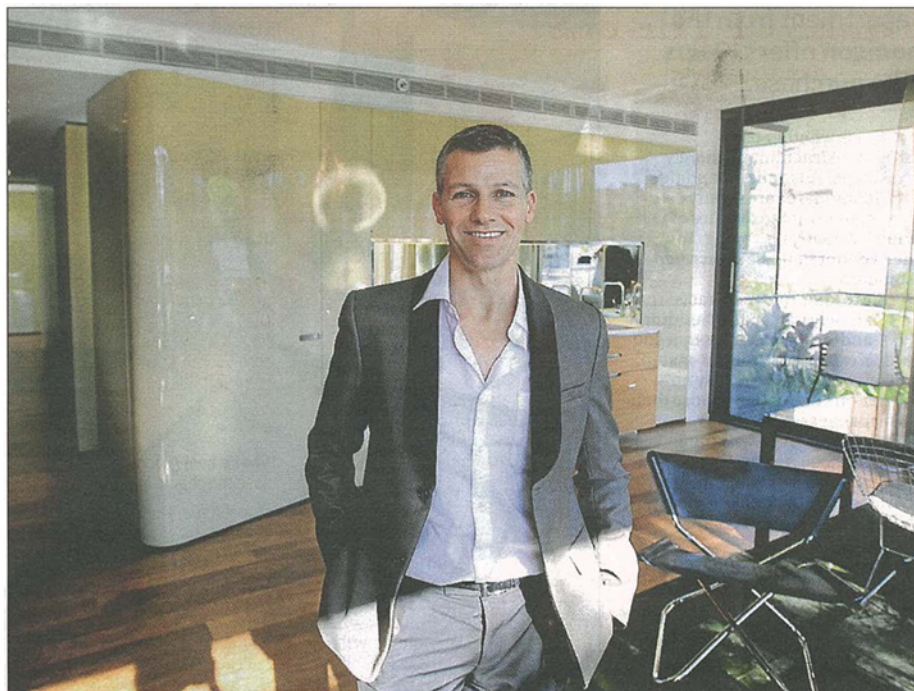
MULTI-FUNCTION DESIGN

Charged with overseeing the interiors for the west tower, Smart Design architect William Smart modelled his plan for the one-bedroom suites around the idea of "high-speed luxury", the kind more commonly found inside sports cars and luxury yachts, whereby all the bells and whistles have to be squeezed into a tight space.

The interiors are based around a central multi-function pod containing all the apartment's functional components: kitchen, laundry, bathroom, storage, airconditioning and services.

Frasers' signature "dual-key" design allows two-bedroom apartments to be converted into two separate apartments, with a shared foyer but separate lockable entrances, making it particularly attractive to investors looking to create two leases, Smart says.

Other developers are now considering incorporating the flexible dual-key approach, including Lateral Corporation in its Emerald Park development at



Green Square (see page 14). The dual-key apartments at Central Park are expected to fetch a total of about \$1000 a week in rent.

Multi-function design is also central to the work of Melbourne architectural firm RotheLowman, which has worked on some of the city's significant residential projects, including Hamton's Haven apartments in Abbotsford (see page 4) and Habitat, a new residential tower for Southbank.

One of the novel options offered

at Haven is a dining table that slides under the island kitchen bench and slide-out benches in the kitchen.

"Attention to detail is absolutely critical," the principal of RotheLowman, Chris Hayton, says.

KITCHEN AND BATHROOM TRENDS

Hayton says the quality of laminate finishes has vastly improved, meaning designers have much more to choose from on a tight budget. Kitchen and bathroom

interact but also attracts outsiders, creating a neighbourhood feel and ensuring on-site businesses have enough traffic to thrive.

Smart Design's exciting North One project in Perth's Subiaco (see page 5) "knits together the old and new architecture of Subiaco", Smart says.

"We took the materials of the old neighbourhood, like the red brick and shutters, and married them with contemporary architecture." As Hayton emphasises:

"Integration with the surrounding environment is very important."

It's one of the reasons why many developments now include a commercial component and public spaces that entice the neighbouring community in.

The noise and "harsh urban environment" of Habitat ruled out individual balconies for the apartments; instead, residents have a communal, three-storey vertical garden with built-in furniture on each level.

Investors buying into Habitat can expect rental returns of about \$350 a week for a one-bedroom apartment.

COMMUNAL ROOFTOP DINING

North One, Haven and Habitat, like many new developments, have introduced the notion of group dining. North One's rooftop kitchen and dining room, called The Loggia, has been designed for large-scale entertaining, capitalising on Perth's balmy weather. Haven's rooftop will have outdoor fireplaces and a dining room for residents.

"You'll be able to book a 12-person dining room on the roof so you're not restricted by the size of your apartment," Hayton says.

More information

Habitat one-bedroom apartments are priced from \$367,500. Phone 0411 111 109, see habitatsouthbank.com.au. One Central Park one-bedroom apartments from \$685,000; dual-key two-bedroom apartments from \$880,000. Stage two of Park Lane offers one-bedroom suites (studios) from \$515,000. Phone 1300 857 057, see centralparksydney.com.

Broad minded ... (above) architect William Smart; (left) the Habitat rooftop. Photo: Edwina Pickles

cabinets sport a range of sophisticated, textured laminates, although Hayton says it would be a hard sell to have a kitchen without stone benchtops. Looking ahead, induction cooktops could replace gas hobs for popularity.

And when it comes to bathrooms, there is a lot more acceptance that a tub is simply not practical in smaller, space-restricted apartments.

"It of course has to be tailored to the demographic of the perceived purchaser but baths now tend to be found in apartments with two bathrooms," Hayton says.

VILLAGE COMMUNITIES

Common to almost all progressive residential projects these days is the idea of creating a sense of community, with a design that not only encourages residents to