

A modern light fitting in the living area sits well with the traditional patterned ceiling.



The gentleman's residence

An old apartment is transformed from a mere crash pad into a stylish pied-à-terre, writes **Robyn Willis**

PROJECT

Owners

A couple whose main residence is out of town

Architect

Andrew Waller
mrwaller.com

The problem

A small apartment with no sense of warmth

The site

An older apartment block in Potts Point

Design solution

Using minor structural changes and a cohesive palette to create a quietly masculine residence

How long did it take

Three months

In some ways, this project is indicative of the changing demands of modern working life.

The owners of this two-bedroom apartment in Potts Point had a more substantial residence outside the city but, for one of them, regular commutes to the CBD were just a fact of life.

Unhappy with crashing regularly at an unwelcoming apartment, he wanted a stylish masculine space that would provide sanctuary after a busy working day.

The perfect pad

Interior designer Andrew Waller set about streamlining the apartment so that it would be both easy to use and a pleasure to be in.

"The owners didn't want to be staying overnight in the city at hotels all the time," he says. "They needed a base where they would not have to eat takeaway every night."

To improve the functionality of the 75sq m apartment — which includes the balcony — Andrew decided to dispense with the second bedroom by removing a wall.

"The smaller bedroom is to the back, which dog legs around so there is more corridor than is warranted," he says. "We took the back bedroom wall out and made it a study area instead and then we set up the larger bedroom at the front as the main bedroom."

But the first priority was updating the kitchen and bathroom, with an emphasis on installing efficient but beautiful joinery.

"The kitchen is pretty small but it has all the appliances you need with the fridge tucked behind the joinery door," Andrew says.

"We were trying to do a lot in there — the washing machine is in the kitchen as well — and there is a dishwasher drawer rather than one with a fold-out door which limited what appliances we could choose."



Built-in robes in the bedroom streamline the small space, making it feel larger.

The style of the joinery is consistent throughout the apartment, even into the built-in robe in the bedroom.

"We don't really like to have the kitchen in one joinery language and then something different elsewhere with no continuity," Andrew says.

"We could have done a more traditional joinery but we wanted to update it a little."

Behind closed doors

Moving services such as plumbing and electrics is notoriously difficult in apartment buildings because of the knock-on effects for

other apartments. Andrew managed small changes in location using the joinery as a disguise.

"With the kitchen, we could conceal services within the joinery," he says. "We took the bath out in the bathroom and put in a sink and then we built that within the joinery."

While this required input from several different tradespeople, Andrew tried to keep numbers down in the small space through a few simple design decisions.

"In the kitchen, we intentionally went higher than the previous line (of cupboards) so that we would not have to render the wall and



A built-in desk in the study makes the most of the natural light.



The old Japanned floors were sanded back to a lighter colour to give a greater sense of space.



get another tradesman in," he says. "Even so, we had five guys in the bathroom at once towards the end."

With so many people coming and going over the three-month construction period, Andrew says keeping the neighbours informed was key to a successful outcome.

"We went overboard with detail so that we didn't put anyone's nose out of joint," he says.

Man's world

Given the apartment would mostly be used by the male owner, Andrew wanted to give the space a masculine edge, which is evident mostly in a quiet palette of white, grey and indigo blue.

"They had some art and ceramic works they wanted to use but it was otherwise doing it all from scratch," he says. "The ceramics were a bit of a reference point. Especially when you are looking at a smaller space, those smaller details become really important."

Pictures Maree Homer



The owners brought some ceramics with them.



Carefully selected contemporary artworks breathe life into the apartment, which is not always in use.

THE SOURCE

Dining chairs Thonet Vienna no. 14 chairs in black, thonet.com.au **Occasional chair** Paulistano chair in black leather C1957 from Hub Furniture, hubfurniture.com.au **Pendant light** Coco Flip pendant by Kate Stokes, from Cult Design, cultdesign.com.au **Artwork** John Olsen Lake Eyre – The Desert Sea IX (limited edition print) **Floor lamp and desk** Derek floor lamp and Scandinavian desk in oak and plywood by Andrew Waller Design (custom design for this project) **Joinery** Vertical V joint detail, hand painted in Resene Quarter Friar Grey semi-gloss, resene.com.au