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Great divide

Getting creative with space in a new interior **14**

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Open to the possibilities

Interior designer Paul Hecker got creative with zoning in this character-filled apartment space, writes Robyn Willis

Paul Hecker was, at first, a little dismayed when he heard that an original warehouse was to be demolished in favour of a new purpose-built apartment block in Waterloo.

As interior designer for the new George & Allen development at Waterloo, it was his task to imbue character and warmth into the display apartment.

He feared the job would be made harder with nothing but slick bare walls to work with.

However, the design of the new building which mixes a range of materials including glass, plasterboard and brick turned out to be just the right backdrop for the contemporary eclectic look Paul and his team at Melbourne-based Hecker Guthrie created.

"The design came quite easily because the initial inspiration for the interiors was the building," he says.

Without an actual client to work with, Paul says he decided to please himself to some extent, while keeping an eye on people already attracted to the area.

"What happens so often with display apartments is that they try to attract everyone from 18- to 65-year-olds with cash," Paul says.

"We know there will be certain people these interiors will alienate but others will be really drawn into it."

Design flexibility

Making the most of the articulated spaces, Paul has divided the rooms using functional pieces of furniture such as open bookcases.

While built-in storage has been provided, he has also opted for additional hanging space such as button-shaped coat hooks from Dutch company HK Living outside the bathroom.

Paul says working with a neutral backdrop has provided design flexibility.

"As soon as you add strong colour and wallpaper they become limiting for the end user," he says.



Open bookcases help to divide spaces in the Waterloo apartment.





Hecker says the mix of materials used in the building made great backdrops.

STYLE TIPS

Green thumb

Plants are an excellent way of literally adding life to an interior.

"As soon as you put a plant in, it looks like someone lives there and it's a lot less expensive than buying flowers every week," Paul says.

Get the Luxe Look

Nothing says luxury like expensive finishes but Paul counsels against applying swathes of the stuff because it loses its impact. In this apartment, toffee-coloured leather and velvet upholstery have been used in small doses.

"We try to use expensive materials to their greatest impact like stone finishes and leather," he says. "Most people don't have the budget to splash it around so if we are going to use stone, it would be for something like a chopping board."

Texture and layering

Paul was delighted to see open brick used in the apartment because of the textural element it introduces. While his overall palette is neutral, he added layers with chunky knitted throw rugs and cushions, patchwork bedspreads and even a large ball of twine for a textural touch which instantly gives the space a lived-in feel.

Changing rooms

While it is tempting to buy the latest beautiful piece of furniture, Paul says often moving your furniture around is enough to give the room a lift.

"I move things around in my home even though I have lived there for about 12 years," he says.

If you stick to neutrals for major pieces such as lounges, Paul says a room can be easily updated with a change of soft furnishings.

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