

# SHIP SHAPE

Throw away preconceived apartment prejudices, writes *Megan Morton*. Less is much more in this perfectly transformed Sydney home.

Photography Simon Kenny

Far from a conventional set-up, this one-bedder in Sydney's Elizabeth Bay challenges all notions of apartment living. Its pared-back design insists visitors develop an appreciation for simplicity. "I wanted a flexible environment where small spaces would be maximised to contain multiple uses," says Peter Lonergan of Cracknell & Lonergan Architects. For the owners, a retired couple unencumbered by a dining table full of school books or tax returns, it's the model way to live.

Starting life as a single bedroom with a separate study, traditional kitchen and bathroom, the apartment now works as one, big, flexible free-for-all that offers its owners the same functions, without traditional walls and useless divisions, as it did when they took it on 10 years ago. Clever design devices confer an increased sense of space. Wiping out internal walls and dropping a room could be considered risky but losing a lot for maximum gain was never a concern for Lonergan. "For me, it's a clever way of summarising the functional elements of a livable space," he says.

Structurally, it's a bit like the thigh-bone-connected-to-the-hip-bone scenario. The bedroom unites with the living area, which adjoins the dining area, which also contains a study area. All spaces are attached to the kitchen, which is in turn attached to the bathroom and robe. The space expands and contracts with the opening or closing of a sliding door, offering the double bill of a cosy pied-a-terre or friendly open studio.

The 70sqm apartment's appointments are all top shelf but the overall effect is not extravagant. The owners are boat lovers and there is a hint of ship-shape efficiency in that nothing is superfluous and everything can be stowed

away. Decoratively, it's a solid connection of purposefully unfussy pieces planted against a dramatic harbour backdrop. The interior doesn't distract from the heady water view but matches it impact-for-impact with a palette of wood, marble, white and mirrors. Soft edges come from the circular-shaped Minotti lounge, Tom Dixon mirror-ball lights, Knoll coffee and dining tables and Verner Panton dining chairs.

As the entire space can be on show with the pull of a door, Lonergan together with fellow architect Diana Ribarevski, also of Cracknell & Lonergan, assumed nothing. Behind the immaculately joined marble mitre joints and sliding door panels, for example, are rich fabric-panel backings and the most touchable draw-pulls and edgings.

Ribarevski explains the effect in tailor's terms: "It's like a fine-tailored suit that is muted and sharp outside, but opens to reveal a rich, fun, expressive lining." As anyone who has experienced the delight of owning a demure Paul Smith suit with polka-dot silk lining or a pair of Christian Louboutin heels with red lacquer soles will appreciate, it's a deeply satisfying guilty pleasure.

Natural lighting, heating and cooling are all in place. Blockout blinds repel the summer sun, while winter sunlight works to heat the marble floor.

The owners are thrilled with their new apartment, which took 16 weeks to complete. Should they ever decide to sell, the advertisement might read much the same as it did when they bought it, less a study. But while they sacrificed a room, they gained so much more.

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**Clockwise, from top left: Superb water views are all the decoration required for the apartment's walls and windows. Living room: Clean, nautically inspired lines have been pursued throughout. The entire space can expand or contract by way of 36mm-thick sliding doors on an overhead track system. Dining: The polished bianco perline marble floor contrasts with the warm blackheart sassafras lined walls. Bedroom: Architects Cracknell & Lonergan encased the bedroom in the same wood-panelled walls, resulting in a cocooning effect when the sliding door is pulled closed. Open plan: The same materials were used in order to achieve maximum impact and to visually increase the apartment's overall footprint. Bathroom: Extensive use of mirrors heightens the sense of space in the streamlined galley-style bathroom.**

