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Resting place

In a reversal of the usual trend, a city apartment configured as a space of retreat functions as one family's escape from the country and casts forward to its role as eventual permanent home

Story by SAM DUNCAN Photography by SHARYN CAIRNS





Opposite and left: The living area with its silk and wool custom rug. Below: Stone references are repeated throughout the home. Below left: The kitchen's stone island bench, whose organic form is mirrored in the metal-clad range hood



Lifestyle priorities have been given a good shake-up in recent months, with remote working and a renewed premium on outdoor space boosting the appeal of a tree change or sea change.

But things will return to normal – I suspect much faster than many think – and the pull of big city life, with its restaurants, entertainment and convenience, will again gather strength.

This 17th-floor apartment on Melbourne's St Kilda Road serves as a city retreat for its owners, a family that resides in Victoria's idyllic Mornington Peninsula. And at some point they intend to make a complete "city change" to the penthouse, which is slated as their future permanent home.

In acquiring the property, they felt there should be no compromise on luxury or space as they transition – in a counter-trend for their demographic – to urban life.

Interior design firm Golden was brought in to furnish the space, but the scope of the project quickly grew as the apartment's owners decided the spatial quality and functionality also needed an update.

Interior designer Alicia McKimm, co-director of Golden, says her studio's response was to "create a home in the sky". They opted to use timeless and luxurious materials that would enhance the natural light and place an emphasis on reflection.

McKimm says of the apartment's materiality and texture: "Honed stone with a natural shimmer, polished plaster that intensifies the lateral light and silk carpet in the bedrooms show subtle movement and luminosity."

One of the key design elements within the home is the shape of the kitchen's stone island bench, which is faceted, rounded at the ends and sanded into an organic form with flowing concave curves.

It's a stunning piece of art, and Golden's studio director, Daniel Stellini, says the shape was also driven by function. It was important that the bench provide the



The master bedroom has been configured for quiet retreat and meditation

right storage and surface requirement, he says, while also allowing for fluid movement throughout the space: the kitchen, dining and bar areas. And the soft edges of the island form also allowed for additional dining seating and more space when entertaining.

There are stone references throughout the apartment – in the living area, study and master bedroom – which McKimm says have been purposely repeated as mindful touchpoints.

Other linkages include the symmetry between the organic form of the kitchen island and the concave form of the metal cladding on the rangehood.

And throughout the space, brass features in a variety of ways: within joinery and lighting, providing sophistication, and also functioning to separate different task zones. A brass trim works to subtly separate the bar from the kitchen, and floating brass shelves provide function and display on the backdrop of blue glass finger tiles.

The master bedroom, adjacent to the secluded balcony and daybed, is configured for quiet retreat and reflection. And there's a hidden television in a leather-clad armoire, which works to create separation between the sleeping and meditation zones.

In the living room, a fireplace set upon a stone plinth adds physical warmth to the design.

A large custom rug in wool and silk incorporates varying weaves and pile heights, emphasising the importance of craft within the home.

Working within the confines of the existing services and spaces, as a result of the prior amalgamation of three smaller units, provided constant challenges, says Stellini – most notably, access via a small lift. “We had to work innovatively and adapt rather than compromise our design narrative,” he says.

Delivery of the five-by-six metre custom statement rug wasn't easy, he says. The limitations also meant the joinery needed to be modulated and constructed to size off-site, and done so in a way that allowed for crafted assembly on-site.

Kylie Dorotic, designer and co-director of Golden, says the firm drew inspiration from city apartments adjacent to park living: Parisian and New York-style properties with luxury spaces and a multitude of urban views. The colour palette, she says, was brought in from the natural materials that feature throughout. “Flecks of colour within the stone were extracted and delicately thread throughout the home. The palette is gentle, natural and warm, yet assertive in balance, relying on texture to feature – the rug weaving all the colours together.”

Asked what her clients most liked about the design, Dorotic says the kitchen was the immediate highlight. Reconfigured, open and flooded with natural light, it's the perfect place for entertaining day and night, she says.