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HD **Perfect match**

BY Stephen Todd

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Design

An architect's quest to breathe life into his designs is paying dividends.

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It's not unusual for designers of luxury goods to conjure up a muse; an idealised "type" to embody their wares. It's less common for an architect to do so.

But as **property** prices soar and inner-city space is increasingly prized, isn't an urban **apartment** the new luxury good – one more glittering trinket on the clanking charm bracelet of modern life? In **residential** developments comprising sometimes hundreds of apartments, how to seduce the desired resident?

Architect William Smart listens to a muse of his own devising. Since 2007, his Smart Design Studio has created some of the most perfectly formed and luxuriously finished apartments, many in the gritty urban heart of Sydney. For each, he and his team work up an identikit portrait of the inhabitant.

"It's an ideal type," Smart says, "a person we've made up that we hope will find its match in the **property** market."

For the One Central **Park** development near **Chinatown** and Sydney University, they envisaged a young, cosmopolitan inhabitant, curious, well travelled and single or in the nascent phase of coupledness. For them, they developed the concept "high-speed luxury".

"Inspired by sleek yachts and top-of-the line sports cars, we aimed for that kind of compact design and slick finishing," recounts Smart. "I had a Riva motorboat and an old Porsche in mind most of the time."

For the Quay apartments near Darling Harbour, the **firm** intended to attract a more mature, professional inhabitant, someone with a love of fashion and the arts.

"Luxury brands create desire – who doesn't love Chanel? So we looked at brands like Chanel, at not just the product but the packaging, the carry bags, the signage, the register receipts, the advertising imagery and from there developed the concept of 'life beautifully packaged'."

That manifested in marble floors, floating joinery, figured veneers, lacquered storage units – each element elegantly articulated into a streamlined whole.

For their redevelopment of the historic Royal Edward Victualling Yard warehouses in Pyrmont: "These apartments are for the people who have possibly returned from years living in Europe and are used to living in big buildings; buildings with gravitas, high ceilings, beautifully shaped rooms. People who love tradition.

"We asked ourselves: what do they drink, eat? Do they work from home? On a laptop or in a study? We try to construct as accurate as possible a profile of the end user." Bespoke approach

This bespoke approach to **apartment** design was encouraged by Stanley Quek, chairman of Frasers **Property** Australia, with whom Smart has worked on many projects.

"We were thinking about the interiors of the Lumiere development [in Surry Hills, Sydney]," says Quek. "I wanted something to really resonate with the end-user. So I said, 'Why don't we work on giving the apartments some personality, a life, a soul?' From there came the concept of boys' toys."

Smart recalls the conversation. "Dr Quek said, 'Tell me about the person who's going to live there.' So we devised this image of a young Macquarie banker with a posh pushbike hung up inside his **apartment** as a kind of art piece, large framed photographs of bikes doing wheelies, lots of gin in the kitchen, videos under the bed and so on." The gin was Bombay Sapphire. The videos under the bed, I didn't ask about. Either way, the apartments **sold** out within days of the interiors being completed in 2007.

Smart Design Studio apartments sell fast: Alexander at Barangaroo within two hours; The Quay in one open weekend; the Vue in Bondi Junction in two days; the Promenade at Parramatta the same. This forensic approach to profile building as a means of getting a grip on the desired demographic is yielding dividends, even if some folk find themselves left out. The display suites for these often off-the-plan apartments are finished with the same attention to material, detail and finish as the apartments will be, and Smart has a **firm** eye on the minutiae of the styling, right down to the colour and texture of the drapes.

One Lumiere buyer was so taken by the boys' toys theme Smart created that he insisted on the identical look, down to the brand of gin. "We don't design scattershot," shrugs Smart. "We don't make buildings that try to please everyone and end up being loved by no one."

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