

S M A R T SPACES **belle** CES



Small and perfectly formed, these apartments prove that you don't need an excess of space to live elegantly. The very sparseness of a well-edited selection of pieces artfully arranged can be a delight.

Greg Natale used nifty shades of grey to create a sophisticated mood in this Sydney bachelor pad. See page 166.



SHADES OF GREY

Designer *Greg Natale* conjured up a dark and moody palette for this bachelor pad in Sydney's eastern suburbs.

PHOTOGRAPHS ANSON SMART WORDS NIGEL BARTLETT

A beautifully appointed bachelor pad is the ultimate sign of sophistication for the contemporary man. More than a flashy car or expensive watch, there's nothing more luxurious than a home that, despite having few rooms, bears all the hallmarks of style – fine furnishings and superb design detailing.

This two-bedroom apartment in a 1950s block in Sydney's Elizabeth Bay hadn't been renovated in more than two decades. "It had a blond timber floor and 80s glass blocks," says interior designer Greg Natale. "It had been painted and had a white bathroom. It looked pretty cheap, pretty standard."

The new owner called in Greg because he loved the designer's own home at the time, an apartment in the renowned Republic 1 building in nearby Darlinghurst. He wanted a home that was similarly sophisticated, masculine and elegant. "He loved Tom Ford's work, and so do I," says Greg. "The bigger-picture inspiration for me was the Manhattan townhouse of the fashion designer Halston. It was very grey on grey, very streamlined; just beautiful."

With that in mind, after gutting the entire apartment – "We removed all the walls, floors, ceilings, everything" – Greg swapped the blond and white finishes for dark, dark and dark. He introduced floor-to-ceiling black-stained oak joinery, which provides plenty of storage and is also used for the doors. The floors are grey basalt, and walls in the bedroom and living area are grey stucco. "The owner wanted the stucco finish, so I took it a stage further and said, 'Let's not have any paint on the walls or doors.' They're entirely joinery, stucco or mirror. It gives a real sense of luxury."

Greg lowered the ceilings to hide the building's ugly beams. Then, to reintroduce some height, he had round "coffers" (sunken panels) cut in above the dining and living areas, and the bedroom. "They break up the ceiling and define the separate areas," he says. Rectangular 70s-style light clusters hanging in two of the coffers give this highly contemporary home a fashionably retro edge.

Fitting the bachelor lifestyle, the apartment's second bedroom became a sleek, smart dressing room, also with black joinery. Despite all the sombre finishes, the apartment doesn't feel at all dark. "It gets lots of sunlight from all the windows, and with so much glass in a location like this, you can afford to go dark," says Greg. Besides, he's introduced certain elements that temper the darkness. "I always strive to create a visual balance, and when you are severe with the palette, you need to break things up and balance them," he explains. "If there's a lot of black, we'll use some white; if there's a lot of grey, we'll add some gold. And here we also threw in a bit of blue."

The white comes in the form of a marble Minotti dining table ("I like Minotti because it's modern and clean, but it's also warm and comfortable – a lot of modern furniture looks and feels cold"). The gold is in sculptures and objects that add warmth but are low-key enough not to be glitzy. And piercing shots of blue come from a cushion here, accessories there, and an oil painting and Minotti lounge chair in the bedroom. "I wanted to bring the colour of the bay into the apartment," he says.

In some homes, Greg will work with the owner's existing art and collectables. In this one, he worked Harry Seidler-style, selecting all the elements himself – every piece of furniture, every sculpture, every artwork. It involved a high degree of trust, but on the other hand the owner had chosen Greg on the basis of his previous work. "This has always been my philosophy: if I think my client has a good idea I'll run with it, but if something doesn't fit, it won't work; you can't put a square peg in a round hole," he explains. "I always say a good decorator is ruthless." 15

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DESIGN DETAILS

THIS PAGE, FROM TOP The dressing room has a custom-designed carpet by Greg Natale that will be part of his new collection for Designer Rugs. Eames chair from Living Edge. Flos 'Spun' lamp from Euro luce. Grey stucco walls in the bedroom are punctuated by vivid blue highlights, including a Minotti 'Capri' armchair from De De Ce. *Lightspeed 12* wall sculpture by Dion Horstmans. A fur rug and a Frette quilt from Cavit & Co on the Minotti 'Bartlett' bed. Nemo 'Crown Minor' polished aluminium pendant light from Cult. Painting by Scott Petrie. OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP Round coffers cut into the ceilings define the living and dining areas. Smoked-glass Vistosi 'Tubes' lights from Mondo Luce. Minotti 'Hamilton' sofa. Vintage leather 'Frank' chair by Thayer Coggin. Vintage Italian coffee table found in the US. Minotti 'Cortina' chairs surround a Minotti 'Van Dyck' table. Blakebrough + King gold 'Detour' candelabras from Space.

