

# SMALL SENSATION

This Melbourne warehouse conversion proves that good things do come in small packages

Words Lauren Clarke Photography Tom Blachford



Industrial aesthetic meets city style in this converted Melbourne warehouse



The en-suite bathroom is cleverly designed to make good use of all available space

An industrial aesthetic meets city style in this converted Melbourne warehouse. Designer Penny del Castillo of Studio del Castillo has given this two-bedroom apartment a new lease on life thanks to striking features like the exposed brick walls, marble island bench and warm wooden floors.

Yet it wasn't always this visually appealing. "The one-bedroom, one-bathroom apartment was well situated within an amazing warehouse development, however the previous owners had not appointed the property with any style whatsoever and there was very little storage," says del Castillo. "Aside from the necessity for a practical outcome to service the couple's changing lifestyle, my observations were that there was a severe lack of continuity between exterior and interior and a severe lack of aesthetic direction. The apartment did not 'feel' like it was part of a warehouse conversion."

And so the homeowners embarked upon a renovation that resulted in a totally new apartment. "It was a complete gut and refurbishment of the entire interior space," continues del Castillo. "A total rebuild of two



## we love

### THAT EXPOSED BRICK WALL THAT SETS THE TONE FOR THE ENTIRE APARTMENT

bedrooms, two bathrooms, and a new kitchen and laundry. All new furniture and window furnishings were designed, selected and supplied by del Castillo."

Del Castillo's design process involved stripping away layers of the building to reveal the core strength of the building's structure, then, piece by piece, rebuilding with a more authentic intent that honoured a single-minded theme. "The heritage red brick synonymous with Melbourne's enviable warehouse conversions was key to all other selections made. We were aiming to create a sophisticated version of an industrial interior without being too masculine."

The stunning red brick certainly captures the attention when you first enter the home. It was just one of the charming finds the team uncovered during the demolition phase of the renovation, along with the painted numbers on the living room wall. "They were previously covered in layers of 1990s Magnolia White paint," del Castillo says. "I was stoked when the sandblaster revealed the 'artwork' to me. We spent quite some time negotiating the exact amount of blasting to do of the red bricks around that area."



The dining banquette is not only visually appealing but also provides storage





The purpose of the apartment rooms remains fluid thanks to the window walls and door



Yet this not the sole feature in the apartment that draws the eye. The dining banquette seat is another favourite element of the home. “This generated a huge amount of drawer storage, along with providing luxurious seating in what would have otherwise been a tight space,” says del Castillo. “The banquette seat drawers have been accessorised with Australian handmade leather handles and the custom-made wall padding and scatter cushions add intrigue with extra layers of textures.”

An array of textures continues in the kitchen, where dark cabinetry truly allows the Cote d’Azur natural stone benchtop to be a hero. “During several after-hours appointments, it was apparent that our clients had a great love of wine,” reveals del Castillo. “We were inspired to keep an open-plan kitchen that provided a perfect platform to create an ambient wine bar experience, where friends can gather around the raised island bench (suitable for up to eight people).”

At the same time, the striking bench offers a practical solution as a preparation area and coincidentally served as a second home office space during the COVID-19 lockdown.

In a small home, light can be limited — yet not in an apartment with a design like this. “Using clever spatial planning within a limited footprint, we have made better use





"We were inspired to keep an open-plan kitchen that provided a perfect platform to create an ambient wine bar experience"  
— Penny del Castillo

Sheer and block-out curtains allow your choice of light into the bedroom



of the natural light to penetrate other areas of the property and massively improve the residents' liveability," says del Castillo.

Glass walls with sheer and blackout curtains allow light to travel to the far reaches of the bedrooms — and keep them dark when needed. "This solution also allows the rooms' purpose to remain fluid," points out del Castillo. She also kept the environment in mind while working on this space, with all materials sourced ethically and chosen with sustainability in mind. "All appliances have high energy or WELS ratings."

Yet this renovation did not come without its fair share of challenges. Access to the apartment was via stairs only, making deliveries a challenge, and the apartment was situated on the middle floor of the building, which meant plumbing alterations effected residents below and above.

Water leaks from other apartments and flooding from the rooftop terrace also impacted the build, but perhaps the biggest delay of all came from the couple. "The clients fell pregnant almost the minute the builders' contract was signed," says del Castillo. This, combined with waiting for the insurance to kick in so recovery works could commence after the flood, and of course the COVID-19 lockdowns, resulted in what was supposed to be a six-month construction program taking two years.

The wait was certainly worth it. The clients couldn't be happier with their new home that was custom-made to suit their lifestyle. "We even selected the floorboard colour to complement Cedric's (the family dog) fur coat," shares del Castillo.

This design certainly proves that good things can come in small packages. **HD** [delcastillo.com.au](http://delcastillo.com.au)