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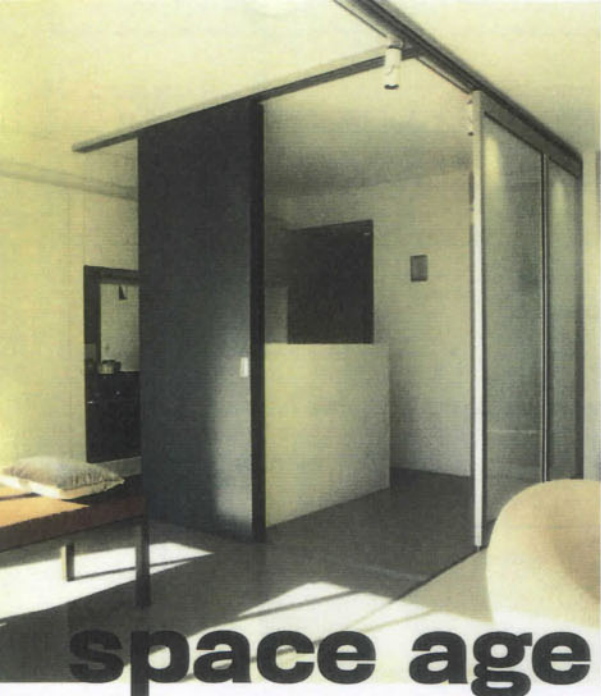
NEW RETRO TO MODERN CLASSIC

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space age

Apartment buyers are demanding and getting forward-thinking living spaces.

Apartments are no longer the second-best option. We're making the conscious choice to live in them, but we're far more discerning in what we'll accept, says Ros Dwyer of Winten Property Group. "People want enduring quality in structure and finishes – higher sound-insulation for instance." Winten still uses blockwork and render for internal walls rather than studwork and gyprock. "People are looking to invest wisely for the long term and they want clever design, even in one- and two-bedroom apartments, traditionally built for investors." Now we're making these our homes, and we're demanding smart storage ideas, luxury hotel-style bathrooms, quality fittings, higher ceilings and a greater illusion of space. Kitchens can be smaller, but we want well-appointed spaces

with integrated appliances and all mod cons. The trend is to the open kitchen along one wall of the living area with sliding panels to conceal it, or work spaces 'boxed' as a piece of furniture. Formal dining rooms have had their day, but we love the versatile area that can be a dining or media room, even if it's subtly defined. Designing for our socio-economic group and the local area is a must: Forum, over St Leonards railway station, saw Winten rebuild the station as a 'lifestyle' precinct with plaza, reflection pool, stores, food outlets and outdoor seating. Another project at Potts Point picks up on the older building styles of Kings Cross. Display apartments are a must, to show the versatility within the same space and the same finishes palette.

ONE SIZE FITS ALL no longer applies, says John Mortimer of Australand Walker. "Even in a localised market such as Sydney's Eastern Suburbs, a variety of design is necessary." Paddington Barracks draws on heritage values, incorporating the existing old sandstone walls in the design; Altair at Rushcutters Bay, with minimalist architecture and natural ventilation, responds to a market with brand awareness, design knowledge and environment sensitivities. (More on its architects, Engelen Moore, page 34.) "In each market there are specifics that people won't compromise on: security, and as large an outdoor entertaining area as possible."

We're asking 'ethical' questions, says Oone Nielssen of Bovis Lend Lease: the apartments at Newington (a new Sydney suburb, the athletes' village during the 2000 Olympic Games) incorporate recycled water, low emission finishes, sunshading, solar panels, natural ventilation. At City Quarter, Sterling's huge redevelopment of the old children's hospital at Camperdown on Sydney's fringe, 70% of the complex is landscaped – village green, gardens, bicycle tracks – and the team is working with the National Trust and local resident group FROGS to regenerate the gully on one side of the site. "It's about developing a lifestyle," says Caroline Selka, "and it's all based around space, aspect, quality of living."

"Apartments are confined spaces, so the best way to deal with them is to open them up as much as possible," says Richard Thomas of The Hayson Group. "Flexible floor plans, sliding walls, disappearing rooms . . ." Lumina, ABOVE, and AE18-20 at Pyrmont are examples. "It's leaning very much towards what a stylish modern house would be, but with a smarter use of space."

Then there's technology. Fat pipeline bandwidth, gigabits ethernet, the age of convergence – residents of the near-future apartment will be in a stage of 'always on'. Intelligent apartment buildings – Melbourne's Liberty Tower is said to be the first – will incorporate all these goodies within their architecture. "Most buildings today are being retro-fitted with cabling, satellite dishes, cable TV and so on. This building takes a 21st century approach and incorporates it at the building stage," says architect Zahava Elenberg, rising star with partner Callum Fraser in Elenberg Fraser. Liberty Tower takes advantage of the fibre optic network being laid along Spencer Street to feed the Docklands and the CBD, connecting them to the World Area Network (WAN). Those of us living with POTS (plain old telephone system) won't be in the race. **BETSY BRENNAN**