

homefront



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The French connection
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Drought tough orchids
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Hide and sleek



A built-in window seat, which conceals a pop-up television

Clear your home of clutter with cabinetry built to order. **Mark Bretherton** reports

THE votes are in — and clutter is out. Clean, modern lines and fab cabinetry maximise space and with the latest technology, pedestrian topics such as “storage” can pack enough surprises to serve as dinner conversation starters.

Touch-sensitive drawers, cabinet wall beds and pop-up plasma screens are among the hot-ticket items to get people organised in style.

Darren James of Interiors by Darren James said clean, simple lines were the way to go, particularly in living areas.

“I’m definitely seeing a lot less clutter,” he said.

“People aren’t putting as many ornaments and decorative things on display as they used to. It’s probably coming in and out of a cycle, but simple is definitely in.

“The advantage of having clean, modern lines is that everything looks neat and tidy and then you can surprise people with things popping out of nowhere.”

James said innovative touches included fridges concealed behind cabinet doors, plasma screens that emerged from built-in cabinets and, with the flick of a switch, a liquor cabinet could pop out of a bar benchtop.

At last year’s Australian Woodworking Suppliers Industry Association trade show, cabinet makers Blum showed a range of cabinets with a touch-sensitive release mechanism that eliminated handles.

While it takes a bigger budget and

you can’t take it with you when you move, built-in cabinetry has many advantages.

“You’re quite limited with a free-standing piece,” James said.

“Built-in cabinetry is part of its surroundings, so you don’t get cobwebs building up behind it. You can make much better use of space.”

Good use of space is the current catchcry as growth in Queensland’s southeast sends living density skywards.

Peter Skinner, associate professor of architecture at the University of Queensland, said that within a couple of decades we would not have the luxury of space we enjoyed now.

It’s not all doom and gloom. Higher-density living is more sustainable. If there are twice as many people in an area, they are likely to be twice as close to public transport, restaurants, cafes and shops.

Skinner agreed that clever cabinetry was one way to get the most out of a smaller living space.

“You need multi-purpose rooms that open into each other to provide a sense of spaciousness,” he said.

“It’s important for small spaces not to feel too cluttered or they feel cramped.

“The secret to avoiding clutter is to conceal things behind panels, under other things and so on. A wall of panels is unobtrusive, but provides key storage space.



Designer Darren James says clean lines look tidy and can hold a few surprises Picture: Megan Cullen

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Sleek built-ins maximise space

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"Building in some elements of furniture can provide a more efficient use of space as well. Space under beds or under built-in benches can massively increase the amount of amenity in the room.

"In a cafe, everyone can see that seating built into the wall allows the table to be pushed closer to the wall and frees up more space, yet not enough people use these kinds of concepts in their homes."

Popular, too, is the wall bed, which allows a spare room to be multi-purpose, with a double or single bed concealed in a cabinet.

Designer Elyse Newman of Organised Interiors said there was a move away from the big suburban house.

"We sell a lot of wall beds for rumpus rooms and family rooms. With the pull of a handle, a cabinet converts to a bed. We also have beds with storage space underneath the mattress, which you can pull up with a handle."

When it comes to kitchen cabinetry, Kim Duffin of Sublime Cabinet Design is well-credentialed. From north Queensland, Duffin is the HIA Australian Kitchen Designer of the Year and this month takes on the best the world has to offer in the international round of the competition.

Duffin said the secret to a good kitchen was to focus on functionality first, then "looks".

His designs include eye-catching island benches that look as much like spaceship consoles as places to chop vegetables.

"You can be very creative with the island benches," he said.

"Different finishes reflect light in different ways to create interesting effects."

Duffin refers to the "dynamic space" concept, where cabinetry and shelving is arranged so everything is within easy reach.

"If I'm preparing a meal, I don't have to back away from the cooktop," he explained.

"You can have a narrow galley-style kitchen and still have space for everything you need, as well as



Imagination is the only limit . . . turn an awkward corner into a built-in study alcove



Functionality comes first for kitchens but looks don't suffer

organised access to everything at your fingertips.

"Drawers allow you to pick up one-third more in storage space over shelves, and drawers with organised compartments can slide out of the pantry."

"One of the latest products is a sink drawer for better use of the space under the sink."

"We've also done kitchens with computer screens hanging off the benches and sit-down areas so that parents can keep an eye on their

kids surfing the net while they are cooking dinner.

"There's some great solutions, but many of them are not cheap. To get full use of the space, they're well worth the investment — then you can pack the contents of a kitchen from a large house into a much smaller space."

With custom cabinetry and storage solutions, Duffin, James and Newman all emphasise that the only limits lie with your imagination.

CHECK IT OUT

SUBLIME Cabinet Design specialises in mid to high-end kitchens and bathrooms. Visit www.sublimegroup.com.au.

INTERIORS by Darren James is an all-purpose cabinet-maker — from built-in living room shelves and kitchens to wardrobes and bars. Visit www.interiorsbydarrenjames.com.au.

ORGANISED Interiors does a nice line in wall beds, wardrobe design and built-in custom cabinetry. Drop in to its premises at 200 Abbotsford Rd, Bowen Hills in Brisbane, or call 3252 4227. Branches are on the Gold and Sunshine coasts.

BLUM products and "systems" are used by many Queensland interior designers. Visit www.blum.com.

THE HOME Ideas Centre is a good place for ideas for all kinds of applications around the home. The two-level showroom with small exhibits from interior specialists is at 66 Merivale St, South Brisbane.