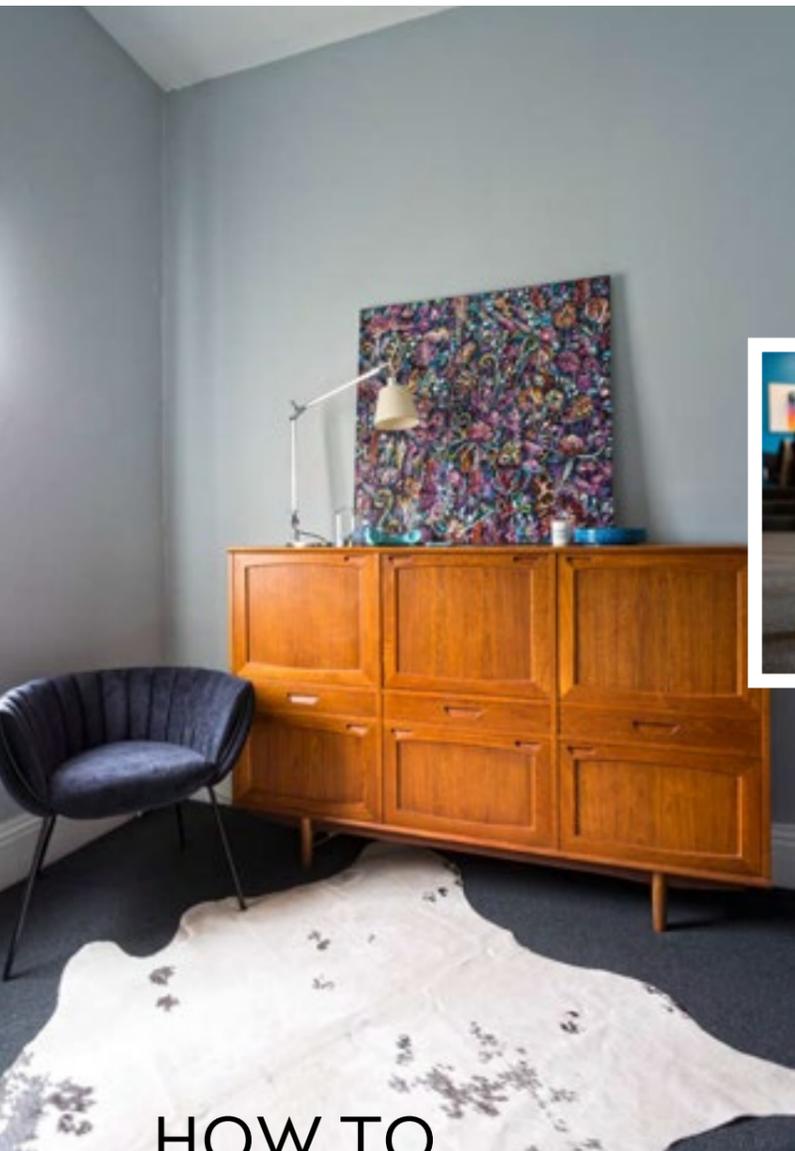


# HOW TO... CONVERT A TERRACE INTO AN OFFICE

With Hot Black's Sophie Safrin

WORDS ELISSA WEBSTER



Moving into a new office always has its challenges but what about moving into a Victorian terrace? Boutique architectural and interior design firm Hot Black recently did just that. And despite forgoing an outdoor space in favour of an abundance of indoor plants that none of the staff know how to care for, their new South Melbourne abode has been a hit. Director Sophie Safrin spills her secrets.

## TAKE UP THE CHALLENGE

Refurbishing an apartment definitely had some hidden challenges, mainly the existing parameters we had to work within. Not all walls are removable, there was only one access point and a narrow staircase so most materials had to be lifted through the first-floor windows and all the furniture had to be delivered in pieces.

## THINK OF THE NEIGHBOURS

Being mindful of our neighbours below us was a huge factor. Having to gain access into their spaces to be able to execute works was obviously not an ideal situation, so where possible, we retained the existing plumbing services and additional power was run through very challenging spaces.

## MATCH ROOMS TO THEIR ORIGINAL FUNCTION

The room's size, aspect and connection came into play when determining the function of each space. The kitchen naturally became our staff breakout space. We opted to convert the dining room into an informal boardroom, also functioning as a celebratory space where we could host 'chef's table' dinners and events for



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our friends and networks in the industry. The lounge room became a place of congregation; this is where we spend most of our time.

## LET THERE BE LIGHT

Natural light was definitely a limitation – we demolished a few walls to let more natural light into the centralised spaces. When we removed the plaster the existing timber framework was exposed. This wasn't our original intent, but we opted to celebrate the uniqueness of construction – and the timber has been a talking point with every visitor to our office. Lighting was integral to bring more brightness into these spaces, so feature fittings and secondary lighting were included.

## PASS WITH FLYING COLOURS

As for colour, what can we say? We certainly aren't afraid of it! I don't believe in the myth that bold colours make rooms smaller and darker – colour is a fantastic way to celebrate details and to promote the context of the space.

## LOOK NEAR, LOOK FAR

Creating long-distance interest and close-up gratification is vital – always take a long-distance view and pick focal points that will entice people to want more. Once you have their attention, grab the audience again with elements that they can run their hands on or pick up.

## HIGH AND MIGHTY

Never think a ceiling has to be a flat element – introduce dimensional aspects that embrace the space or celebrate the existing features.



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SOPHIE SAFRIN,  
DIRECTOR, HOT BLACK

