DAVID HICKS IS STYLING PROJECTS AS PRIVATE HOMES.

AS A SHIFTING MARKETPLACE IN THE LUXURY APARTMENT SPACE, BROUGHT WITH IT AN EVER MORE DISCERNING BUYER, DAVID HICKS' RENWOWN AS STYLE MAKER FOR MELBOURNE'S ELITE HOME OWNERS BEGAN TO DRAW HIM A SIGNIFICANT FOLLOWING AMONGST THE DEVELOPERS OF AUSTRALIA'S MOST LUXURIOUS APARTMENTS.

David Hicks was destined for a life in luxury interior design from the day he was born. Ironically given the same name as the legendary British interior designer David Nightingale Hicks, his passion was honed from a young age. Growing up in Malaysia, it was Hicks' mother and her love for art and design that left an indelible mark on him. His memories of his first childhood home with its grand wrap-around veranda, terrazzo floors, decorative screens and eclectic array of ornamental pieces were what spurred his thirst for interior design.

After carving out a distinctive aesthetic and love for timeless design, Hicks opened his own practice, David Hicks Design in 2001, which would soon become synonymous with highly-detailed, luxe interiors. Across 18 years, his unmistakable style that fuses one-off, quality vintage pieces with chic minimalism and striking artwork has graced high-end homes, offices, retail stores and penthouses all over the world. From some of Melbourne's wealthiest suburbs to Los Angeles, where Hicks redesigned starlet Ginger Rogers' former Hollywood home, and most recently the Gili Islands in Indonesia where Hicks is creating his first resort, clients come from all four corners of the globe to work exclusively with him to realise their vision.

Hicks' undeniable style is quintessentially one-of-a-kind with a fluidity across each project that bucks popular trends and traditional notions of design. "Trends tend to come and go, and in residential design, you are working with a foundation that will likely outlast its inhabitants. My work and the work of my studio is profoundly intimate and intrinsically aligned to place. I design from the inside out, an organic process that puts the client's needs and their lifestyles at the heart of the concept," says Hicks.

Hicks' residential projects are undoubtedly the mainstay of his practice and until recently his in-demand studio was working almost exclusively on high-end, stand-alone homes owned by Australia's top echelon of private wealthy families. Throughout the years Hicks and his practice became the first choice for luxury interior design in the Melbourne suburbs of Toorak, Brighton and South Yarra. It was this experience and Hicks' knowledge of the high-end residential market that saw client after client reaching out to work with him exclusively in the design of their new apartment or penthouse.

"It wasn't necessarily all at once, but rather a trend that I started to see develop over time, particularly among my downsizer clients."

"For many years there has been a perception that apartments could only offer one universal design and couldn't be distinctive or representative of a personal style. We wanted to change that perception, to showcase how we could translate beautiful and opulent interior design into an apartment setting and ensure the same standard of superior sophistication and lavishness that people had come to expect of the houses I had worked on."

From here, the industry came knocking. At the same time Hicks was seeing a rise in requests for his custom apartment projects, developers were likewise noticing a marked shift in off-the-plan sales. The expectations of customers were rising, especially in the prestige property market where multi-million-dollar decisions were coming down to which interior designer was working on which project. Hicks' skills across custom design and ultra-luxe interiors made him incredibly desirable in the eyes of developers.

Enter property lynchpin Tim Gurner of GURNER™ who first met Hicks when he developed Hicks's former residence on St Kilda Road, Melbourne.

"I had purchased an apartment within Tim's development and I just about customised every single inch of it. If I am meticulous with my clients' homes, you can imagine how fastidious I was with my own home! I think Tim was initially a bit frustrated with how precise and detail-orientated I was. It was this encounter that led to us reconnecting years later when Tim was looking for an interior designer to take on his latest project at the time, 74 Eastern Road, to the next level."

74 Eastern Road represented a turning point for the apartment market, with more than half of the floorplates comprising three to four-bedroom layouts. The project was a pinnacle in terms of luxury and design and every single detail of the interiors needed to be uniquely curated. It was a perfect alignment for the two.

The relationship paid dividends, with Hicks and Gurner collaborating on three further developments in the last three years, including Albert Place Residences, Hawksburn Place Residences and the upcoming Saint Moritz, where the country's second most expensive apartment was recently sold, fetching a record-breaking $30 million.

The project, which is located on the site of the Novotel in St Kilda, will launch to market mid-2019, bringing ultra-luxury living to a new global standard. Saint Moritz will offer all purchasers the opportunity to work exclusively with Hicks to customise their apartments.

"Tim really was one of the first developers who intrinsically understood the value of collaboration and the commercial benefits of a holistic design language between the architecture, landscape and interiors. His most recent projects have certainly set a benchmark for this and especially now in luxury developments, this level of detail and prestige in the interiors is not a nice-to-have, it is a must-have. Being at the bespoke end of the design spectrum is really exciting and it is going to be something we will see more and more of in Australia."

While Hicks is selective about the number of companies he collaborates with, he counts other high-profile multi-residential developers like Golden Age Group and Gamuda Land among his clients, entrusted by them to deliver