

Publication Date: 11 October 2016
YSP Podcast Transcript: Episode 031. Renovating Your Strata Home - with Interior Design Expert Jen Bishop

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Intro: Welcome to Your Strata Property. The podcast for property owners looking for reliable, accurate, and bite-sized information from an experienced and authoritative source. To access previous episodes and useful strata tips, go to www.yourstrataproperty.com.au.

Amanda Farmer: Hello and welcome. I'm Amanda Farmer and this is Your Strata Property.

Jen Bishop is the founder, publisher, and owner of the website Interiors Addict. A former journalist and magazine editor, Jen describes herself as the original interiors addict. An ordinary girl with no design qualifications – just a serious love of all things décor and homewares.

What she lacks in official design know-how she makes up for with a genuine passion for her subject. The ability to write, and bring to life other people's stories, and an eye for a bargain, Jen believes everyone should get joy from their home whatever their budget and whether they rent or own.

Started in 2011 as a hobby, Interiors Addict has been Jen's full-time job for more than 3 years. Last year, she started a second site: Reno Addict. Interiors Addict has around 90,000 Australian readers, almost 70,000 Facebook fans, and more than 70,000 Instagram followers.

Jen is also a strata unit owner. Today, I am delighted to welcome Jen Bishop of Interiors Addict. Welcome, Jen.

Jen Bishop: Hi, Amanda. Thank you so much for having me.

Amanda Farmer: Absolute pleasure. Thank you very much for taking the time to come on the show and of course, I've invited you on the show today to pick your brain about all things interior design.

Jen Bishop: There's nothing I like talking about more.

Amanda Farmer: Great. I want to start by asking you, can you tell us Jen, why is good interior design so critical for people living in strata apartments?

Jen Bishop: Well, I think good interior design is critical in all our homes whether they're units or not because I think it's all about making the best use of your home and your space and really creating a place that really makes you happy to come home to.

I think the thing with strata units is that you're often dealing with less space and you have to be a lot cleverer about making that space work for you and making sure you have the right things in that space. So, yeah, I think, it's a case of having to be a bit cleverer.

Amanda Farmer: Yes, definitely. And Jen what are your top tips for styling or renovating a small space?

Jen Bishop: I think one of the biggest basics is to look at consistency in your flooring and your wall colour. So, painting your entire unit the same colour is a very easy and effective quick win really in terms of creating the illusion of more space. You don't want to cut your space up by having different colours from room to room. It will only make it look smaller.

Amanda Farmer: Yes.

Jen Bishop: And flooring as well I think if you have the same flooring throughout your apartment – perhaps not the kitchen and the bathrooms but if you have the same flooring throughout that also makes a huge difference. Another thing is in units you're often



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looking at open plan living and an important thing or a good tip for that is to zone your spaces. So, if you have for example, an open plan dining-living area to use rugs to zone that area.

Jen Bishop: So a big rug under your dining table and another different big rug in the living area and a tip on rugs is go big, you know, always buy the biggest rug you can afford. If you're not sure which rug I'm sure it's probably – the answer is the bigger one. Because a mistake a lot of people make is having a small rug and to arrange all their different furniture around it.

Amanda Farmer: Yes.

Jen Bishop: It kind of floats there in the middle. And it's a pet hate I think of every interior designer. And it will just look a lot better if you have all your furniture on it not even if it's just you know, the front legs of your sofa.

Amanda Farmer: Yes.

Jen Bishop: Trying to have you know, a rug that is big enough that you can do that.

Amanda Farmer: That's a really good tip. I have to admit, I'm not the best when it comes to interior design and I do need help, that's one of my points of confusion I guess when it comes to rugs. That the furniture is actually supposed to go on the rug or over the top of the rug.

Jen Bishop: And you are not alone, I think this is like a huge thing that people struggle with. It shouldn't go around.

Amanda Farmer: Yes.

Jen Bishop: If it can be sort of at least, one foot of that chair to be on the rug.

Amanda Farmer: Yes, okay.

Jen Bishop: That will look better.

Amanda Farmer: I think I'm making that mistake right now so I'm about to go and buy a new rug. Alright, so it sounds like keep it simple, I like that. The painting all the one colour, so it doesn't have to be complicated.

Jen Bishop: Yes.

Amanda Farmer: We don't have to be doing feature walls.

Jen Bishop: No. Oh God no.

Amanda Farmer: and baby blue rooms.

Jen Bishop: No.

Amanda Farmer: Keep it simple, hey?

Jen Bishop: As well as keeping it simple though I think, don't feel like you have to have less things because you have a smaller space. It's often you can still have side tables and things like that but look at more compact, smaller furniture.

Amanda Farmer: Yes.

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Jen Bishop: And these days so many of us live in apartments that the stores are starting to produce the smaller armchairs and everything more compact so you can still have all the pieces that you want but just make sure that they fit with the size of the room.

Amanda Farmer: Yes and obviously, with the floors it's very popular to rip out those old carpets and put in some form of hard flooring and we have lots of different options these days.

Jen Bishop: Yes.

Amanda Farmer: And obviously, that's something to make sure your owners corporation, your strata building, your committee is on board with and there's heaps of options when it comes to make sure that doesn't disturb the peaceful enjoyment of others in your building.

Jen Bishop: Yes, definitely worth a read of the by-laws and there's plenty of acoustic underlays and things that you can look at there in terms of laying hard flooring.

Amanda Farmer: Yes, wonderful. Okay, so Jen, can you share a story or two about a strata owner who you think has got it right when it comes to their interior design and what they did?

Jen Bishop: Yes, absolutely. A very well known Sydney interior designer called Greg Natale. He has recently sold his one bedroom apartment in a prestigious building in the city and I think, you know that gave everyone a chance to have a nosy at his space and I think it was really a great case study on how to have a beautiful interior in a very small space.

And I think a lot of what he did there was to make everything custom and make everything really work for him and how he wanted to use the space. Custom cabinetry because of course, storage is really important in small spaces.

Amanda Farmer: Yes.

Jen Bishop: Custom flooring, beautiful high-end kitchen and I think it shows that just because you live in a unit doesn't mean that your interiors and your experience of your home can't be just as high-end and comfortable, if you want it to be, as someone living in a house or a larger space.

Amanda Farmer: Definitely. Gee, I wish I had got a sticky beak at that place. That must have been interesting.

Jen Bishop: You can probably find it online.

Amanda Farmer: Oh, good. I will do. Okay, so, Jen, what are some common problems that you've noticed people face when it comes to styling or renovating their apartments and what's your advice for overcoming those?

Jen Bishop: And this is speaking of someone who has recently renovated their bathroom.

In an apartment, so bathrooms in particular, in a unit quite often you may only have one bathroom and that means unfortunately, you're gonna have to move out while those renos are happening which is massive pain really, especially if you have kids. So my top tip for that would be to organise a holiday and have it done while you're on a holiday or at least have a couple of weeks of that time while you're going to be away anyway.

Amanda Farmer: Yes.

Jen Bishop: So, that's one tip. Another challenge you're always going to face is that you're probably going to need a by-law if you're doing something like a bathroom.

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Jen Bishop: So, start that process as early as possible because it can take easily take a couple of months for that to go through strata and through your lawyer and to get all the paperwork finalised.

Amanda Farmer: Yes, definitely.

Jen Bishop: So, yes. Don't start that the month before you'd like to start because it's not going to happen and if you start without it, you're quite likely to get in trouble. And I think probably the biggest challenge you are going to face with renovations especially noisy ones in an apartment building is neighbours. And you really- you can't do renos like that quietly but I think you have to be aware and considerate of your neighbours.

Amanda Farmer: Yes.

Jen Bishop: So, ways that you can I guess, look at making the problem you know, for them as small as possible is to make sure that you have professional trades on board.

People that aren't going to be cowboys and make mess and annoy the neighbours.

Amanda Farmer: Yes.

Jen Bishop: Make sure that your trades know where they are allowed to park because there's nothing like blocking someone's garage to annoy the neighbours – it'll give you a bad name.

Amanda Farmer: Yes, good tip.

Jen Bishop: You could have live in the building with this people so you really want to you know, not get on the wrong side of people.

Amanda Farmer: I found in my experience some people forget to tell their neighbours that they're actually doing the renovations.

Yes, this is – that was my last point that I'd just forgotten.

Yes.

Jen Bishop: Yes, let your neighbours know. We put notes through every- it's a really easy thing to do– We put notes in every letterbox. You don't even have to go door to door you can just go to all your mail boxes and I think it's all about managing expectations so you know, this is what we are doing, this is how long we expected to take. We don't expect there to be any issues because we are using you know, professionals but if you have any problems, here's my number give me a call, and I just think that makes a massive difference.

Amanda Farmer: Yes.

Jen Bishop: It just shows consideration and it manages expectations so people know, this is going to take this long and probably going to be noisy.

Amanda Farmer: And when people don't know what's happening they imagine things and they imagine the worst I think.

Jen Bishop: The worst case scenario.

Amanda Farmer: Yes.



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Jen Bishop: Absolutely.

Amanda Farmer: Exactly and then there is a panic and the strata manager gets called and the lawyers get called in and –

Jen Bishop: Yes and it can all spiral into you know, something out of nothing.

Amanda Farmer: Yes, yes and it can be dealt with very easily so that's important one to remember.

Jen Bishop: Yes. Yes.

Amanda Farmer: Okay, so Jen we've probably got some listeners who are thinking about starting a renovation or would like to, would like to improve their apartment. What actions can they take today, to get started with solving their interior design issues? What are some quick wins?

Jen Bishop: Well, there's nothing better than a good declutter.

Amanda Farmer: Yes.

Jen Bishop: I think, to start the process. Since living in an apartment I have become you know, ruthless.

Amanda Farmer: Yes.

Jen Bishop: I give things away, throw things out all the time.

Amanda Farmer: Yes.

Jen Bishop: Especially when you have a toddler and toys and things so you have to really think hard about what you want in your home and there was a famous quote from William Morris which is something along the lines of don't have anything in your home that you don't know to be useful or believe to be beautiful.

Amanda Farmer: Yes.

Jen Bishop: Which is just a really good starting point I think.

Amanda Farmer: Yes.

Jen Bishop: And yes, you know, look at when your next hard rubbish clear out is and think about what you might be able to give away or what you don't need.

I think the painting tip is a big one. I think it's just probably the easiest way to create a blank canvas for the rest of your plans.

Amanda Farmer: Yes.

Jen Bishop: And something that's consistent and will make your space look bigger and the third tip I would say is to invest in storage. And that could be perhaps putting some custom joinery into your apartment depending on how much storage you need or investing in pieces that have storage. For example, you can get these wonderful gas lift beds.

Amanda Farmer: Yes.

Jen Bishop: The amount of things you can put underneath your mattress!

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Amanda Farmer: Yes. We bought one of those for my little 3 year old.

Jen Bishop: Yes, it's amazing.

Amanda Farmer: A lifesaver.

Jen Bishop: That's it so you can be really clever about your space like that. Buy pieces of furniture that incorporates storage and always think about storage and how you can keep things organised and tidy I guess.

Amanda Farmer: Yes, excellent. Thanks for those tips, Jen they are good ones. Alright, you're on the show so you are getting asked the book question. Jen, what books have had the greatest impact on you and why?

Jen Bishop: Well, my library of decorating books is ridiculous but they're all essentials so they are staying in my apartment. So, Domino. This is a book which is probably one of the first decorating books I bought.

Amanda Farmer: Yes.

Jen Bishop: It's by the people who used to run Domino Mag which is an American decorating magazine.

Its subtitle is 'a room by room guide to creating a home that makes you happy' which I just love the whole ethos of that.

Amanda Farmer: Yes.

Jen Bishop: And it's just a great book for beginners I guess who are looking to make their homes nicer. It has lots of case studies of real homes, lots of tips for small spaces, takes you through each room in your house and things you might be able to do. That's been a best seller for years so I definitely think that is a good book to buy. I just have one more as well.

Amanda Farmer: Yes, go for it.

Jen Bishop: This book is called The Tailored Interior and it's by Greg Natale whose apartment I mentioned earlier.

And I happen to help write that book but you know, of course that's not why I'm mentioning it but I know this book inside out and if you have more than a passing interest in interior design I think this is a great book for breaking down all of the elements of interior design in a really easily understandable way. So it talks about contrast, and it talks about cohesion, and it talks about colours, and patterns and it's just a really nice and full of beautiful photographs of his project.

Amanda Farmer: Yes, that sounds great because it can be something – at least I find interior design can be very overwhelming and a bit daunting and a bit 'where do I start? I'm not qualified to engage in this exercise'.

Jen Bishop: Yes.

Amanda Farmer: Where do I start so I don't start at all and I know, personally, I feel a little bit like that.

Jen Bishop: Yes, that's the problem but I think when you break it down, it's actually not rocket science.

If you look at it chunk by chunk I think, it makes it a lot less daunting and you know, people can really have a lot of fun with this stuff. You know, be really enjoyable so it's not something to be scared of.

Amanda Farmer: Thank you. I'll get stuck into that book. I'll put links to those in the show notes.

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Jen Bishop: Yes.

Amanda Farmer: And I'm sure that will help many of our listeners. Okay, Jen before we wrap up, how do listeners find out more about you and is there anything else you'd like to add before we say goodbye?

Jen Bishop: I think one thing that I always like to say about interiors is that your home should be a reflection of you and the people who live in it. So not to take it too seriously you know, you don't want your home to be like something. It would be great if all our homes like something out of a magazine but I think it should be more about you.

Amanda Farmer: Yes.

Jen Bishop: And you should want to come home at the end of the day and walk in and think: "Oh, I love being home in my space."

You can find out more about me on my two sites so that's www.theinteriorsaddict.com and www.renoaddict.com. And I'm easily found on Instagram and Facebook and yes!

Amanda Farmer: Excellent and I know you've got great articles and you've got a weekly newsletter for each of those.

Jen Bishop: Yes.

Amanda Farmer: And I know I'm often on there going down the rabbit warren reading about bathroom renovations and art, and colour, and I love those websites.

Jen Bishop: Yes, massive inspiration on there.

Amanda Farmer: I encourage our listeners ago and check those out. Thank you so much for your time coming on the show today Jen and we are actually filming this as well and I can see in the background you have an absolutely beautiful home.

Jen Bishop: Thank you.

Amanda Farmer: Enjoy your day.

Jen Bishop: Thanks

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