



INDOORS

# Space odyssey

BY Karen McCartney

I DON'T have a dressing room, I have an old-fashioned cupboard – and a small one at that – so I marvel at the rarefied nature of interior-designed spaces where bespoke cabinetry and luxury furnishings are the order of the day. I've seen velvet-lined drawers with sections for up to, oh, 20 pairs of sunglasses, open racking for enough shoes to make Carrie Bradshaw envious, and colour-coded hanging sections that wouldn't be out of place in an upmarket retail store.

Rosa Coy, director at Coy Yiontis Architects in Melbourne, is no stranger to the inventive creation of such spaces for her clients. In the instance above, the original

living room at the front of a Federation house became the master bedroom and ensuite.

"Rather than dissect the space and compromise the heritage ceiling details, we decided to leave it as a singular space and insert a piece of custom furniture to act as bedhead and mask a robe area," says Coy. The blade wall in a dark-veneered timber conceals a generous walk-in wardrobe and beyond it a large ensuite, the door to which is hidden in the robe panelling. "Bedrooms are a high-use zone and, like any other space in the home, need to be functional as well as looking great," she adds. "Well-considered, customised storage is key to achieving this."

OUTDOORS

# Aloe there

BY Richard Unsworth

WE ALL know about the soothing powers of aloe vera (*Aloe barbadensis*) for sunburn, but this tough and showy performer is more versatile than that.

*Good breeding.* A number of aloe hybrids have been specifically bred for the garden, with superior flowering and resistance to pests and drought. There are a variety of sizes: the diminutive "Bumble Bee" hybrid grows just 20 centimetres high; the statuesque "Erik the Red" will tower over two metres. The "Copper Shower" (shown below) will grow to about a metre high, sprouting striking bronze/orange flowers throughout winter into spring.

*Decent exposure.* Aloes can take full sun all day, but are perfect with only morning or afternoon sun. They are ideal for coastal, windy and exposed sites, and will tolerate some frost.

*Flex appeal.* Aloes are a perfect accent plant. Use en masse for a strong display in front of a dark wall, or contrast with softer plants. They blend well with sub-tropical or formal planting schemes; I love using them among clipped topiary and plants with contrasting smaller, rounder leaves.

*The living is easy.* In a garden setting, very little watering is required; once they're established, rainfall should be enough. Avoid over-watering, or poor-draining soils; sandy soils are ideal. In pots, however, give them a good water every couple of weeks. Feed with a controlled-release fertiliser once a year in spring, and clip off any dead flowers.

*Suitable companions.* Try contrasting the aloe's strong architectural foliage with softer forms such as Indian hawthorn (*Rhaphiolepis*) or box topiary (*Buxus*). If you live near the beach, mix them with natives such as coastal rosemary (*Westringia fruticosa*) or white correa (*Correa alba*). Native and ornamental grasses also work well.

Where can I learn more? [aloe-aloe.com.au](http://aloe-aloe.com.au).



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