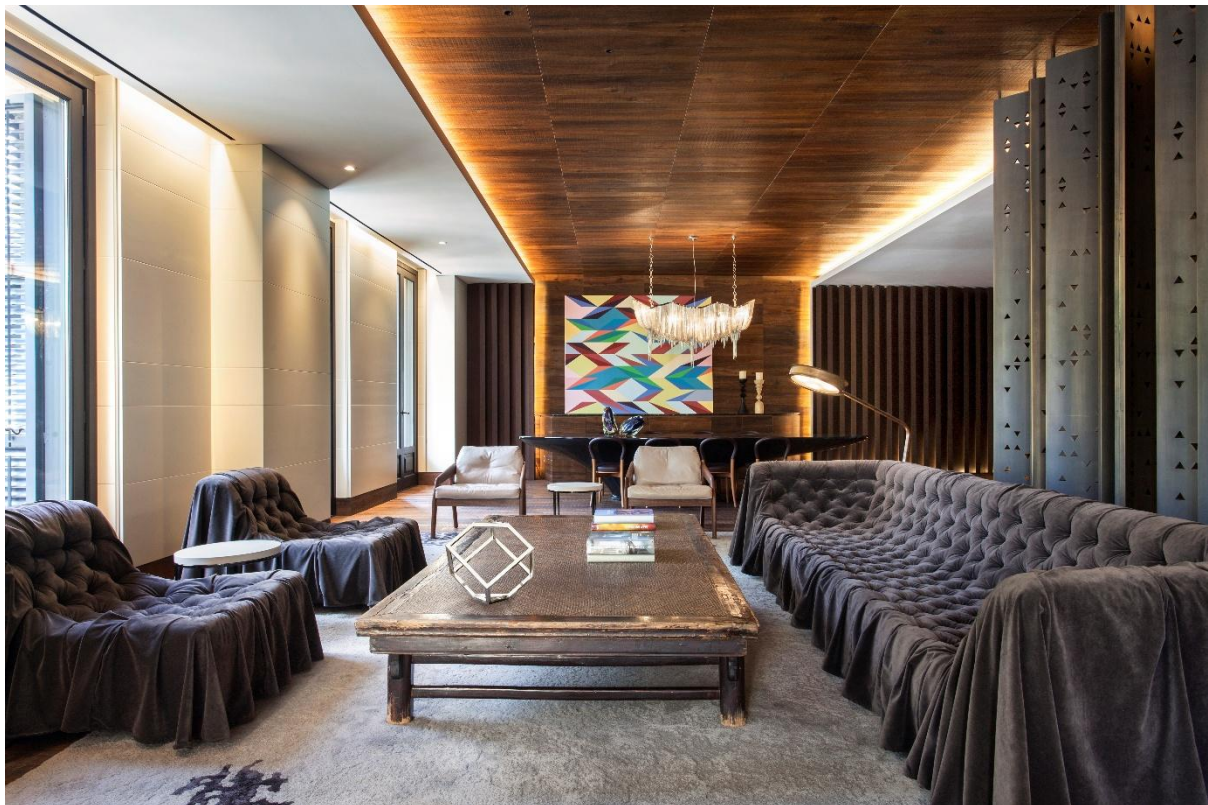


The New Language of European Apartments by Top 100 Interior Designer

In cities like Paris, Barcelona and Milan, the grand old apartments of Europe are quietly entering a new chapter. These homes, layered with architectural detail and cultural memory, are increasingly being reimagined as modern sanctuaries that reflect both the lives and values of a globally connected generation.

A New Chapter for Europe's Historic Apartments

While these apartments once served traditional living arrangements, today they are being adapted into secondary homes, creative hideaways or lock-up-and-go bases for international business travellers. Their charm lies in their balance of intimacy and stature. *“High ceilings, ornate mouldings, worn parquet floors and deep-set windows tell a story that newer builds often cannot replicate.”* says **Michele Rhoda, ARRCC Director and Designer**, *“Yet the way people live has changed, and designers are stepping in to interpret this evolution with clarity and grace.”*



European apartments offer a sense of place that is hard to find elsewhere. Often situated in cultural hubs, they combine rich heritage with vibrant city living. Their scale, location and architectural detail make them ideal foundations for thoughtful reinvention.

However, the layout of these spaces often reflects an older mode of living. Rooms can be fragmented and disconnected, with structural columns or thick interior walls shaping circulation in unexpected ways. The design challenge lies not in erasing these quirks but in refining and celebrating them. Heritage elements like detailed cornices, patterned wooden flooring and original window proportions add character to a contemporary style.

Light, Flow and the Language of Craft

"One of the most powerful tools in reworking these spaces is light." **says Michele.** Designers avoid placing heavy furniture near windows and focus instead on opening the orientation of the apartment to its best views. Sightlines are extended through carefully placed joinery, concealed lighting and feature shelving at the back of rooms to create a sense of depth. These focal points not only draw the eye but visually expand the apartment, making even narrow layouts feel generous.

Ceilings are kept clean to heighten volume and make space for statement flooring below and this might include marble inlays, layered textures or patterned rugs that visually ground the room. Working with existing window placements rather than against them ensures that natural light maintains its rhythm and harmony with the original proportions of the architecture.

"But the evolution is not only structural." **says Michele,** A renewed emphasis on craftsmanship is taking hold across Europe, echoing the design sensibilities of artists rooted in places like South Africa. In an age of mass production and digitalisation, there is growing desire for tactile pieces that feel meaningful, and reflect personality.



Designing With Purpose

The process of reimagining these apartments begins long before plans are drawn and understanding the emotional and lifestyle needs of the client is central to the design journey. *“Through detailed questionnaires and one on one conversations, the team builds a holistic picture of how the client wants to live, entertain and recharge.”* says Michele.

Outdoor spaces, when available, are treated with reverence. Whether it is a hidden courtyard, a narrow balcony or a rooftop with a view, these natural extensions of the home are framed thoughtfully, allowing even compact apartments to feel expansive, where maximising views becomes the priority.

Renovating within Europe's heritage buildings brings unique challenges. There are often strict preservation guidelines, and not all features can be altered or removed. But within these boundaries lies a creative opportunity to innovate in ways that respect the past while gently modernising the experience of space.

This sensitive balance is embodied in the work of ARRCC, a Cape Town based design studio known for its philosophy of curated elegance and a culturally rich design language. ARRCC brings an art focused, bespoke sensibility to every European project, merging contemporary needs with architectural memory. Whether in the heart of Paris or overlooking the Riviera in Monaco, the studio's work reflects a refined understanding of how history and innovation can coexist.