



Practical as she is philosophical, Zahava Elenberg works collaboratively with developers and architects realising their vision for how a finished space can come to life.

Having designed award-winning buildings herself as an architect and establishing businesses recognised for design, from architecture firm Elenberg Fraser in 1998, to full furniture fit out company Move-In in 2002, it seems only natural to ask — what does good design mean to you?

After more than 20 years in a design-focused industry, her humility endearing, she responds:

“I have no idea,” mid-laughter.

“It’s like asking, what’s a good painting? Or what’s a good sculpture? They’re so intangible.”

“It’s the fusion between philosophy and execution. That intangible, ungraspable thing. It’s something elusive, which you often can’t define.

“Good design; something has to resonate with you, reflecting your own sense of who you are, and your own morality.”

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The Boulevard: Move-In worked with developer GSA and architect MJA Studio on the project.
Photographer Credit: Dion Robeson

A niche in the market

Established 17 years ago, the idea for Move-In was conceived almost by accident during her time at Elenberg Fraser, when clients asked the firm to furnish properties for their investors.

“It’s not something that I had heard of, something that existed, or something that we did,” she said.

“Today every project we do is totally unique and we try and deliver the promise of the architect and the developer’s vision from the outset,” she says.

Move-In are currently working with developer Global Student Accommodation (GSA) on a suite of student accommodation projects.

The first of which, was a 13-level DKO-designed development called University Square in Carlton.

“We designed and delivered full furniture, fixture and equipment (FF&E) fit out for both locations, ensuring each had its own distinct look that complimented each architectural build,” Elenberg said.

The second GSA collaboration includes Perth-based “The Boulevard”, designed by architecture firm MJA Studio.

Zahava describes the site as a “slick and Scandinavian design aesthetic with monochromatic interior” which comprises 576 beds.

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Journal. Move-In worked with developer Citiplan and architect METIER 3 on this project.

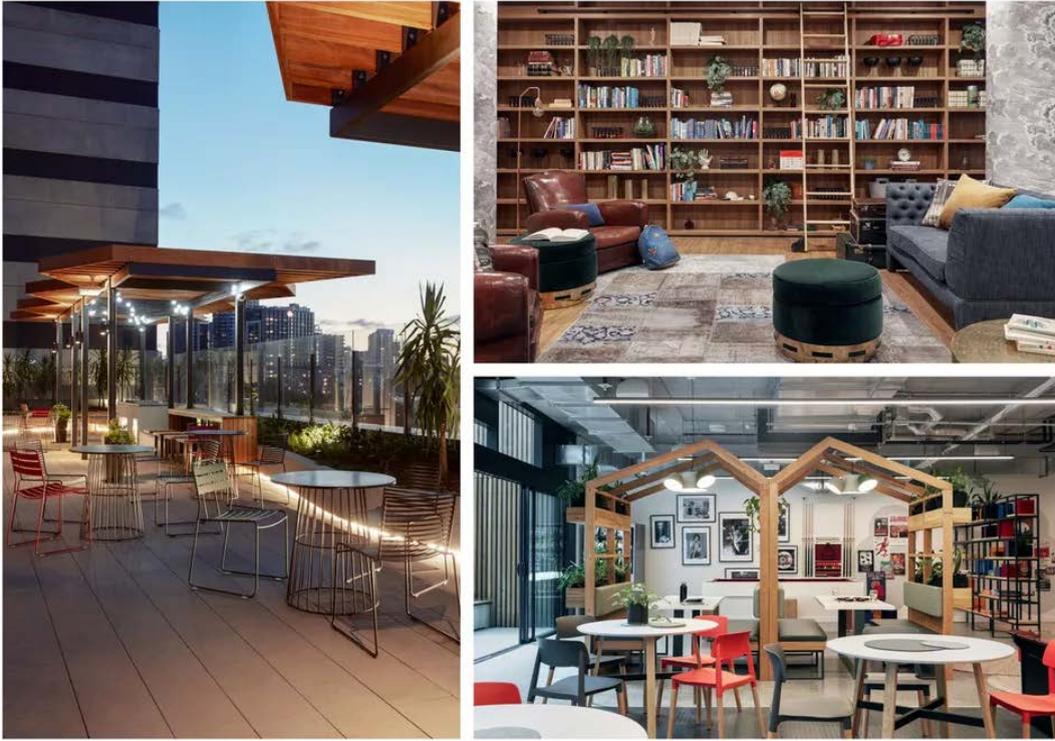
Photographer Credit: Tom Ross

A recent collaboration with developer Citiplan saw Move-In furnish a mixture of 804 student studios and shared apartments, also located in Carlton.

Operated by Journal Student Living, and designed by architect METIER 3, Zahava says the project included several large and quirky social spaces furnished with items to ensure the space feels “quintessentially Melbourne”.

“We’re really trying to bring a localised environment into what we’re doing, whether that’s working with local designers, or using local products, and we’ve got some great clients who believe in that.”

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'Quintessentially Melbourne': Journal in Melbourne's inner suburb Carlton.

Photographer Credit: Tom Ross

On creativity

As a recently appointed board member of the Melbourne Film Festival, when asked how her interests in film and her roles in the property sector overlap, she's decisively clear.

"I love process and detail.

"They share the same mental dexterity which is problem-solving. You have to find a creative solution for each one of those problems.

"And I get enormous pleasure out of a beautifully crafted and complicated spreadsheet as much as I do from reading beautifully crafted scripts.

"How you can get involved in the architectural structure of screenwriting, and the way in which you imagine that as a film, is very defined in the way it fits together.

"That sense of order and the processing of information to me is very powerful."

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Zahava pictured with her youngest daughter Hephzibah.

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On diversity

As she moves through life, the pool of experiences she draws from continues to refine itself.

“The older I get, the more I gravitate towards people that have a diverse background of experiences. People that have had to navigate difficulties and challenges,” she says.

Having traversed loss, her father at a young age, and illness, she knows trying times.

“The hues of life are richer and deeper when you add those layers of complexity.

“My step-father is amazing and has been part of my life for more than 30-years.

“And Mum has always taught me, not through words, but through her actions that you can be whoever you want to be, and do whatever you want to do.

“And that’s been my goal to instil in my own three children.”

The hues of life are richer and deeper when you add those layers of complexity

Zahava Elenberg



Melbourne University was the developer on 303 Royal Parade, Move-In also worked with architect Hayball on the project.

Photographer Credit: Tess Kelly

And while Move-In is firmly grounded within the student accommodation and the serviced hotels sectors, Elenberg says she's focused on expanding into the senior living space.

“It can be a very lonely thing to be an elderly person in this society.

“Some horrible statistic came out last year that said around 50 per cent of people in retirement homes have zero visitors.

“Age is not an illness but loneliness is.”

Her plan for “elderhood” a cultural community for people aged over 80 in the senior living space focuses on education, events and social engagement, something she plans to launch in her favourite world city, New York.

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MOVE-IN delivered full furniture fit out in the Fender Katsalidis designed Puntnill Ivanhoe apartment hotel, Melbourne.

Photographer Credit: Martina Gemmola

And having known “success” in many forms, the former Telstra Young Businesswoman of the Year believes its definition is being able to implement some kind of change.

“I think there’s this very artificial sense of achievement that wealth brings and that’s not what success is to me.

“Success is more about contribution, and being part of a continuous narrative that allows for change.

“It’s also having the freedom to do the things that you love doing, and the things that are important to you.

“I say to my kids, success is in the tiny things. It’s setting a goal and achieving it, whether that’s cleaning the kitchen or writing an amazing story.

“It’s a sense of achievement, and that’s self-determined.”



The Schwartz/ Elenberg family: From left to right; Lilit, Hepziban, Zahava, Anna, Morry and Boaz.

Supplied

Fast facts:



Zahava, and Hephzibah, sit on her father Joel Elenberg's sculpture 'Untitled', 1976.

Sarah Collins The Design Files

What excites her most about the industry? Imaginative clients.

Favourite architect? Elenberg says she will always have a soft spot for Mies (Ludwig Mies van der Rohe — regarded as one of the pioneers of modernist architecture).

Favourite designed building or space? Central Park, New York.

Mother to three: Lilith, Boaz and Hephzibah.

Only child of art gallery owner Anna Schwartz and sculptor the late Joel Elenberg.

Step-daughter of publisher and property mogul Morry Schwartz.

Her ***favourite author*** is Nicholson Baker, and ***poem?*** A Season in Hell by Arthur Rimbaud.



"I'm confident in who I am. I've been brought up by a really strong woman," Zahava, on her mother Anna Schwartz.

Sarah Collins, The Design Files

#Zahava Elenberg #Move-In

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