

## THE EXPERT

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## Holly Hamlyn

Holly Hamlyn's job sounds quite magical to me. The British-born, Cape Town-based designer is responsible for developing and maintaining the interior aesthetic of Blok's developments, including of course **TENONQ**. But, seeing as her work begins before the first brick has been laid, Holly operates on vision and intuition without the advantage of actually seeing a space before she sets about enhancing it.

In this sense, her work sounds akin to a video game designer – mining the imagination to create functional, inhabitable worlds. In fact, when I meet with Holly to talk about her work, she's spent most of the day working on the digital renders of all the prospective **TENONQ** units. In front of a computer screen, Holly co-ordinates the interior aspects of each apartment, and the building as a whole. It's the final frontier of the design phase, building on the vision of the architects.

These simulations ultimately materialise into real homes for real people, though they are developed months before breaking ground. Beyond the creative thrill of progressively bringing bricks and mortar to life, there's a responsibility towards the imminent human experience; you're detailing all those miniscule considerations that constitute a sense of being 'at home'. It's a sentimental thought, but one that can never be underestimated in the design process.

A balance also needs to be struck between finished artwork and blank canvas. The Blok aesthetic embraces the elegance and efficiency of minimalism, and a great deal of consideration goes into establishing a beautiful and effortlessly comfortable living environment. A minimalist lifestyle certainly isn't synonymous with 'cold', 'stark' or 'empty'. More often than not, it creates an opportunity for personal expression and shines a light on good taste. A restrained interior design context foregrounds the conscious decorative decisions we make. It compels you to own fewer things, of higher quality. As Holly puts it, the idea of 'less is more' is qualitative, not quantitative. It only really works when less is more.

Echoing a sentiment expressed by the architects at WAUW, Holly believes simple design is the most difficult to achieve. In her context, there's much more emphasis on design details, exposing every seemingly minor decision to scrutiny. Nothing is incidental or purely functional; every detail has a leading role on her stage.

After our chat, Holly returns to the business of imagining. Imagining the difference in warmth a particular type of flooring offers over another, imagining the ways in which a couple might relax and watch TV at the end of the day and how that subtle difference might make life a tiny bit more pleasant. These tiny details accumulate to define one's daily life, and Holly wants to make that experience as joyous and intuitive as possible.

It might feel like a virtual game at times, but in due course all those well-considered minutiae will materialise, and Holly's imagination will in turn become somebody's dream. Quite magical, right?