

DESIGN FEATURE OF THE MOMENT

# built-in wardrobes

IS IT STORAGE? IS IT A STYLE STATEMENT? CAN IT BE BOTH? THE NEXT GEN OF FIXED WARDROBES ARE EVERYTHING - DECOR, ROOM DIVIDERS AND MORE

FEATURE Keith Flanagan





Walk-in closets may always be the more aspirational storage goals for homeowners, but some of the latest built-in wardrobe designs are making a case for pulling closets out into the open. Often fitted directly across a wall (unlike moveable armoires, an age-old precursor to closets), built-in wardrobes can be made to measure, designed as custom storage solutions for awkward and unusable wall space, or bedrooms that lack proper closets. Upping the ante, architects have even started to pull them away from the wall entirely, creating wardrobes akin to floating closets anywhere throughout the home.

‘Built-in wardrobes have many advantages: They help to store many things in a space-saving way, and help to create a tidy and reduced feeling of space – the architecture comes into its own better,’ says Mark Neuner, architect at Vienna’s Mostlikely. ‘But it is also possible to create special solutions: wardrobes as room dividers or even as a design piece with great shapes and materials.’

Similar to planting a tall bookshelf or partition wall, built-in wardrobes can behave like room dividers, demarcating different zones within open floor plans while bridging the gap between architecture and floating furniture. Installed this way (often perpendicular to existing walls), they go beyond simple storage, fundamentally altering the flow of your space – an architectural feature with form and function.

And any standout architectural feature has an opportunity to add flair to your interiors – fixed wardrobes can be fabricated with a variety of materials, finishes and trims that bring character to your space, while the wardrobe’s cavity can be personalised with endless variations of shelving, drawers and racks. ➤

## 1 CUT CORNERS

Creating a custom wardrobe from scratch is a costly endeavour that requires skilled carpenters, but there are ways to cut corners. While this design is tailor-fit through and through (it divides the room while also creating a hallway to the door), you can get a similar look with savvy furniture hacking. ‘A tip to do it yourself would be to customise existing products,’ says Mark Neuner. ‘You can order only the carcass and design the fronts yourself – this would be a financial and time-efficient approach.’

PROJECT BY Mostlikely

## 2 TRICK OF THE EYE

Building wardrobes directly into the wall can save space compared with floating furniture – and in doing so, you might just create a seamless storage solution like this custom design. ‘Initially, this bedroom had no closets, so we built them in and added

architectural trims around the room,’ explains interior designer Ghislaine Viñas. ‘We wanted the room to feel seamless and not interrupted by closet doors, so we carried our trim throughout the bottom of the space and added wallpaper above it. It’s a sneaky way of hiding the closet and providing uniformity to a small room.’

PROJECT BY Ghislaine Viñas

## 3 BLOCK OUT

Perfect for open-plan spaces, fixed yet floating wardrobes can establish different zones without putting up floor-to-ceiling walls. In this Krakow flat, a hulking mirrored design serves multiple functions. ‘The first and most important thing was to separate the bedroom area from the living area,’ says designer Marcin Czopek, noting that a partition wall would just waste space. But in addition to an enclosed wardrobe, it also pockets a utility room complete with a washing machine.

PROJECT BY Mistovia



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## OPTIONS, OPTIONS

In the Swiss Army Knife wardrobe above (which doubles as a sleeping pod, with a bed tucked behind sliding doors), designers pulled out all the stops. 'To maximise storage, we always consider how best to use vertical and horizontal space,' says Jack Mama of London's Studiomama of the unit's many compartments. 'We like to combine open and closed storage with shelves for clothes or other kinds of objects - design elements like pull-out shelves and drawers, allowing you to access even those items that tend to get buried at the back.'

PROJECT BY Studiomama





PHOTOGRAPHS (OPTIONS, OPTIONS) BILLY BOLTON; (HALL PASS) ROBERT RIEGER

## HALL PASS

'Why does a closet always need its own space and a wall to lean against?' asks designer Gisbert Pöppler. Proving that closets need not be sealed off behind closed doors, the wardrobe area in this open-plan Berlin apartment creates a porous layout between the dining and living areas. A central and fixed unit creates a corridor-like path from room to room, bringing another layer of function to an architectural feature that easily could have been a simple partition wall.

PROJECT BY Gisbert Pöppler Architecture and Interior ➤

## IN FOCUS

Inspired by her upbringing in Switzerland, where wardrobes of all shapes and sizes were common in lieu of closets – all while enhancing the interior style – designer Stefanie Brechbuehler outfitted this elegant bedroom with a show-stopping design echoing exterior architecture featured in the home’s new extension. ‘In this case it pays homage to the new addition with its unusual rounded corners and also becomes a beautiful focal point in the room,’ explains Stefanie, nodding to the project’s inside-and-out approach. ‘The interior was customised to the needs of our clients which is a great benefit of custom work.’

PROJECT BY Workstead

PHOTOGRAPH MATTHEW WILLIAMS





