

The VL50 is the last word on the AUSTRALIAN design industry's top talent. This year's list honours, the MAESTROS of their METIER alongside enterprising innovators and rapidly rising stars selected for their CREATIVITY, dedication to craft and contribution to community. Once again, an awards ceremony presented by Mobilia will mark the occasion.

WLF50

Compiled by THE VOGUE LIVING TEAM *Written by* LINDYL ZANBAKA

JILLIAN DINKEL

“As an American, I’ve been struck by the warmth and openness of Australia’s design community. The emphasis on collaboration and genuine connection makes it an inspiring industry to be part of,” acknowledges principal and creative director Jillian Dinkel, whose talent for sewing stories into the fabric of her interiors stems from an early career in fashion and media. To date, Dinkel’s promising portfolio suggests prestigious estates and period homes are her métier. **2024 HIGHLIGHT** Opening a new studio in Woolloomooloo — “it’s been wonderful to create a home base for our clients.” **UP NEXT** Dinkel’s first heritage multi-residential development, a new build in Mosman, and a country house in the Southern Highlands.

RICHARDS STANISICH

“These are our people,” assert founders Jonathan Richards and Kirsten Stanisich by way of comment on the community their work contributes to. “Australia’s design calibre is exceptional, and we have so many supportive and wonderful friends in the industry. Not just designers, but builders and tradespeople.” **2024**

HIGHLIGHT Richards and Stanisich acknowledge their practice faced considerable challenges. However, having dedicated years to prioritising their studio’s culture and values, they say those efforts paid off. “Our team stepped up and were outstanding.” **UP NEXT** A “prestigious, multi-level residential project in central London” will be revealed. It’s the studio’s first international commission, which involved some of the team relocating.



GREG NATALE

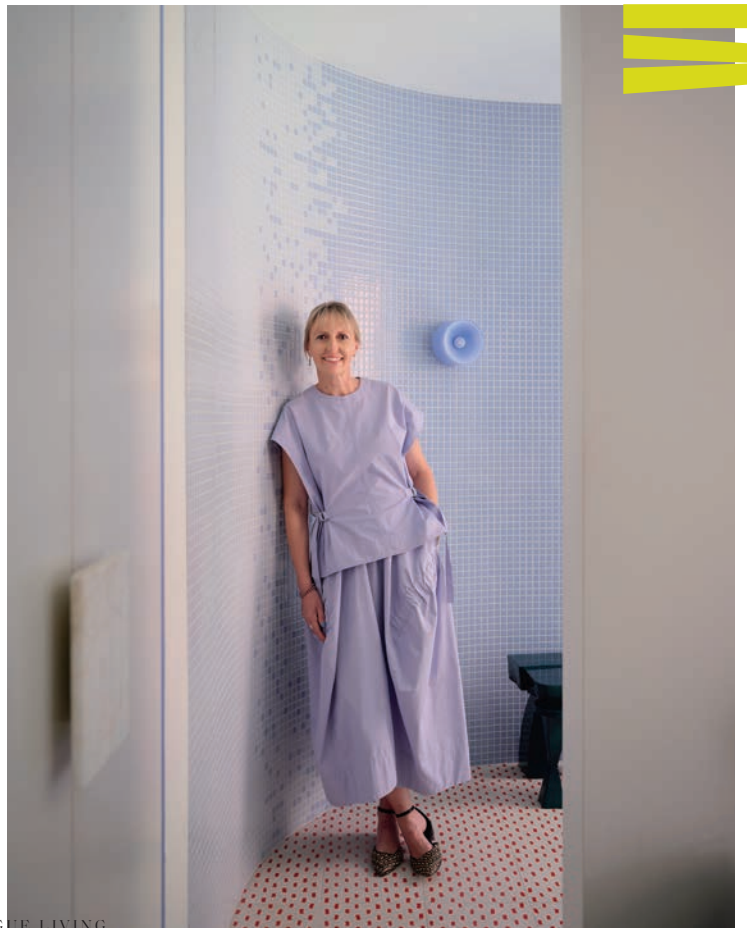
“From a young age, I wanted to build beautiful spaces for others to enjoy and feel at home in,” says Greg Natale, who has built a product empire alongside his self-titled design firm. “It’s all about imagining possibilities, creating comfort and crafting environments that foster joy.”

2024 HIGHLIGHT “Completing our first residential project in London and our first house in New York” — the latter features in this issue. **UP NEXT** A country house in Oklahoma, flagship stores for luxury watches and jewellery retailer Kennedy, a new décor collection, a timber flooring collaboration with Tongue & Groove, and the realisation of a five-year residential project in Mosman.

STUDIO DOHERTY

Founder Mardi Doherty has built a studio to last through her sensitive interpretations, collaborative nature and colourful élan. “Design is about focusing on possibility — seeing what could be, rather than what stands in the way... It’s about imagining a future that doesn’t exist yet and taking creative risks to bring it to life.” **2024 HIGHLIGHT**

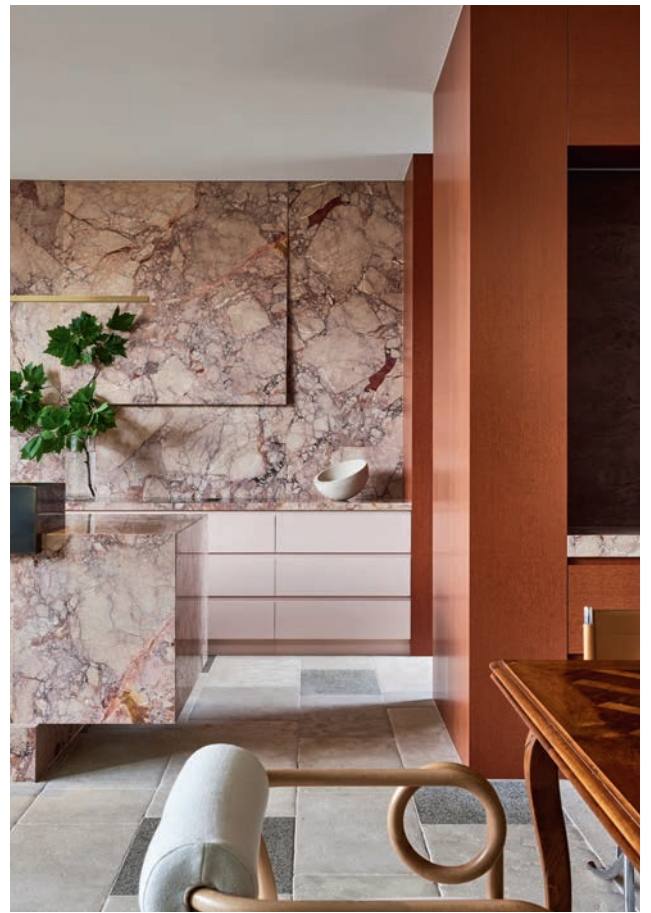
“Celebrating our 10-year anniversary, reflecting on the incredible journey we’ve had and the lasting relationships we’ve built,” says Doherty, whose recently completed home renovation appears in this issue. **UP NEXT** In the pipeline is a farmhouse cottage in Gippsland and a grand Georgian home in Toorak, plus new brand environments.



VOGUE

STUDIO TALI ROTH

That interiors can inspire levity and joy in others “thrills” Tali Roth, whose aesthetic is generous, whimsical, sentimental and blithely unpretentious. “The world is a diverse and at times divisive place, and when you figure out how to get people from different walks of life into a space, have them unite and feel at ease... it’s just so meaningful.” **2024 HIGHLIGHT** Designing Trove’s retail space in New York, launching a soft furnishings collection, and working on the Temple House project alongside Golden, featured in this issue. **UP NEXT** A home renovation in Melbourne, a hardware collection with Lo & Co, and new Studio Tali Roth objects for an Oigall Projects Melbourne Design Week presentation.



FIONA LYNCH OFFICE

For Fiona Lynch, who is known for designing soulful realms with a sense of purpose, every project “is an opportunity for growth and learning”, an attitude that speaks volumes about her fierce dedication to her craft. Still, she insists, what makes her most proud to be a part of Australia’s design industry are “the friends made over the journey”. **2024 HIGHLIGHT** “Winning *Vogue Living’s* VL50 Interior Designer of the Year!” **UP NEXT** Looking ahead, Lynch’s next endeavour is a project on a vineyard near Siena in Tuscany.

HECKER GUTHRIE

Founding principals Paul Hecker and Hamish Guthrie say that through design they strive to enhance the businesses of hospitality and commercial clients, and better the lives of people by way of their domestic environments, “endeavouring to evoke some form of emotional connection to the spaces we are creating.” **2024 HIGHLIGHT** “After 23 years of practice, we continue to be blessed with brilliant clients, substantial project briefs, a studio of engaged and enthusiastic designers, and kind acknowledgments, like this!” **UP NEXT** Collaborations with Mecca, a project for Idée Fixe wine house in Margaret River, and a first for the studio: the launch of two European river boats designed for APT.



ACME

Redefining the hospitality scene for more than a decade, Vince Alafaci and Caroline Choker regard Australia's design industry as a global leader.

"It's inspiring to see constant innovation while staying connected to the spirit of place," say Alafaci and Choker. "Contributing to a design landscape that's creating a meaningful legacy is a privilege we're proud to embrace." **2024 HIGHLIGHT**

The Grounds Coffee Factory (in a heritage locomotive workshop in Eveleigh), Lunetta (a dodecagon modernist spaceship-turned dining experience in Canberra), Songbird (a multi-level Cantonese dining room in Double Bay) and a new Supernormal restaurant in Brisbane. **UP NEXT** Merivale's first Melbourne CBD venue, in Tomasetti House, plus Becco restaurant's next chapter.



YSG

Simultaneously blue-skied and rock 'n' roll, Yasmine Ghoniem's culturally fluent, globally recognised studio possesses a sought-after attitude that could be described as 'cool'. Design, Ghoniem says, is inherently optimistic: "It breaks down barriers, melds cultures together and heightens curiosity and diversity among all." **2024**

HIGHLIGHT We're living in a YSG world with projects emerging across Oz and abroad, but Ghoniem says the best bit was "the creation of YSG Junior" — her first child was born in February 2025. **UP NEXT** A product launch and new rug collection, a Brisbane hotel, artist Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran's apartment, and new builds by YSG's architecture team. Further afield, a home and hospitality venue in Dubai, retreats in Indonesia, and a dwelling in the Saudi desert.



TAMSIN JOHNSON

Tamsin Johnson's experimental-yet-sophisticated creative repertoire, which spans design, antiques and fashion, is making its mark on the local aesthetic landscape. Says Johnson: "The design community's impact on Australia comes from many sources, and I hope my contribution has shifted our tastes and desires forward."

2024 HIGHLIGHT Rae's Guesthouses in Byron Bay, and new P. Johnson stores in Sydney and Melbourne — "we have made a shift in the standard of women's retail with these spaces". **UP NEXT** Her second book. "It thrills me to think the wider public can peek into mostly private spaces that I have designed since the last instalment."



BLAINEY NORTH STUDIO

A major international voice and master of measured extravagance, Blainey North believes "creating spaces that inspire peace and happiness is so important. We spend most of our lives indoors and should be focusing on the alchemy of these spaces as part of the new wave of wellness." **2024 HIGHLIGHT** The set design of *The Roast of Tom Brady* comedy special in Los Angeles. "I loved immersing myself in a different world and scale... It was astonishing to have billions of people see our design." **UP NEXT** A multi-level clinic in Mayfair, a project in Manhattan's Steinway Tower, and a grand residence in Sydney.



AKIN ATELIER

Founding director Kelvin Ho and his team engineer brand identities that never miss a beat and design positive experiences, whether they be fashion stores or restaurants with a trippy déjà vu twist. Ho's desire to create spaces "that foster community and bring people together" reflects his practice's approach to visual storytelling. **2024 HIGHLIGHT** "A research trip to Mexico City, where we were introduced to incredible places through the eyes of local designers and architects." **UP NEXT** A hospitality project in Byron Bay. "It's been in the works for a couple of years," says Ho. "The fun we've had working on it will be reflected in the finished product."



THOMAS HAMEL & ASSOCIATES

"Witnessing Australian design mature and evolve into a globally recognised force has been exciting," says Thomas Hamel, whose three-decade-spanning body of work is the last word in luxury. "We like to design interiors that act as a cocoon, enveloping our clients in stylish yet timeless surroundings, filled with rich layers that make them happy, comfortable and at ease." **2024 HIGHLIGHT** "The successful completion of our third Mentorship Program. It's been incredibly fulfilling to see three exceptional designers join our team and embark on their journeys in the industry." **UP NEXT** A series of projects in Point Piper, Toorak, Palm Beach, and London's Mayfair.



OSMA



PATTERN STUDIO

Having hatched a distinct style and expanded on their fashionable portfolio of brand environments with spirit-lifting residences, Lily Goodwin and Josh Cain remain joyfully open to experience. “It’s a privilege to spend our working hours thinking of how we can thoughtfully and elegantly solve problems,” the creative partners tell us. “We’re lucky to be in a position where we find all of our work exciting.”

2024 HIGHLIGHT “Receiving the inaugural VL50 On The Ascent Interior Designer of the Year award!” **UP NEXT** “New iterations of spaces for old friends including Above The Clouds, Nagnata and Deiji. It’s very cool to play a small part in the stories of these Australian brands.”

PHOEBE NICOL INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE

By fortifying and building on her studio’s identity and codes, Phoebe Nicol has established a singular look that balances studied detail with understated chic. “Design is about creating spaces that inspire and bring joy,” Nicol says. “It’s a way to add positivity to daily life and remind people of the beauty around them.” **2024 HIGHLIGHT** Nicol’s most rewarding moments? Growing her business and moving into a new

Woollahra office space with her team. **UP NEXT** A mid-century home called Helsham House, which is revealed in this issue. Plus, work begins on a Southern Highlands farmhouse.



PHOTOGRAPHERS: TOM ROSS (PATTERN STUDIO), DAVE WHEELER (PHOEBE NICOL INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE), ANSON SMART (ALEXANDER & CO. AND ARENT & PYKE), SEAN FENNESSY (GOLDEN)

ALEXANDER & CO.

“Our work has the capacity to heal landscapes and communities when done well. We have the authority to imagine any future we can bring ourselves to believe in,” says principal Jeremy Bull, who sees his B Corp-certified studio as part of an industry “rich with excellence and relentlessly improving. The Australian vernacular continues to evolve and redefine itself.” **2024 HIGHLIGHT** “Launching Ayrburn in Arrowtown, near Queenstown, a momentous and beautiful hospitality precinct project.” **UP NEXT** The opening of a new hotel, Mondrian Gold Coast, and the unveiling of integrated architectural and interior design residential projects several years in the making.



ARENT&PYKE

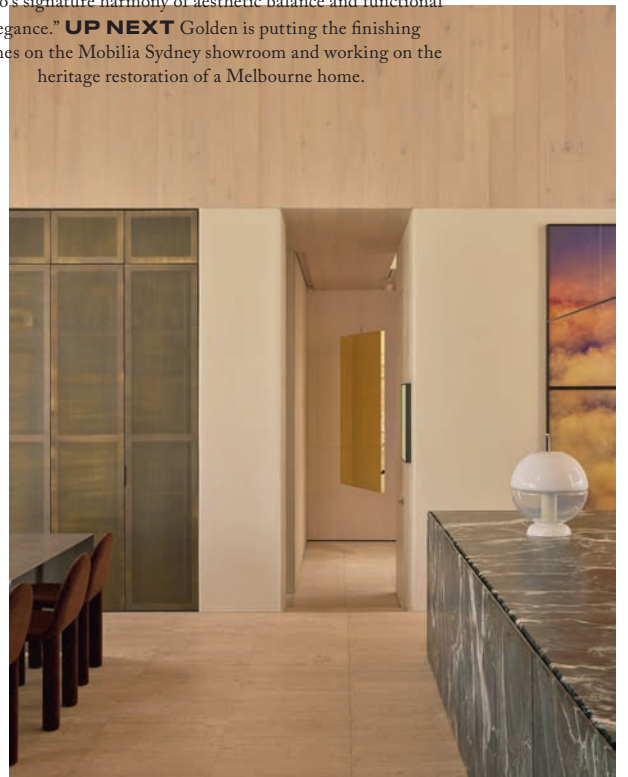
Year after year, creative directors and co-founders Juliette Arent and Sarah-Jane Pyke inspire with their exaltation of colour, and like the evocative palettes they are known for, their craft “opens minds to different ways of viewing and appreciating our diverse world.” **2024 HIGHLIGHT** Arent and Pyke are most proud of expanding their team and reinforcing their core values. “We’ve never felt so unified and ready for growth.” **UP NEXT** A home in Sydney’s eastern suburbs with architect Polly Harbison, as well as retail venues, which follow the success of their KODA Cutters salon. “We love expanding our reach beyond the private residential realm.”



GOLDEN

“At Golden, we strive to design environments that enhance how we move, live, and feel in our daily lives, fostering a sense of purpose and optimism,” say directors Kylie Buhagiar and Alicia McKimm, who pay particular attention to the potential for design to elevate emotional and physical wellbeing. **2024 HIGHLIGHT** The completion of McKimm’s family home, and Temple House, “a once-in-a-decade project” that appears in this issue. They describe it as “embodying our studio’s signature harmony of aesthetic balance and functional elegance.” **UP NEXT** Golden is putting the finishing touches on the Mobilia Sydney showroom and working on the heritage restoration of a Melbourne home.

VOGUE



HANDELSMANN + KHAW

On the subject of design's potential to inspire hope, Tania Handelsmann and Gillian Khaw believe "an interior with colour and playfulness can lift the spirits, but on a deeper level, surrounding oneself with beauty does do something for the soul." **2024 HIGHLIGHT** Projects that "allowed us to create the best version of H+K's style," the founders share. "We're really enjoying this stage of being comfortable in our own 'design' skin. There's something liberating about not needing to prove oneself."

UP NEXT A lighting range with Dunlin — the studio's first foray into product — and they're branching out with a retail fit-out, too.



DECUS

The sky's the limit for managing director Alexandra Donohoe Church, whose residential projects are known for their elevated scale and atmospheres. She views design as an invitation to pause and reconnect, and regards beauty as a "powerful antidote" to negativity. **2024 HIGHLIGHT** Donohoe Church says she felt most rewarded by new commissions and collaborations with long-time clients, a sourcing trip in France, and "bumping into my design hero, Pierre Yovanovitch, at PAD London!" **UP NEXT** As well as projects in North Bondi, Cottesloe and Sydney's east, the team will embark on their next chapter and passion project: the restoration of a new Decus studio.



K.P.D.O.

"We're looking for the best possible solution for each project. The best quality of light and space, the most logical plan and the most beautiful materials. The best solution is a synthesis of all of these simple elements," state K.P.D.O.'s director of interiors Kerry Phelan and director of architecture Stephen Javens, who agree that "it's an incredibly liberating time to be part of the wider design community". **2024 HIGHLIGHT**

One particular residential project proved especially rewarding. "Our challenge was to keep the soul of a 1930s English Revival home set in an Edna Walling garden." **UP NEXT** The reveal of the Mobilia Sydney showroom's Special Exhibitions Space.



FLACK STUDIO

Reflecting on the way design “goes beyond the physical and tangible”, principal David Flack says: “At our studio, we actively prioritise engaging with and supporting our local design community through initiatives like Open Library and Plinths. These programs foster dialogue and collaboration, and create spaces for shared learning and innovation.”

2024 HIGHLIGHT The launch of the Me and You lighting collection with Volker Haug Studio at Milan Design Week, followed by a showcase at The Future Perfect in Los Angeles. Flack Studio also completed five residential projects, including its first in the US. **UP NEXT** Several private residences and the opening of a new Melbourne hotel.

ADAM&ARTHUR

Adam&Arthur represents the combined ingenuity and savoir faire of industrial designer Adam Goodrum and marquetry artisan Arthur Seigneur, whose way with colour, pattern and straw marquetry is hyperbolic in the best way. The duo say Australia's creative output is "defined by its ability to resourcefully blend diverse influences with a bold, progressive vision", a statement that certainly applies to their practice. **2024 HIGHLIGHT** Adam&Arthur received the National Gallery of Australia Melbourne Design Week Award, and were shortlisted for Best Product 2024 at the prestigious Créateurs Design Awards. **UP NEXT** Commissions are in progress for major institutions, as well as one for White Rabbit Gallery co-founder Judith Neilson.

PRODUCT DESIGN



STUDIO TOPS

For designer and artist Simone Tops, the materials she employs are participants, partners, even, in the creative process, which is guided by her adept skill and technical sophistication whether working with leather, steel or glass. Through playful interactions with material, Tops regards “bringing new form into being” as a heartening act. “Adding to the discourse of object making, developing your visual language and extending skills as a maker is enriching.” **2024 HIGHLIGHT** Presenting her 2024 collection The Soloist at Melbourne Design Week. **UP NEXT** “Collaborations presented in new built environments and a 2025 collection that works with familiar materials in new explorative ways.”



ANNIE PAXTON

Annie Paxton's work sits “in that rich median” between function and formative art expression, “tethered to function, but driven by the optimistic precepts of an artistic project.” An architect and maker, Paxton wholly embodies the ‘multi-disciplinary’ label, and the furniture and accessories she calls playful exercises emerge from a disciplined mentality. She is well placed, then, to observe that within Australia, “you can quite freely dance across multiple disciplines, which imbues a real richness to what you’re crafting.” **2024 HIGHLIGHT** Exhibitions including Aluminium at Craft Victoria, Holder curated by Trove for Melbourne Design Week, and Elemental at Studio Gardner. **UP NEXT** An exhibition at Collectible in Brussels with colleague Dalton Stewart and a group show at Adelaide’s Jam Factory.



TOM FEREDAY

Before ‘quiet luxury’ saturated design-speak, Tom Fereday was cultivating ‘quiet innovation’. He erases any hierarchy among beauty, form, technical composition and exhibition, and his designs originate from an inquiry into their larger role, and an appreciation for the resources from which they came. “Natural materials, longevity in design and the unique character of these pieces shape our everyday lives for the positive.” **2024 HIGHLIGHT** “Exhibiting works in beautiful locations”, including Milan’s Villa Borsani, a waterfront warehouse in Denmark, and in Melbourne, Villa Alba and Oigall Projects. **UP NEXT** New works will launch at Sydney’s Custom House, Melbourne Design Week, and 3 Days of Design in Copenhagen. Plus, he’ll open a new studio space.

DESIGN
WEEK

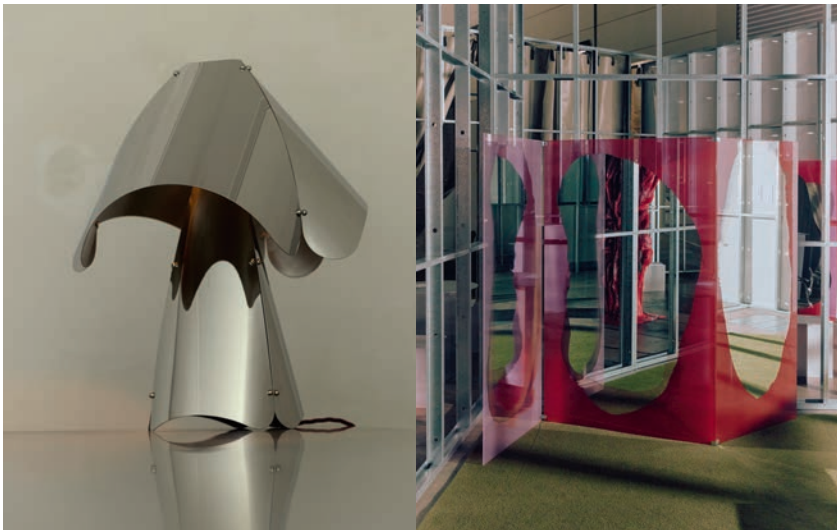


VOLKER HAUG STUDIO

Just as Impressionist artists found new forms for the representation of light, Volker Haug's practice engineers new ways to illuminate physical realms. But for Haug, the process outweighs the spectacle. "Design is inextricably connected to the people involved in the steps between concept and realization. Our relationships with our fabricators are integral to everything we do, and to have so many skilled artisans excited to work with us gives us hope for the future of handmade design." **2024 HIGHLIGHT** Seeing the Me and You lighting collection with Flack Studio "make its way into projects worldwide". **UP NEXT** Haug says new US-based projects are in the pipeline.

TRENT JANSEN

Trent Jansen envisions a bright future "if we lead with curiosity and a desire to learn about one another". In fact, he learned from designer Tanya Singer "that the closest word to 'design' in her language Pitjantjatjara means 'watch and learn!'." **2024 HIGHLIGHT** At Design Miami alongside Tanya Singer and Errol Evans, Jansen showed *Kurunpa Kunpu* | *Strong Spirit* and spoke on the Design Talks stage. He is also collaborating with peers "committed to centering Indigenous Australian narratives in major architectural projects". **UP NEXT** Work with Wexler Gallery in the US, a new body of collectible design, an Australian Research Council project titled *The Design of Repair*, and "celebrating 20 years of practice with a retrospective as part of Melbourne Design Week".



CORDON SALON

Hand-poured mirrors and a stainless-steel lamp are just the beginning for Ella Saddington, whose curiosity and experimental approach reflect a respect for “the skills, knowledge and materials passed down from previous generations... which inform what we create now and what we leave for those to come”. In this sense, Saddington says, “design is a gesture of gratitude and a responsibility; a dialogue between creation and legacy.”

2024 HIGHLIGHT “Completing an applied research fellowship supported by the International Specialised Skills Institute... exploring medieval European armour, tracing material and craft innovation across centuries.” **UP NEXT** Garniture, an expanded collection of functional artworks launching at Oigáll Projects for Melbourne Design Week.

DON CAMERON

Reflecting on his practice as a source of optimism, erudite creative Don Cameron posits: “Collecting design from different periods and places creates a collage of cultural reference points. Different works characterise political ideologies, technical advances, poetic, intellectual or radical thinking. Regardless, all are made with equal intention and the desire to create functional beauty.” Cameron has also observed the growing attention Australian design is garnering overseas. “It feels in this moment there is a strong movement.” **2024 HIGHLIGHT** Presenting his Translations objects at Alcova, Villa Bagatti Valsecchi during Milan Design Week. **UP NEXT** “Delivering residential projects to wonderful clients and working towards a new exhibition.”



OIGALL

DAVID CAON OFFICE

At the helm of his creative practice, propelled by industrial design nous, David Caon is piloting new versions of reality, from futuristic saunas to implausibly flat headphones, and taking the aviation industry to luxurious new heights. Says Caon: “A beautiful, simple piece of design, maybe with a touch of humour, can bring joy and inspire us to seek out the same in our lives.” **2024 HIGHLIGHT** Unveiling the Modulo (a new airline seat concept) with Woolmark Australia. Caon says it represents “the culmination of a lot of our thinking around materiality and construction.” **UP NEXT** New and ongoing projects with Qantas, and a collaboration with jewellery brand Erede in New York. Caon will also take part in the Craft x Tech exhibition in Japan, which pairs designers with craftspeople from traditional craft regions.

KENNEDY NOLAN

Patrick Kennedy and Rachel Nolan crack open possibilities for exuberant invention and transformation in diverse spaces, contributing to cities with sensitive, empowering and responsive projects that reconcile and build relationships with people, history, Country and its Traditional Owners. This, they say, is essential to inspiring “a unique and beautiful Australian identity”.

2024 HIGHLIGHT “Projects with a deep commitment to integrated architecture and interiors”, including Balam Balam Place, a creative community centre in Brunswick, and Melbourne Place hotel, which features in this issue. **UP NEXT** Projects range from a house on the Central Coast to a facility for Tennis Australia, “which celebrates the rich heritage of the Australian Open”.

ARCHITECTURE



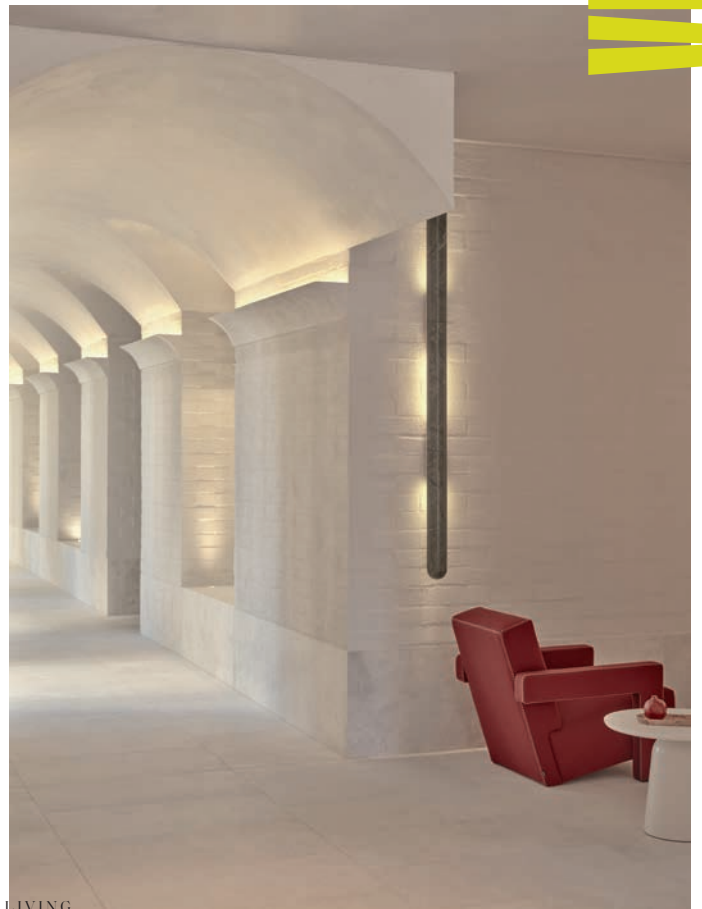


MORQ

Matteo Monteduro, Emiliano Roia and Andrea Quagliola are the founders of MORQ, a practice with offices in Perth and Rome. Their projects appear enraptured by the earth they stand on, conveying nature's beauty and emotion without directly declaring it; their mastery of light often leads to interesting harmonies and rhythms. "By creating a meaningful legacy, connecting to nature through architecture, and with one building at a time", the founding partners say design can be a source of optimism. **2024 HIGHLIGHT** "Staying at our beloved Further Hotel in Bali" — a project architected by MORQ. **UP NEXT** The construction of Walsh Street apartments in Melbourne, coastal residences in Australia and Italy, and hospitality projects in the Middle East and Indonesia.

SJB

The wide-ranging nature of SJB's output suggests great contextual consciousness and emotional intelligence. "There is a sense of collegiality in the industry, a belief that we are working towards a better understanding of ourselves, of this nation," observes Adam Haddow, director of SJB Sydney. Adds Melbourne director Andrew Parr, "a well-designed environment serves as a source of hope". **2024 HIGHLIGHT** "My house being on *Grand Designs!*" says Haddow. As for Parr, it was the moment a client expressed their delight at the celebration of a completed project. **UP NEXT** Haddow will become president of the Australian Institute of Architects and reveal EVE Hotel in Surry Hills. Parr will share Portsea House, a major interiors and architecture project.



VOGUE
LIVING



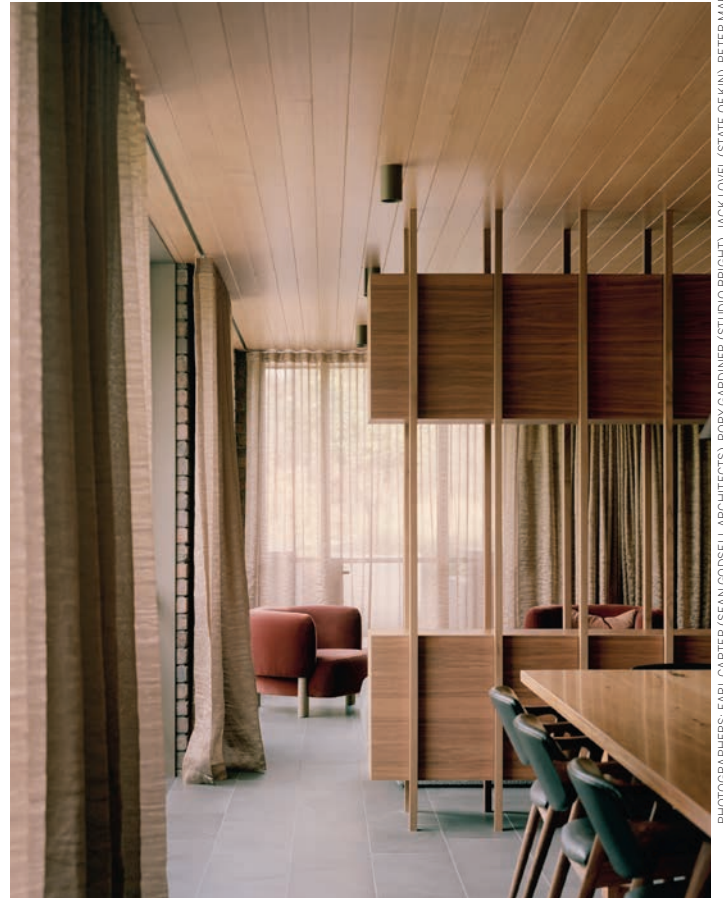
PHOTOGRAPHERS: EARL CARTER (SEAN GODSELL ARCHITECTS); RORY GARDINER (STUDIO BRIGHT); JACK LOVEL (STATE OF KIN); PETER MARKO (WARDLE); SHARYN CARRIS (CLARE COUSINS ARCHITECTS)

SEAN GODSELL ARCHITECTS

Parlaying field dominance as an AFL player into the profession of architecture, Sean Godsell has long sustained ‘the game’s’ necessary toughness in taut muscular structures that owe more to Michelangelo than modernism. Or so he says of a meditative austerity that runs the commissioning gamut from the Vatican to RMIT University, whose disc-clad Design Hub incubates and inspires next-gen designers. Awarded the Australian Institute of Architects (AIA) 2022 Gold Medal and exhibited from the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum in New York to the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, he reckons Australian design lifts in heavyweight class for turning its contextual limitations into a human calling. **2024 HIGHLIGHT** Godsell’s appointment as the Kenzo Tange Design Critic in Architecture at Harvard Graduate School of Design. **UP NEXT** It’s under wraps!

STUDIO BRIGHT

Principal Mel Bright has said she thinks of the houses she designs as having civic ambitions — the dreams of individuals manifested with positive outcomes for the public. Her buildings are rigorous and robust, but never at the expense of experience and enjoyment. “We think design can work hard to solve problems, and that good design can contribute to a nurturing and kind built environment.” **2024 HIGHLIGHT** Two projects recognised across the NSW and Victorian Architecture Awards went through to the AIA National Awards. **UP NEXT** Studio Bright will unveil new additions to St Mary Coptic Church in Kensington, Victoria, and are relishing working on social and affordable housing.





STATE OF KIN

This promising interdisciplinary practice channels the efforts of design and construction experts, as well as a high-performing architecture team led by Ara Salomone, into contemporary reimaginings of archetypal homes. “We are proud to be part of a design community that embraces connection and collaboration despite the geographical distance,” states the Perth-based studio. “We find joy in the design process, leaving room for exploration and finding new ways to solve problems.”

2024 HIGHLIGHT “Completing our Proclamation House project in Subiaco was a standout moment.” **UP NEXT** An Australian fashion label’s flagship store, a multi-residential development, private residences and an “exciting collaboration”.

WARDLE

“The primary premise of designing is to create something that doesn’t exist and imagining its engagement with future circumstance,” says founding partner John Wardle, the 2024 VL50 Architect of the Year. “I’ve enjoyed working more profoundly with First Nations communities to better represent the vast contribution of local, Indigenous cultures in our work. This is long overdue, and I’m gratified to see recognition evolving as a core principle in our profession.” **2024 HIGHLIGHT** Burnt Earth Beach House, Wardle’s family holiday home. **UP NEXT** Valley House in the NSW Southern Highlands, a home on the Victorian coast, a world-leading facility for the Australian Institute for Infectious Diseases, and The Shed, an education and research centre at the University of Tasmania.



VL50

CLARE COUSINS ARCHITECTS

“Architects and designers are great problem solvers. We need to leverage our skills to repair our environment and deliver projects that care for communities,” asserts director Clare Cousins, whose firm channels this ambition into private, cultural and civic projects that enrich. “With Australia’s severe housing crisis, it has never been more important to use our design expertise for the benefit of the community.” **2024**

HIGHLIGHT “While we love designing single-family houses, in 2024 we completed our first social housing projects, one in the City of Melbourne, the other in Regional Victoria.” **UP NEXT** An LA store for Melbourne label MAAP — Cousin’s sixth international store for the brand. Plus, residences across the state.

MADELEINE BLANCHFIELD ARCHITECTS

Beauty is a recurring theme for founder Madeleine Blanchfield, who frames it as a tangible goal and a philosophy that can “uplift us and allow us to dream big”. Since registering her business 15 years ago, when she was “working at the dining table while a newborn slept”, Blanchfield has built a portfolio of residences that sing with clarity and quietude. **2024 HIGHLIGHT** Moving into a new studio space, “which has allowed us to shape how we work and interact with each other and our clients”, and completing several diverse projects that have received industry recognition.

UP NEXT Houses in the NSW coastal suburbs of Tamarama and Kincumber.



PHOTOGRAPHERS: TOM FERGUSON (MADELEINE BLANCHFIELD ARCHITECTS); TOMMASO SARTORI (WOOD MARSH ARCHITECTURE); ROMELLO PEREIRA (SMART DESIGN STUDIO)

SMART DESIGN STUDIO

“I can’t help wanting each project to be the best that it can be, every step of the way,” says founder and principal William Smart, who is motivated by the potential to improve the quality of people’s lives and the natural environment. As his studio asserts, buildings have a duty to contribute positively to the public domain. **2024 HIGHLIGHT** “Watching the scaffold come down on our South Dowling 479 project,” recalls Smart. “We were flooded with calls and messages as the project was revealed over several days.” **UP NEXT** With four houses under construction, Smart is most inspired by a residence in Bellevue Hill — “it’s one of those once-in-a-lifetime projects”.

WOOD MARSH ARCHITECTURE

Founding partners Roger Wood and Randal Marsh apply artistry, an intention of permanence and uncompromising talent to their diverse international oeuvre. Still, Wood says, they remain motivated by what is happening at ‘home’. “We’ve always been heavily influenced by the art and design of Melbourne and Australia more broadly. We believe in a multidisciplinary approach, and the incorporation of artistic practices into architectural outcomes.” **2024 HIGHLIGHT** The year marked an incredible 41 years of practice. **UP NEXT** The opening of the Ian Potter Museum of Art at the University of Melbourne, a development at Ivanhoe Grammar School, of which Marsh is an alumnus, and the completion of Victoria’s West Gate Tunnel Project, which they’ve worked on for eight years.



KAREN BLACK

An anatomist of mortal (and imagined) interaction, artist Karen Black collapses the boundaries between bodies in her paintings and sculptures. While her abstractions can be called ambiguous and strange, they require gentleness and care from both the artist and those

looking at her art. "Art asks us to think and feel," says Black, whose work is, in a way, diarised, given her ideas stem from her own experiences and emotions. **2024 HIGHLIGHT** "Making a large plaster sculpture for the first time for my solo show with Ames Yavuz gallery in Sydney." **UP NEXT** The Intelligence of Painting exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art, showcasing the work of 14 Australian living female artists. Plus, a new solo show at The Renshaws in Brisbane.



ARCHIE MOORE

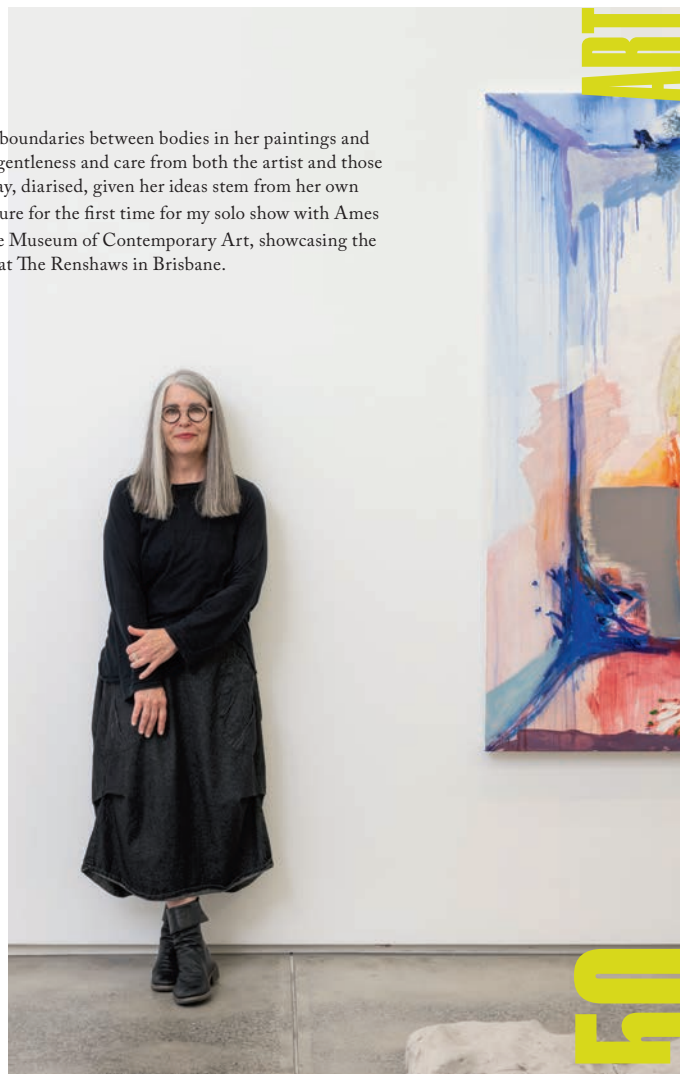
Though you can't paint reality, Archie Moore has shown you can paint your place in it. His body of work charts his research into prescribed identity signifiers, and summons images of human connection in the face of 'contested' histories, as seen in *kith and kin* (pictured), Moore's hand-drawn personal genealogy. **2024 HIGHLIGHT** Moore, who received an honorary doctorate from Queensland University of Technology, is in his golden age: he was awarded the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale, and the gold Queensland Art Gallery and Gallery of Modern Art (QAGoMA) medal, "both in recognition of the impact of *kith and kin* at the Australian Pavilion." **UP NEXT** He'll restage *kith and kin* at QAGoMA.



LAURA JONES

For Laura Jones, art shares fresh perspectives on life and reminds the viewer that they aren't alone in the pursuit of beauty. "I love connecting with creative people who are constantly coming up with new ideas while using their platforms to fight for environmental and social causes," she says. Her colourful floral still-lives expose environmental vulnerabilities, and though there's an uneasiness and looseness in the paint, there's sensitivity and wonder in the dissonance. **2024 HIGHLIGHT**

With her portrait of author Tim Winton, Jones won the 2024 Archibald Prize, "becoming the 12th woman in its history to win." **UP NEXT** An inaugural solo show with Jan Murphy Gallery in Brisbane, and Tender, an all-female exhibition at Ngununggula, Southern Highlands Regional Gallery.



POLLY BORLAND

"I am motivated by a desire to explore the human condition, identity and transformation; to push at the boundaries between beauty and discomfort," says Polly Borland, who is bursting forth with a new medium. Far from the photographer's internationally recognised celebrity portraiture, Borland's sculptures tip form into a realm of abstraction. "Sculpture allows me to explore form and texture in a more tactile, immersive way... to create something more visceral and physical." **2024 HIGHLIGHT** Her solo show *We Are Family* at Sullivan+Strumpf Melbourne. **UP NEXT** She's working on a "public outing" of *Big Bod* in Los Angeles and will present a show at Sullivan+Strumpf later in the year.



DANGAR BARIN SMITH

Australia's contemporary gardens owe a lot to William Dangar, Naomi Barin and Tom Smith, who bring a refined aesthetic, horticultural know-how, expansive vision and unreachable intuition to their profession. "By creating gestures or pockets of landscape, we can curate and reinterpret nature in a meaningful and sustainable way that better connects us all with our natural world."

2024 HIGHLIGHT Major projects in Queensland and Western Australia rewarded the team with significant knowledge about different climates and plant diversity, as well as the opportunity to work with new collaborators. **UP NEXT** "Multiple projects of significance that have come out of the Land and Environment Court", plus interstate and international works.

FLORIAN WILD

Principal Rupert Baynes-Williams ensouls gardens with charm and hidden narratives, mining culture and memory for seeds of inspiration. Emotion shapes his landscapes just as much as their locality, and though inspiration often comes from a nostalgic place, he presents fresh interpretations. Like hearing a favourite song for the first time, a Florian

Wild project feels familiar, yet radically new. "Gardens," he says, "embody growth, renewal, and the cyclical nature of life, reminding us that even in challenging times, beauty and resilience emerge." **2024 HIGHLIGHT** For a young practice, the work Florian Wild has taken on has been most rewarding. **UP NEXT** "A rambling garden... one that deeply reflects where we want to go with our style."



MYLES BALDWIN DESIGN

"Ideas from interiors, textiles, landscape and architecture come together on our projects in fabulous, collaborative ways," says Myles Baldwin, who delivers gardens that share an intimacy with the co-existing built environment, from heritage sites to new developments and rural properties.

Sowing landscapes of desire across the country, Baldwin eschews rote themes in favour of bespoke responses to climate and place. **2024 HIGHLIGHT** "To be included in the VL50 was a highlight!" Plus, projects in Toorak, Bellevue Hill and the UAE. **UP NEXT** Projects with Powell & Glenn, Fearon Hay, Tobias Partners and Thomas Hamel. Baldwin is excited about "the more romantic requests" inspired by Tuscany, South America and Côte d'Azur.

VL50

PAUL BANGAY STUDIO

"We are seeing the rapid evolution of a unique Australian garden design style, and I am proud to be part of this movement," praises Paul Bangay, who delights in the layering of natives with Mediterranean plants, resulting in a true representation of casual Australian entertaining. On a personal level, he observes the profound effect working on his vegetable garden and with the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation has on his wellbeing. "Gardens have a way of healing your soul."

2024 HIGHLIGHT "Hand on heart, winning the VL50 Landscape Designer of the Year." **UP NEXT** Bangay's first major commercial garden in Asia, and a large-scale garden on the NSW Northern Tablelands is in the works.

