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The next wave of design talent



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Middletown



With strong and consistent branding sitting high on their agenda, interior design firm Studio Tate and graphic design firm Pop & Pac have used a modern muse to define and concretize their vision for Melbourne cafe Middletown.

Below — The clients of Middletown wanted the venue to be a humble but aspirational destination for brunch.

Right — The striking blue that anchors the palette was inspired by the project's muse, Duchess of Cambridge, Kate Middleton.





Above — The space picks up on details typical of modest English pubs such as the checkerboard flooring and the herringbone wall detailing.

In the age of social media, the notion of “branding” has come to the forefront of our collective consciousness. Now that a brand’s touchpoints can follow in such quick succession, ensuring consistency in brand messaging has become increasingly challenging.

In the case of Middletown cafe in Melbourne’s Prahran, the owners have taken this challenge particularly seriously. It’s for this reason that the design process was slightly unconventional – graphic design studio Pop & Pac was the first to be engaged by the owners. Pop & Pac lay the foundations of the brand identity very early on. They developed a loose vision for the brand and only once the bones were established did they recommend and appoint interior design firm Studio Tate. Having worked together on projects before, Pop & Pac knew that Studio Tate’s design language was on point for the brand vision and that the young practice’s studio culture was suited to a collaborative design process with the owners and graphic designers. Once engaged, Studio Tate

worked collaboratively with Pop & Pac, together formulating and fine-tuning the brand’s identity. The relationship was symbiotic; the graphic design vision influenced the interiors and vice versa.

The clients wanted to create a “tiny giant.” That is, they wanted to create a brunch destination that was small and humble but simultaneously aspirational with high impact. Rather than a cafe, they were looking to create a brunch restaurant experience – something more refined and a touch more formal than the usual offering. With this vision in mind, Pop & Pac and Studio Tate went in search of a muse, to help pin down their vision for the brand. Collectively they decided on the Duchess of Cambridge, Kate Middleton; a classic, refined beauty who has stepped up from ordinary girl to royalty. Her graceful demeanor embodied the refined dining experience they foresaw, yet her ordinary-girl roots and her sense of humility in spite of her royal status expressed the desired sense of approachability.



Above — Terrazzo and marble give the subtle theme a refined, contemporary feel. Artwork by Amery Oke-Johnston.

The interior architecture takes cues from the Duchess’s wardrobe, as well as drawing on details from her life before she landed in the spotlight. The striking blue of her signature coat anchors the palette, and the pale lavender accents were also inspired by her wardrobe. An elegant and opulent brass pendant, approached on axis, greets visitors at the entry, referencing her formal and regal status. Yet the space also picks up details typical of modest English pubs such as the checkerboard flooring, lining board ceiling and herringbone wall detailing. Using terrazzo and marble, these details are reinterpreted with a refined, contemporary feel. The glamour of brass and marble are countered with more humble materials such as natural and white-painted timber.

Pop & Pac developed a pattern for the routed lines in the joinery and a perforated dot pattern for the wall panelling also influenced by Kate’s hometown pubs. There’s a circle and diamond motif that repeats itself throughout, a graphic detail that

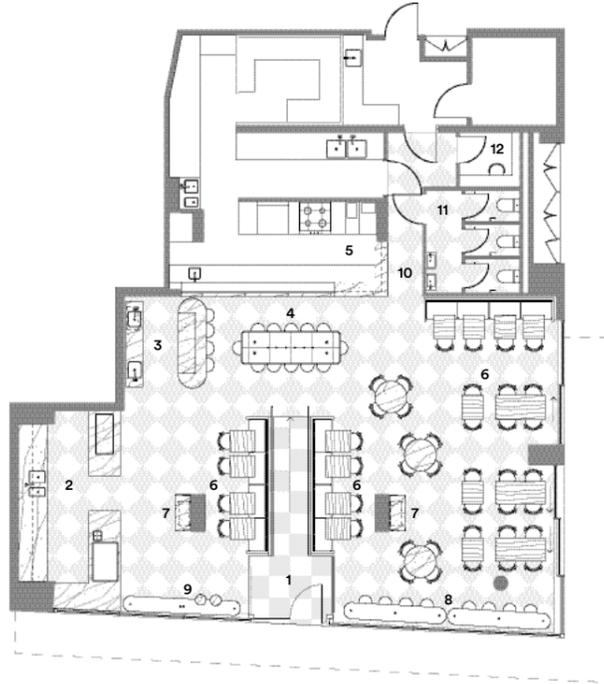
references a game the Duchess enjoyed playing growing up. This is seen in the table legs, which punch through the tabletops to reveal their shape at the surface. The wall lights that dot the perimeter also have circular and diamond-shaped base plates.

Although the design takes inspiration from the Duchess Kate Middleton, the references are subtle and its presence would likely remain undetected by a visitor. It is not a Kate Middleton-themed restaurant by any stretch, nor is it a fanatic shrine to the Duchess. Looking to her as a modern muse was first and foremost a design tool, one that gave the designers a measured place to strive for in terms of balancing glamour and approachability. It also allowed the design language to have a strict cohesiveness that reads consistently across both the interior architecture and the graphic design.

The result is a comfortable and inviting brunch destination, imbued with classic, understated glamour. 

Hospitality

- 1 Entry
- 2 Coffee bar
- 3 Brew bar
- 4 Communal table
- 5 Kitchen and pass
- 6 Banquette seating
- 7 Waiters' station
- 8 Window tables
- 9 Window seat
- 10 Service corridor
- 11 Wet areas
- 12 Office



Middelton floor plan 1:200



Below — Although the design takes inspiration from the Duchess of Cambridge, the references are subtle and would likely remain undetected by visitors.

Top Right — Brass and marble are balanced by materials such as natural and white-painted timber.

Bottom Right — Pop & Pac developed a pattern for the routed lines in the joinery and a perforated dot pattern for the wall panelling.



Middelton

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Time schedule —
Design, documentation:
4 months
Construction:
4 months

Builder —
Demroc Building Group

Signage manufacturer —
Premier Graphics

Products —
Walls and ceilings: Walls painted in Dulux 'Sharp Blue' and 'Natural White.' Custom-made perforated panels framed in moulding designed by Studio Tate, perforation designed by Pop & Pac. Custom-made textured glass in steel frame designed by Studio Tate, steel frame manufactured by Demroc Building Group. Textured glass by Access Glass. Easyvj timber lining board ceiling by Easycraft.
Doors: Custom front door handle designed by Pop & Pac and

Studio Tate, and manufactured by Demroc Building Group. Stone insert by Fibonacci Stone.
Flooring: Terrazzo stone tiles from Fibonacci Stone. Embedded branding to floor designed by Pop & Pac, manufactured by Premier Graphics.
Lighting: Estiluz Volta T-3536 pendant light from Alti Lighting. Lord Sconce I and custom square Lord Sconce wall lights from Dowel Jones. Wall light globes from Volker Haug. Track lights from Sunny Lights.
Furniture: Mattiazzi Solo Bar Stools from District. Aloe chair, Lisboa table base from Cafe Culture + Insitu. Custom-designed timber and stone tabletops. Custom banquette seating designed by Studio Tate and Pop & Pac, manufactured by Demroc Building Group. Custom-made communal dining table designed by Studio Tate, manufactured by Demroc Building Group. Custom timber dining and seating benches with white powdercoat aluminium trim designed by Studio Tate, manufactured by Demroc Building Group.
Kitchen: Sinks, basins and taps from Reece. Front of house kitchen/bar custom joinery by Studio Tate, with Carrara stone benchtops and herringbone tile from Signorino Tile Gallery.
Other: Artwork by Amery Oke-Johnston.