

*The Global Design Issue: The best new interiors
and products from home and abroad*

Rising Hospitality Firms

5 dynamic studios to watch

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Pushing commercial design boundaries

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volume 61 Issue 3
cover: Cheriff, Barcelona
photography: José Hevia and Benjamin Iborra Wicksteed

contract, volume 61 Issue 3 (USPS 307-970, ISSN 1530-8224, April/May 2020) is published monthly except bi-monthly February/March, April/May, and October/November; issued by Emerald X, 100 Broadway, New York, NY 10005. Editorial and advertising offices: Emerald X, 100 Broadway, New York, NY 10005, 949-226-5700. Customer Service: For address changes (provide old mailing label and new address including ZIP or postal code and allow four to six weeks), singlecopy/sales(510)229(9)imed/advance.and.subscription/inquiries(888)year/US.\$84/year/Canada.\$175/year/lat/other/foreign(90)to/www.contractdesign.com/subscribe.ca(630)739-0900.fax(630)739-8700.or/writer/subscribe(90)to/www.contractdesign.com/subscribe.ca(630)739-0900. Creative Data Services, 440 Quadrangle Drive, Ste E, Bolingbrook, IL 60440-3000. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY and additional mailing offices. Printed in the USA. Postmaster: Please send address changes to Contract Magazine, Creative Data Services, 440 Quadrangle Drive, Ste E, Bolingbrook, IL 60440-3000. Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement No. 40798037. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: Emerald X, c/o P.O. Box 2801, 915 Dale Rd., Mississauga, ON L4T0A9



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PHOTOGRAPHY: PETER CLARE (TOP LEFT); NICOLA FRANTON (TOP RIGHT)

FEATURE

Cofounded by Alex Hopkins and Carley Nicholls (bottom left), Studio Tate has designed interiors for Workshop Brothers Southbank (right), featuring orb scones, curved timber moldings, and a checkered floor, which aims to create a convivial hub for patrons. Toby's Estate evokes the gravitas of a bank with plush velvet seating (below) and black, green, and white marble floors (below, right). Bold yet refined describes the interior of Middletown Café (opposite, bottom), and its muse is Duchess of Cambridge Kate Middleton.



PHOTOGRAPHY: TILLY PEEDEY

PHOTOGRAPHY: JAMES CLARKE

Studio Tate

Location Melbourne, Australia
Founded 2014

Following stints at the firms Carr Design and Elenberg Fraser, Alex Hopkins cofounded Studio Tate in Melbourne, Australia, with her business partner Carley Nicholls in 2014. "We embark on every project with a dynamic approach that is grounded in curiosity, a highly considered methodology, and a refined, polished finish," Hopkins says.

Studio Tate crafts hospitality spaces with a focus on richly layered materials and thoughtful detailing in which classic meets contemporary. The palette of Middletown Café celebrates the textures of brickwork, stone, perforated metal, and intricate parquet, all grounded by walls of deep blue and softened by feminine details such as brass accents, pastel furnishings, and unstained timbers. Inspired by the great brasseries of New York, the interiors of Workshop Brothers Riverside Southbank offer a convivial hub that provides customers with a sojourn from the everyday.

"Successful hospitality design considers not just the experience of the diner but the functionality and flow of service for the operator," Hopkins believes. "A well-considered interior provides ambiance and sets the tone, while skillfully and seamlessly addressing functionality—something that is not seen but unconsciously felt by the patron. This considers everything from how guests are greeted to how waitstaff retrieve and deliver food to the table."

For Toby's Estate coffee shop set within the ground-floor foyer of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia headquarters, Studio Tate employed rich tones and warm metallic finishes to evoke the gravitas of traditional treasury

design. Luxe materials reinforce the old-school feeling, from black, green, and white marble to plush velvet upholstered banquette seating. Recalling bankers' desks and furnishings, vintage-inspired details include bullnose benchtops replete with brass kick rails and high bars with integrated lighting.

Even given the current situation in the world, which is keeping us out of hospitality venues, Hopkins remains positive about the future of design. "Perhaps this humanitarian and economic disaster will enhance our appreciation of the role hospitality venues play in our lives," she says. "Yes, they serve a functional purpose of nourishing us or providing that all-important coffee or glass of wine—but they also provide a framework for connection and the evolution of our communities. When we find a new normal, hospitality design may well be more appreciated and noticed. Studio Tate looks forward to this design challenge."

