

# hospitality design

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**Carley Nicholls and Alex Hopkins**  
Cofounders  
Studio Tate

Bringing together their different skillsets, Carley Nicholls and Alex Hopkins joined forces in 2014 to establish Melbourne-based interior architecture firm Studio Tate. Hopkins, who holds a bachelor's degree in interior architecture from Melbourne's Monash University and honed her skills at several Australian design firms, leads the studio's design and creative practices, while Nicholls helms the business, strategy, and people side of the company.

"We have distinct but complementary leadership qualities, which sets us apart—recognizing that both are required to build a sustainable and successful business," says Nicholls. "We are both passionate, driven, and aligned in what we want to achieve, from great design to forging a supportive training ground for talented designers."

With a portfolio ranging from residential to workplace and hotels (including an upcoming high-end project in Riyadh), they have made a name for themselves with F&B spaces that highlight their commitment to "intelligent and responsible design that reflects the way we live, work, and play," says Hopkins.

Related through marriage (Hopkins also says Nicholls was a mentor during college and the early part of her career), Studio Tate's ethos is further demonstrated in its name. "In [Old Norse], *tate* means cheerful," says Hopkins. "In all of our projects, it's a priority for everyone involved to enjoy



The bold yet refined interior of Middletown Café in Melbourne's Prahran suburb.

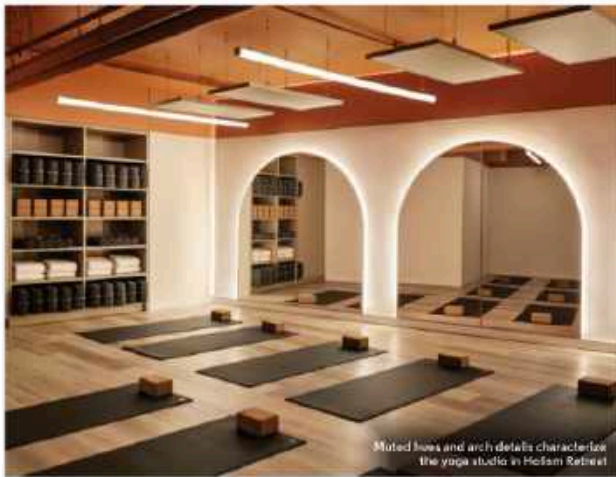


Contemporary meets classic at Middletown Café, a tribute to the Duchess of Cambridge Kate Middleton

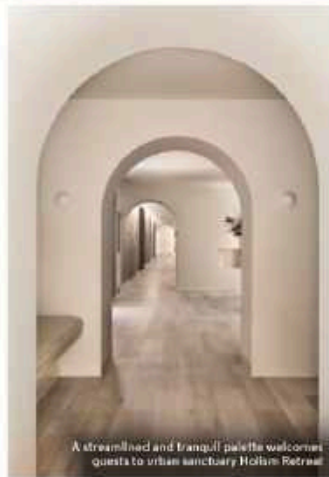
the perfect pair



The design of Holism Retreat day spa in Melbourne is inspired by a polished gem emerging from the rough.



Muted hues and arch details characterize the yoga studio in Holism Retreat.



A streamlined and tranquil palette welcomes guests to urban sanctuary Holism Retreat.



Toby's Estate in Sydney features stone floors, metallic finishes, and pink accents.



Workshop Brothers Southbank in Melbourne takes cues from New York brasseries.

the process—to have fun, be challenged, excited, and inspired. We love injecting an element of surprise, juxtaposing textures, or including an unexpected color.”

“The firm’s lively spirit is evident in three recently completed café shops: the restrained Toby’s Estate in Sydney, bedecked in rich tones, warm metallic finishes, and vintage details; Middletown Café, where layered natural materials mix with feminine accents like brass detailing and pastel furnishings in Melbourne’s Prahran suburb; and Workshop Brothers Southbank in Melbourne, whose classic-meets-contemporary narrative is inspired by New York brasseries.

Beyond their design work, the partners are passionate about nurturing a collaborative and community-focused environment. “Carley and I enjoy mentoring young designers within the studio, as well as through work experience programs,” says Hopkins, who explains the studio is also committed to “providing pro bono expertise to organizations and groups in need. These elements provide distinct challenges, but they’re extremely rewarding.”