

# HELLO TO OHLO

While light, materiality and the big picture all inspire Ohlo Studio, it's the connection to its clients that takes priority.

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**T**here are a few qualities that define Ohlo Studio: exploiting the magic of light, focusing on the micro and macro of the design, and ensuring the materiality and detail are engrained throughout the entire project. Yet, for director, Jen Lowe, the most potent motif is how the practice collaborates with its clients on design that works for its user – creating spaces that aim for longevity, growing with the owner.

Based in Perth, Ohlo Studio's projects are varied – from commercial projects like an Italian 'jewellery box' coffee shop to a Bollywood-inspired, Bombay street-side style Indian canteen. Or in its residential designs, which span beachfront, laid-back refuges and sun-bathed family homes.

Across all her designs, Lowe envisions a welcoming space for her clients. For residential projects, she adds comfort, invigoration and support in function, but also culture and personal expression.

"We ensure that our projects function extremely well, that's a given, but equally important, and more often overlooked, is the need for homes to support lifestyles and ideologies," says Lowe. "For one client that might mean creating an intricate canvas for the messy 'stuff' of life and living among memories; while, for others, it may mean reduction and simplification."

In her retail and hospitality projects, she also constructs intrigue – striving to create designs that gently communicate her

**PREVIOUS LEFT** The intense blue of walls and lounge fades away to white as the hand-painted ombre walls rise.

**PREVIOUS RIGHT** Furniture nooks and displays sit within loosely defined rooms.

**ABOVE** The restored staircase is made contemporary, while scale is reduced through opulent chandeliers.

**OPPOSITE TOP** Switching between showroom and private dining room, the interior space of the vestibule is defined by arches: a glimpse into the private realm





client's brands. "Storytelling is a powerful tool to enhance sales and customer loyalty in commercial projects," she notes.

Ohlo Studio is inspired by literature, philosophy and art at the intersection of design. As reference material, Lowe cites Valerio Olgiati's Monograph and the current issue of MacGuffin magazine, a timeless publication that combines design with sociology, psychology and history. Lowe also looks to Nilufar's Brazilian Modernist design, New York-based furniture collector and curator Michael Bargo, Barcelona-based photographer Salva López; and Auktionstipset—a website that offers a curation of vintage furniture from all of Scandinavia's auction sites.

"I am particularly interested in the area that sits between [art and design] and I co-curated a few exhibitions a couple of years ago that explored exactly this," says Lowe.

Scandinavia has inspired Lowe in more ways than just Auktionstipset—it is also her former home and partner's heritage. In particular, her mother-in-law's 1970s Swedish home stands out as a muse—the former architect only adding one special object or piece of furniture to the house periodically to last a lifetime or more.

"Every time I visit, I fall in love with something different," says Lowe. "She keeps

things that were very fashionable in the 70s and 80s, they go out of fashion, and then they come back again. It's really quite a beautiful way of appreciating design."

Acknowledging and appreciating other inspiring women designers and architects is important to Lowe. "In the building and construction industry, women continue to come up against sexist attitudes and challenges caused by ignorance," she says. "While this is disappointing, the industry has progressed a great deal, and there are an incredible bunch of women leading Australian architecture and design into the future.

"It excites me that so many of the projects I look to as my favourites are produced by women and that these women are receiving the recognition they deserve," she adds. "There is strong female representation in the design community within Australia, and it's something that I am incredibly proud to be a part of."

Late last year, Lowe won the opportunity to travel with some of these women—Yas [Yasmine Saleh Ghoniem] from YSG, Fiona Lynch and Pascale Gomes McNabb—on the Dulux and Design Institute of Australia tour to Portugal and Singapore. "It definitely sparked an ongoing camaraderie between us. The benefits of this camaraderie inspired me to set up the



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**JEN LOWE**



WA interior architecture practice group on my return to Perth,” says Lowe.

Working across commercial and residential projects allows the studio to reflect on the different design journeys, from individual brand philosophies to the intimacy of creating a deeply personal, soulful home – ideally built to last.

In a holistic approach, Ohlo Studio looks towards reinvention, rather than dismantling, as it aims to transform spaces with a new life through redesign. For its Vera project, the original 1990s off-the-plan design was upgraded to elevate the home into a new category. The studio chose, however, to retain features like the terracotta tiles in the living room, offsetting them with the cool, mint tones on the custom-built cabinetry.

Lowe says she is increasingly drawn to residential design and improving the quality of the Perth housing stock, particularly in the multi-residential sector, but only if the practice is able to engage with a developer who shares an interest in quality and longevity. “Milieu Property has also been on our radar a lot over the past few years,” says the designer. “These guys have got the hospitality and multi-res game down, and we’d love to work with developers following suit in WA.”

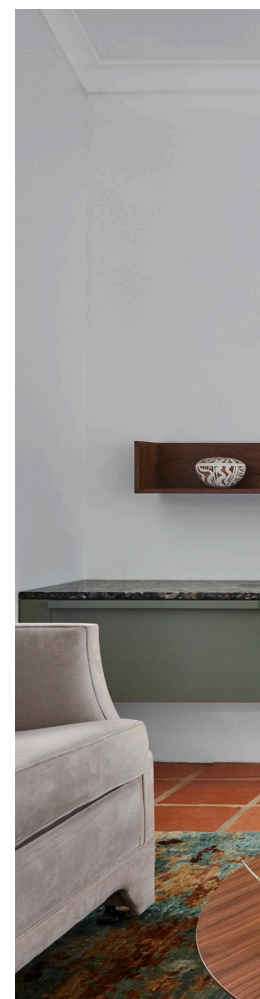
Ohlo Studio also hopes to spend more time renovating classic buildings for clients

who share the same vision. “The 1960s ‘garden suburbs’ of City Beach and Floreat have some of the most interesting mid-century housing stock in WA, and we are very lucky to be working on two projects in the area,” says Lowe.

One soon to be completed project, which includes the renovation of a mid-century home in City Beach, saw Ohlo Studio collaborate with Simon Pandal Architect and Steven Postmus from landscape architecture practice, CAPA. “Together, we have created an exceptional home, modest in proportions, but beautifully considered, such that it will remain relevant over a long period of time,” says Lowe.

The studio is also working on the Tomich House, originally built in 1971 by Perth architect Iwan Iwanoff. “This house is really wild and includes some of Iwanoff’s most detailed blockwork walls in his unique style,” says Lowe. “We are working with our very passionate client, Kyle Jeavons, to create a modern interpretation that respects the original intent.”

No matter the project, the team at Ohlo Studio sets out to remain curious in the way they design by always immersing themselves in thought-provoking environments, engaging with their communities and continually questioning. “By being infinite learners, we push our projects to be better,” concludes Lowe.



**PREVIOUS LEFT** The intense blue of walls and lounge fades away to white as the hand-painted ombre walls rise. **PREVIOUS RIGHT** Furniture nooks and displays sit within loosely defined rooms. **ABOVE** The restored staircase is made contemporary, while scale is reduced through opulent chandeliers. **OPPOSITE TOP** Switching between showroom and private dining room, the interior space of the vestibule is defined by **OPPOSITE BOTTOM** In its dining room iteration the space is clearly separate from the restaurant, while affording patrons a glimpse into the private realm.

