

‘Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful.’ William Morris 1880

Everything is designed and we all make design decisions every day. Across three galleries, this show is an invitation to reflect on the objects, spaces and places we interact with daily. What are the values embedded in the things that surround us? How do they shape our experiences? And how do they reflect local context?

#### curator's statement / pippa hurst

The curatorial framework for Object, Space, Place was established late in 2019. Who could have foreseen that by opening night, we would be living in a world so irrevocably changed? The ongoing pandemic of 2020 has altered the globe so drastically that we struggle to process the present, let alone gauge the future. Uncertainty has become the new norm as we sit, sheltered but not immune, in our isolated west coast town. The exhibition, rescheduled from its original slot in May, could well have become irrelevant.

Yet the thematic concerns of the show are now in even sharper focus. As borders close, supply chains become unreliable and we find ourselves vulnerable, there has never been a more pressing time to examine the way we live, and to look locally for the things that sustain us as individuals and as a community.

We all make daily design decisions – how we dress; the objects we buy and use; and the spaces and places we live in. Our design choices may be well considered or impulsive; they may be driven by need, price or aesthetics; but every decision has a legacy. And every choice has the potential to make our lives better, whether through simple moments of daily joy or long-term benefits that manifest over time.

The designers who have contributed to the show work across different disciplines but are united by common threads – integrity, ingenuity and craft, underpinned by a commitment to responsible practice that seeks to minimise negative impacts on our planet through carbon emissions, waste and over-consumption.

As practitioners, all have gravitated to the same geographic location. Fremantle's genius loci – its spirit of place – is embodied in its natural and man-made landscapes, in its built fabric and in its community values. Creativity is in Fremantle's DNA, as is sustainability – something that has evolved from necessity to a sense of shared responsibility.

spaceagency architects' Michael Patroni observes that historically, Fremantle's design culture has been typified by individuals or small teams quietly beaver away in backyard studios and suburban workshops. Economy and material scarcity informed much of what was built and made, the outputs often making up for in charm what they lacked in sophistication.

This legacy of small practice continues today amongst the growing number of designers scattered throughout the city and its outskirts. Architects, interior and landscape designers; fashion, jewellery, communications, product and digital designers; the Fremantle design community continues to grow. From far and wide, designers are drawn to the port city for its urban fabric, progressive politics, diversity and coastal lifestyle.

'Design' is often perceived as an expensive, superficial concern that prioritises newness over substance. Yet there is no such thing as 'no design'. Designers work with intent – a desire to create things that have value, meaning and purpose; that make our lives better.

#### Main Gallery / Object, Space

The main gallery focuses on the domestic spaces we inhabit and the objects within.

spaceagency architects' installation reframes a voluminous single gallery into a series of intimate, domestic-scale spaces. Referencing Fremantle's love for renovation, the spaces notionally represent familiar household rooms. The gallery is dissected – expanding and contracting, offering shifting sightlines and experiences. Semi-translucent walls reveal shadowy figures, reflecting home as a place of people, memory and history. Within these newly-created spaces we encounter the exhibiting designers and their everyday objects.

Simone Nabholz of **Winterwares** occupies the 'kitchen' space with a pared-back display of ceramics. Each item carries the honest imprint of the human hand, its beauty in its imperfection – a quality echoed in a treasured kintsugi vase. This is design that sustains the soul, creating a visual and tactile connection to the physical that counters the increasingly virtual world that we find ourselves inhabiting.

In contrast, the simple, elegant dining table by Ben Savage of **squarepeg home** is a finely-crafted object that belies its complexity. A suspended, disassembled table reveals the engineering that usually remains hidden in the construction process and under the tabletop. The time, creativity and thought that is embodied in quality design is made visible.

Good design innovates, improving on what already exists rather than reinventing the wheel. From an unassuming suburban brick house in White Gum Valley, **Tiller Rides** founder Julian Illich and his team are creating an electric bike that aims to greatly improve the user's experience. The prototype bike, working sketches and 3D-printed parts on display offer a glimpse into how this small local company is tackling global issues through ingenuity and inventiveness.

The shirts created by Sarah Watanabe and Emma Williamson as **Monster Alphabets Dilemma** carry multiple levels of meaning. Concern around the wasteful nature of the fashion industry was the initial spark. Emma observed that the best fabrics in the op shop are on the men's shirt rack, another subtle signifier of workplace gender bias. The classic male uniform of business shirt and tie, symbolic of power and authority, is reappropriated, disassembled and reconstructed in playful collages of pattern and form. This is design as feminist statement: 'f-you' served with a frill.

Where does design merge with art? Jen Lowe of **Ohlo Studio** and Angus McBride of **Remington Matters** were commissioned to create gallery benches that reflect the show's thematic concerns of home, local context and sustainability. The pair explored the bench as a place to sit and also as a sculptural artwork within an art gallery paradigm. These one-off pieces are unique artefacts that would be equally at home in a domestic space.

A second exhibition commission is the room scent by Katie Leenan of **The Second Salon**. Imbuing space with scent is a practice that dates back centuries, initially driven by the need to disguise other odours. Katie's essential oil blend aims to enhance the visitor's gallery experience and mood. This invisible form of sensory design will become increasingly prevalent in a world where lock downs enforce home stays and there is a growing focus on wellbeing.

#### Gallery 3 / Shadow Space

Gallery 3 explores the way design shapes our experience of Fremantle as a city and contributes to our sense of place on an urban scale.

**Penhale & Winter's** site-specific installation 'Shadow Space' draws attention to the strong relationship that Fremantle has with the physical matter on which it is built. The work invites us to see the city not as a collection of heritage buildings but as a landscape that emerges straight out of its limestone foundations, creating a visceral connection to place. The grid and perforations of the intervention's timber frame recall the rhythms and filigrees of West End facades and the distinctive streetscapes intrinsic to the city centre's character. Exploring beyond the gallery walls is encouraged, extrapolating the experience of 'Shadow Space' into the city.

#### Kathleen O'Connor Gallery / What's My Type?

The ubiquity of type and the manner in which it communicates through design are the central themes of What's My Type?

**Isabel Kruger's** photographs of local found type draws attention to the multitude of encounters we have with type as we go about our day, highlighting a rich visual language and what it can reveal about history, culture and values.

The super-sized characters by Becky Chilcott of **Chil3** offer a fresh perspective on the familiar. Inviting visitors to identify the typeface that best aligns with their own personality is a fun way to explore type's capacity to communicate via form.

Questioning the design provenance of everything around us is an opportunity to engage more deeply with everyday life. Good design has the capacity to elevate the ordinary; lazy design does the opposite. Embracing local design strengthens our connection to place and our community's capacity to be more resilient – 'buy once, buy well, buy local' rewards the individual and the collective.

#### Participating designers

spaceagency / architecture and interiors / michael patroni and dimmity walker

penhale & winter / architecture, interiors, art / drew penhale and shane winter

chil3 / communication design / becky chilcott

isabel kruger / brand designer

squarepeg home / furniture designer and maker / ben savage

tiller rides / electric bicycle designer / julian illich and team

winterwares / ceramicist / simone nabholz

monster alphabets dilemma / fashion designers / sarah watanabe and emma williamson

ohlo studio / interior and furniture designer / jen lowe

remington matters / furniture designer and maker / angus mcbride

the second salon / scent designer / katie leenan

#### Additional contributions

giac patroni / film maker

rae fallon / film maker

spaceagency is one of Western Australia's most respected architectural practices. Led by Michael Patroni and Dimmity Walker, the highly awarded studio has been working in Fremantle for over thirty years and is renowned for its residential and hospitality projects and a sophisticated approach to heritage. Deftly balancing old and new, much of spaceagency's work is imbued with a distinctly Fremantle character that draws on the port city's industrial heritage and design vernacular. Well-loved local projects include Bread in Common, Strange Company and the Knutsford Precinct (Stage 1), which received Australia's highest award for multi-residential architecture. Projects further afield include Petition at the State Buildings, the Alex Hotel and the Premier Mill Hotel at Katanning.

The Second Salon is an essential oils business started by Katie Leenan. Katie travelled to New York to become a certified aromatherapist and launched the business in 2016, taking pride in offering informed and reliable information on the use and properties of the 100% essential oils she provides. The business encourages the infusion of oils into spaces to nurture mind and body.

#### Designers' statement / spaceagency architects

We have interpreted the exhibition theme as an abstraction of the act of renovating; a common experience for homeowners in Fremantle, where the majority of the housing stock is existing, and the culture of DIY renovation is a shared community experience.

Our installation is an idea of home that is in a state of change, either doing or undoing, hovering between a past state and a future intention.

Using the language of architectural design, a 1:1 scale plan drawing is marked on the floor, white physical translucent 'walls' form fragments of rooms but are shifted and tilted off the plan as if a work in progress.

A scaffold armature to the exterior walls references construction process and temporary support, designed to imply the main wall of the gallery has been removed – as a play on the proposal of renovation and associated demolition.

These room fragments create the background setting for the exhibition, as familiar, intimate spaces to contain the exhibits; kitchen, hall, dining room, bedroom, all of which have an essential use in the context of everyday life.

The 'rooms' are appropriated by each exhibitor to display / convey a message of the design quality of the work and highlight the value of design in everyday objects from the perspective of sustainability and quality.

DESIGN  
FREDO

#### MAIN GALLERY / OBJECT, SPACE

OBJECT  
SPACE  
PLACE

# OBJECT SPACE PLACE

**'It's all of those tiny moments throughout the day that bring us joy.'**

Simone Nabholz, Winterwares

Winterwares is the studio of designer-maker Simone Nabholz. Simone left behind a stressful career as a graphic designer to concentrate on the mindful process of hand-making ceramics. Working from a space at Fremantle's Stackwood Studios, Simone's practice is born from a desire to embrace a slower pace in life. The pieces invite the user to savour everyday moments – drinking a cup of tea in solitude or gathering around the table to share food with friends. Beautiful and functional, each unique and imperfect piece has an integrity that connects us to our humanity.

The items in the gallery are for sale. Please contact Winterwares for enquiries.

'I like to make things that people can use every day, things that are beautiful, that serve a purpose, and that we can enjoy using for ordinary things. I want to add beauty to the world but I don't want to add to the noise and the clutter. So for me it's important to make wares that are understated and simple, like a really simply designed cup. It's a simple glaze and a simple shape, but it's a little bit wobbly and it fits so perfectly in your hands. So it feels really warm and you can tell that it's handmade. What makes design move people is how we interact with it, whether that's a website or a piece of music or an object. When you choose everyday objects that have been really thoughtfully, consciously made, it makes for a much more meaningful life. It is also so much more sustainable to have fewer but better-quality things – to have less, but to choose wisely.'

## 'There's a lot of complexity in making something that looks simple'

Ben Savage, squarepeg home

'The classic challenge with long tables is that they sag from length to length because of their weight. I came up with the idea of using a steel spine that flexes – pulling the middle of the bar down to a cross brace and putting downward pressure on the bar. At a certain point, it's pushing back up. It stops a sag in the table and allows me to have a slender rail along the side. As somebody who makes objects, I want people to love and cherish them forever. Sustainability is in the materials but more important is the design – to make something that people want to keep.'

squarepeg home is the studio of designer-maker Ben Savage. Ben creates beautiful furniture designed for a lifetime of love and use in people's homes. Ben grew up in Manchester and moved to Australia in the mid-1990's, working as a geologist prior to pursuing his lifelong love of furniture-making. He attended the Australian School of Fine Wood to further develop his wood-working skills and has never looked back. Ben is a skilled craftsman with a refined design aesthetic influenced by Danish mid-century furniture. His work embodies the 'buy once, buy well' philosophy, demonstrating the enjoyment that good design brings to everyday life.

The table is for sale / \$4,400  
Please contact squarepeg home for enquiries.



Image: Amanda Miller

## 'Do something significant that's going to make a difference here in Australia and globally.'

Julian Illich, Tiller Rides

'I've always had a passion for making a difference to sustainability. And I've always ridden to get around town. Then I got to a point where I thought – this is just such a painful thing to do. It's so annoying because you have to carry a lock and then you've got to find the lights and you've got to make sure they're charged and then you've got to carry them in your pocket when you go out for dinner. Then you worry about your bike getting stolen. Lots of people see bike riding as a recreational thing only. So I saw this opportunity to improve the bike – to get lots more people on bikes. You don't have to wear lycra, you don't have to get dressed up. Just walk out the door with your helmet, and everything's built in, just like a car. And that was the vision for the business. For me, I've gone to do something significant that's going to make a difference here in Australia and globally. That's a thing to get you out of bed with a spring in your step. So that's what started Tiller Rides.'

Tiller Rides is an electric bike company that grew out of founder Julian Illich's desire to reduce reliance on cars as a transport mode. Electric bikes appealed to Julian as a way to reduce our environmental impact and improve lives, yet he found that none of the bikes on the market had features that might encourage a greater uptake. So he set about creating a bike that does, with everything built in to make cycling simple and stress-free. Working from a house in White Gum Valley, the Tiller team have created a prototype that demonstrates the capacity for local companies to innovate and address global challenges.

## 'I'm drawn to ideas where things that might otherwise be discarded could have another life.'

Emma Williamson, Monster Alphabets Dilemma

Image: Sarah Watanabe

'I've always spent quite a lot of time in op shops. I'm drawn to ideas where things that might otherwise be discarded could have another life. That's what sparked the idea. I was always drawn to the men's shirts section of the shop because the fabrics and tailoring are nicer. We have five different garment styles but for the exhibition we decided to make five of the same style. This shirt really shows the beauty of the fabrics and the infinite possibilities – no two shirts are ever the same. The rug was made from all of the cuffs that we didn't use on the shirts – we have never thrown anything away. Now I just feel really uncomfortable about purchasing new clothing, when I see how much stuff is available.'

Monster Alphabets Dilemma is a collaboration between fashion designer Sarah Watanabe and architect Emma Williamson that grew from a conversation about the environmental impact of the fashion industry. The two designers re-imagine men's business shirts, taking advantage of their beautiful fabrics to create considered and playful garments for women. Sourcing the men's shirts from charity stores, each piece is a one off, producing stylish, contemporary fashion without using new materials. Over the last 12 months the process has evolved and now includes a custom tailoring service alongside a range of ready-to-wear garments. Each garment is ethically made, paying a fair wage to Australian workers for their efforts, and working to reduce the impacts of consumption.

The items in the gallery are for sale  
Shirts \$240 / Rug \$1500  
Please contact Reception for enquiries.



## 'We had a notion that we wanted sculptural benches that were honest in terms of their materiality.'

Jen Lowe, Ohlo Studio

'A traditional bench in a gallery has a particular style but we wanted to tailor this specifically to Fremantle Arts Centre and Fremantle itself. We took a trip out to a salvage yard – we had a notion that we wanted sculptural benches that were honest in terms of their materiality, and we let what we found there drive what the pieces would be. We also looked at details from around Fremantle and took ideas from that. Limestone, jarrah and wool are materials that have a strong connection to Fremantle. A simple, common joinery detail is the key design move that unites the pieces as part of the same brief but allows the inherent beauty of the materials to be the focus.'

Ohlo Studio is a South Fremantle based interior and furniture design studio led by Jen Lowe. After honing her interior architecture skills overseas, Jen returned to Australia in 2016 to set up Ohlo Studio and very quickly gained national recognition. Her design for Willing Coffee in Guildford was named Best of State / Commercial at the 2020 Australian Interior Design Awards. The project exemplifies Jen's ability to bring all elements of design together to create a strong story that builds the character and quality of place. Jen's work is driven by artistic enquiry and an innate sensibility, crafting design of the highest standard.

Remington Matters is a multi-disciplinary design and production studio led by Angus McBride. Primarily producing furniture, lighting and accessories, the studio also provides custom design, production and installation services. Angus studied architecture before shifting his focus to making. Remington Matters' recently released furniture and lighting range demonstrates Angus's level of craftsmanship, transforming beautiful materials into striking contemporary design pieces. The benches in the gallery are for sale  
Limestone \$1,450 / Wool \$3,200 / Jarrah \$4,100  
Please contact Ohlo Studio for enquiries.