

# DISC OVER IES

Want to know  
who *Inside Out* is  
watching right now?

*We share our  
hot list of architects,  
designers, artists and  
makers for 2023...*

## DISCOVERIES

WORDS ANDREA TOMAZ







5 **CASSIE HANSEN**  
Committed potter

In 2016, when *Artichoke* magazine editor Cassie Hansen dabbled in ceramics, her second life in clay began to take shape. “I took a beginner’s wheel-throwing course to de-stress and was instantly hooked. I loved everything about it: the mess, a new skill, muddy hands, no screens, being in the zone. I was really bad at it for a long time but loved it nonetheless.” Fast-forward to now and Cassie’s pottery is turning heads in art and design circles. She uses building materials such as mouldings, tiles, wall panels and hardware to make textures, patterns and forms that create a geometrical architectural language. “Many pieces are unglazed, connecting back to the humble brick,” says the ceramicist, who lives in Kyneton (country Victoria) and works from a converted carport. “It’s a lovely space flooded in natural light, with garden views. Some days it’s messy; other days it’s neat – a reflection of my headspace.” She says the best part of pottery is reaching that ‘flow state’, which is good for the mind and soul. “Pottery teaches resilience. Lots of things can go wrong... and when something inevitably does, you have to learn to let go, say goodbye and start again – it’s a good life lesson.” Cassie is the recipient of the 2023 Shelley Simpson Ceramics Prize, through Mud Australia. [cassiehansen.com.au](http://cassiehansen.com.au) and [@cassiehansen\\_](https://www.instagram.com/cassiehansen_)



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**JESS HUMPHSTON**  
Multi-skilled maker

Jess Humpston cut her design teeth in fashion, then stepped into interiors – and now she’s mastering furniture! An impressive creative force, this Sturt School For Wood grad took out The Wood Review’s 2022 Maker Of The Year title and also nabbed a gong in the ‘Tables, Chairs & Desks’ category for her barely there chair, aptly called *Ch-air*. Jess loves working with wood and says furniture design is “that sweet spot, that lovely middle ground” which exists between fashion and interiors. “It’s in the interiors realm, but is intimate and tactile like fashion design and I really love that.” Jess is currently resident at the Victorian Woodworkers Association. [jesshumpston.com.au](http://jesshumpston.com.au) and [@jesshumpston](https://www.instagram.com/jesshumpston)



**PLACEMENT STUDIO**  
Space translators

At Placement Studio, excellent design is a process of meaning-gathering, discovery and evolution. “We place a lot of value in the initial brief-writing. It’s where we calibrate the emotional dialogue,” says Stephanie Kitingan (left), who works in conjunction with co-founders Jacqueline O’Brien and James Flaherty. “The [concept stage] design is formed by hand, keeping the idea malleable and inviting clients to use their imagination. Then it’s a process of layering, adding detail and massaging ideas into a coherently built product – with core designs and intent still intact at the end.” Placement Studio won best Emerging Architect Practice at the 2022 Houses Awards. The team now has its first graduate (Ashlee) on board and they’re all settled into their Northcote studio. Projects are underway in Victoria, NSW and SA. [placement.net.au](http://placement.net.au) and [@placement\\_studio](https://www.instagram.com/placement_studio)



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Human-centric design duo

Four years ago, friends Mariah Burton and Chris Polain kissed their nine-to-five jobs goodbye and followed their shared dream. They set up Folk Studio, a bespoke interior design and styling studio that keeps everything personal. “Folk means ‘people’ in general,” says Mariah. “Our goal is to design spaces that make people feel tranquillity, purpose, joy, and an unquestionable feeling that their space reflects who they are. I guess we want our approach to be human-centric. The core belief for us is that good design promotes a healthy state of mind, and designing is very much a creative outlet.” Chris agrees: “Being able to collaborate with various brands and design homes in amazing locations is incredible. Teasing out what someone really wants is a fascinating process. Often people don’t know how to explain what they want until we interpret and express it in a visual form. It’s probably the most satisfying aspect of our jobs.” [folkstudiodesign.com](http://folkstudiodesign.com) and [@folk.studio](https://www.instagram.com/folk.studio)



PHOTOGRAPHY: LEON SCHOOTS (CASSIE HANSEN); VIVIENNE WONG (JESS HUMPHSTON); PATRICK HEGARTY (PLACEMENT STUDIO)



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**VALERIE VIGAR****Creative chameleon**

A trained fashion designer, Valerie Vigar has styled for *Vogue Australia*, fashion directed for *Elle Australia* and worked on various ad campaigns. But these days, she's deep in a world of clay. "Evolving into ceramics was a natural creative progression," says the artist, who was "steered into the back shed for some meditative time with a ball of clay in hand" by a need for more work/life balance. Her small art space is "very Japanese", helping her to work as efficiently as possible. She creates vases, wall sculptures and lighting, and is drawn to interesting textures, strong forms and coloured glazes. "I love the way ceramic work has a life of its own," she says. "There's so much to learn... I'm pretty sure I'll still be making when I'm 90, which is exciting as that's when I'll probably come into my true self as an artist." Valerie's works are part of the 'Morning Musings: 1000 Clay Cups' exhibition at Jai gallery in Byron Bay from April 13. Her stockists are Saint Cloche (see *By The Water* vase, below), Tigmi Trading and Garden Life. @son\_ra\_ceramics



PHOTOGRAPHY: SEBASTIAN KRIETE (VALERIE VIGAR VASE), ROBYN DALY & SARAH PANNELL (LAUREN LEA HAYNES PROFILE & PRODUCT), KWC IMAGE (BILLY HO)

**LAUREN LEA HAYNES****Furniture sculptor**

Lauren Lea Haynes has always been drawn to furniture. In her early years, hard-rubbish collection days in Perth offered endless creative adventures, then she moved to Melbourne, studied Furniture Design at RMIT and fell in love with architecture and the history of design. Today, Lauren works from a small shared warehouse in Coburg North. "The space is very inspiring and music-filled. I'm very lucky," she says. With artistic friends, suppliers and fabricators all close by, Lauren primarily works by hand with limestone but also has aluminium pieces and dabbles in timber carving. One day, she'd also love to master harder stones such as alabaster and marble. "My work is inspired by the spontaneous nature of sculpture... I look at architecture to learn about structure, texture, colour and shadows. Colour is my favourite thing; I'm also inspired by natural palettes from remembered childhood landscapes and those I'm currently surrounded by. Colour coordination is everywhere, and tells great stories."

laurenleahaynes.com and @llh.studio



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**BILLY HO****Bonsai artist**

Billy Ho's creative life has two distinct sides. By day, he is the focused co-owner of Pop This, an award-winning packaging design business. But by night (or at any other time, really), Billy has bonsai on his mind – and he's probably off procuring suitable trees to shape into miniature living works of art. Tildy's Bonsai is Billy's enchanting and self-reflective side hustle... but how exactly did his artistic passion first take root and grow? "I was introduced to this traditional art by my father when I was young, but I didn't actively pursue it until later," he says. "I've now been practicing bonsai for six years and plan to continue learning about it for the rest of my life. As an industrial designer and business co-owner, bonsai helps me to de-stress and find balance. I also apply my design background principles and aesthetics to my bonsai creations." So, is it somewhat difficult to be a late-night/early-morning bonsai artist? "No," he insists. "My father told me, 'If you love something, you find time. And it's true.'" Billy can often be found hosting bonsai appreciation events in Sydney or hunting for excellent secret moss locations on the north shore. He sells his bonsai, shares his knowledge generously, and also has VIP clients who ask him to care for their plant babies for a little extra TLC – ensuring the little trees not only survive but live their best lives. tildy.com.au and @tildysbonsai



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**KELLY THOMPSON**  
 Treasure trader

Illustrator Kelly Thompson had a lightbulb moment when she realised there wasn't a killer online shopping platform out there connecting keen-but-baffled shoppers to exceptional artists and their creative wares. Not one to loaf about, Kelly got straight to work and created Makers' Mrkt! She has a sharp and highly selective curatorial eye and an interest in promoting good people. "The MM motto is 'Nice things by nice people', so personality is of equal importance to the product," says Kelly. "I'm looking for pieces made thoughtfully and sustainably. Nothing can be mass-produced. And I also have to admire the creator's skill, of course!" [makersmrkt.com.au](http://makersmrkt.com.au) and [@makers\\_mrkt](https://www.instagram.com/makers_mrkt)



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**TILLY BARBER**

## Furniture innovator

Stylist and furniture-trader-turned-creator Tilly Barber is the boss at Monde, a sustainable sofa brand that challenges the 'love it, then toss it' ethos of the fast-furniture world. "Monde was born out of a desire to design responsibly and encourage a conversation around consumption and waste in a world that favours new over better," says Tilly. Made with GECA-certified foam, a Monde sofa is easy to reconfigure, clean and repair – you can even change the upholstery. And (drumroll please) it's recyclable! Tilly says that successfully combating greenwashing can be tough, but the key is asking questions – lots of them! "Turn the coin over a few times," she offers. "Consider your purchase deeply. If you don't know enough, ask questions. Where was it made? By whom? Where are the materials sourced? What are the waste policies? How long will it last? How can I maintain or repair it? Can it be recycled, and how can it be disposed of if it's no longer useful?" As a working mum, Tilly says Monde is a lovely juggle, and most of her days are a mix of school-lunch-making, skate-park trips, client meetings and factory pop-ins: "As a one-woman show, the career satisfaction and work-life balance is liberating and empowering." Monde's Collingwood showroom is open by appointment, and Tilly plans to expand the company's online accessibility and add interstate sofa experiences soon. [mondestudio.com.au](http://mondestudio.com.au) and [@monde\\_](https://www.instagram.com/monde_)

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**ALEXSANDRA PONTONIO**  
 Focused woodworker

Alexandra Pontonio says she may well have caught the furniture-design bug in childhood. "I grew up in a creative family that loved sharing ideas out loud, renovating, and hunting for interesting things in second-hand stores and markets. [That meant] I felt really comfortable and excited the first time I walked into a workshop; the machines were big and the possibilities endless." Alex is now an artist in residence at the Victorian Woodworkers Association in North Melbourne. She describes her style as "part traditional, part contemporary" and leans into "details that highlight craft". She likes to let the wood she works with 'talk', with shapes and form taking precedence. Wood also has a 'tree history', she says, adding that she loves working with it because "it's so unforgiving and appeals to my tendency to obsess over accuracy". [alexsandrapontonio.com](http://alexsandrapontonio.com) and [@alexsandrapontonio](https://www.instagram.com/alexsandrapontonio)







## MARNIE HAWSON Sustainable snapper

B Corp-certified photographer Marnie Hawson is in business to bring back nature. Her practice is carbon neutral, and she only works with clients who are committed to the Sustainable Development Goals. Despite all the greenwashing out there, Marnie says she can spot a sustainability phoney straightaway. “My ‘green eye’ is pretty good now,” she shares. “If you have to explain what a high-performing house is to a client, chances are that sustainability isn’t an integral part of their practice.” Marnie’s paid and pro-bono work elevates projects that directly help the planet. When she’s not photographing sustainable architecture, interiors, gardens, food and fashion, she’s either busy in her office or engaging in “productive procrastination” by her veggie patch.  
*marniehawson.com.au and @marniehawson*



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## LOTTIE DALZIEL Waste warrior

In 2018, Lottie Dalziel vowed to reduce her waste, but it wasn’t that simple. Greenwashing, plastic packaging aplenty and confusing recycling rules (varying between councils) made it a minefield. But instead of despairing, Lottie powered up and created Banish, an organisation that provides Australians with trusted information and tools for successfully reducing their waste outputs and eco footprints. What’s more, Banish’s disposal program, BRAD, ensures recyclable-but-challenging items (like spent coffee pods, medication blister packs and toothbrushes) actually make it to the ‘right’ place and don’t end up in landfill. The above has made Lottie 2023’s NSW Young Australian Of The Year, and fuelled her plans to keep creating solution-based content (via podcasts, TikTok and more) and expand her pool of BRAD volunteers. When she’s not busy saving the world (our words, not hers), Lottie can be found drinking coffee around town and blissing out at the beach.  
*banish.com.au and @banish.au*

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## MADE BY BARE Pre-fab change-makers

What do you get when you put an innovative carpenter (Jackson Dannock, right), an urban planner (Matt Fletcher, left) and a structural engineer (Kylan Low, centre) together and mix in blue-sky thinking? The answer is Made By Bare, a tiny-home construction company driven by sustainable solutions. It utilises cross-laminated timber and advanced pre-fabrication principles, along with eco-friendly habits such as eliminating all cutting waste and salvaging old wood for bespoke joinery. Their clients include tree-change dreamers and those priced out of ‘normal’ real-estate markets. “Pre-fab tiny homes let us explore the big principles of sustainability and the circular economy in a bite-sized way,” says Matt. He and Jackson also own sister company Bloom Collective, which shares the same DNA as Bare and is all about imagining and creating new, sustainable and affordable solutions for social housing. Made By Bare’s flagship warehouse is in Moruya, NSW, and there are plans to open a second space in Melbourne.  
*madebybare.com.au and @madebybare\_;*  
*bloomcollective.com.au*

PHOTOGRAPHY: JOSH MILLER (LOTTIE DALZIEL), STEFAN WELLSMORE (SELENA O'HARE)

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## SELENA O'HARE Publicity whisperer

Talented designers dream up and create some seriously beautiful products. But they still need experts championing their work and securing the right kind of spotlight recognition. Enter Selena O’Hare, the director of Whispr, and her team. They represent premium design, interior and lifestyle brands – handling content creation, media strategies, branding partnerships and events. Within this crazy-busy media landscape, there’s always plenty of ‘noise’. So, how do Selena and the crew stay focused, cut through and deliver? “At the heart of our work is the art of storytelling,” she says. “Authenticity and consistency are the ingredients that keep a brand relevant. Additionally, understanding your audience and collaborating with others allows you to create meaningful relationships that stick. PR is a team sport, and Whispr thrives on collaborative conversations filled with different perspectives – that’s where the best ideas come from.” *whispr.com.au*





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## BLAKLASH Meaning sharers

Troy Casey and Amanda Hayman (pictured with their son, Charlie) are the directors of Blaklash, an Aboriginal-owned Brisbane-based design agency that specialises in First Nations placemaking. Working across architecture, interiors, landscaping, art exhibitions and more, Blaklash consults and collaborates with stakeholders, communities, artists and designers to ensure every project is not just culturally appropriate, but also spot-on in a much deeper sense, truly delivering the voices, sentiments, intentions and storytelling of Aboriginal people. “Our work aims to embed First Nations’ perspectives and knowledge into the built environment through genuine and authentic engagement processes with Traditional Owners,” says Troy. “Every project is different. We say ‘the relationship is the project’ or ‘the process is the project.’” Amanda adds, “We invest time in establishing relationships, understanding Country, and dreaming up the potential transformation of spaces together.” [blaklash.com](http://blaklash.com) and [@blaklashcreative](https://www.instagram.com/blaklashcreative)



## TOM BUTTERWORTH Sandstone sculptor

Entranced by the beauty and history of Australia’s natural landscapes, sculptor Tom Butterworth handcrafts one-of-a-kind, functional artworks, mostly in vase form. Based on Sydney’s Northern Beaches, Tom works from an outdoor studio. Reclaimed sandstone is his material of choice, and his practice is one of intuitive discovery, working respectfully with the forms, colours and veins organically present in each raw block. “Onestone came to light when I witnessed a piece of sandstone break open,” he says. “Not only did the natural beauty of the stone capture my attention, but the deep unknown history of the material lit up my imagination. Working with nature that’s been discarded, and giving it new life with functionality, gives me great pleasure.” Tom’s works are exhibited through Hake, the House Of Art in Dee Why. [one-stone.com.au](http://one-stone.com.au) and [@onesto.ne](https://www.instagram.com/onesto.ne)



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## DEFY DESIGN Plastic recreators

A few years ago, product designers Sam Davies and Will Thompson wanted to use recycled plastics in their work but felt frustrated by the options available from off-shore factories. The material information was opaque (using words like ‘recycled’ and ‘recyclable’ interchangeably) and the colours were limited. “We were told, ‘I hope you like black because that’s it!’” says Sam. Dismayed yet fired up, the duo started their own one-stop Sydney operation: Defy Design. Their customised products are designed and created from start to finish onsite using plastic ‘waste’ that’s sorted, cleaned, shredded and moulded into new items. Think high-end sheet boards (for kitchens, commercial fit-outs and exhibition sets), tupperware, combs and more. Defy Design has already received an Australian Good Design Award, and the company hosts tours for school kids – demystifying the recycling process and hopefully changing ideas about the use of plastic by showing it’s a valuable resource. [defydesign.org](http://defydesign.org) and [@defy\\_design](https://www.instagram.com/defy_design)

PHOTOGRAPHY: MINDI COOKE (BLAKLASH), PHILLIP CASTLETON (DEFY DESIGN).  
HAIR & MAKE-UP: GEMMA ELAINE (BLAKLASH)



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**BLACKWOOD COLLECTIVE****Collaborative storyteller**

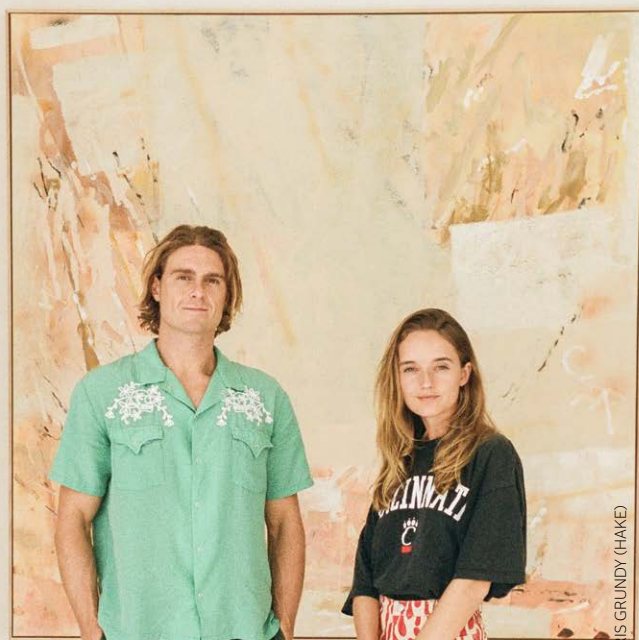
Anything and everything is possible when Gareth Robertson is around. A skilled carpenter with bang-on experience in high-end bespoke joinery and furniture-making, Gareth and his team work with architects, designers and regular joes who just have a crazy-good idea in mind. Blackwood Collective is named after Gareth's favourite wood, and it's also a nod to his Indigenous heritage. "I used a lot of it on early jobs and it's my favourite," he says. "Blackwood was also traditionally used in boomerangs, spear-throwers and didgeridoos. When I was growing up, my dad's family always told their stories and taught me that you need to have your own story. That's what I built my business around. I chose a name with real meaning to me because storytelling is important." Gareth's Sunshine Coast workshop is a relaxed, collaborative space, just how he likes it. "It's more like an art studio," he says. "Designers who we work with want to come here and hang out. I don't want a sterile place – I like to keep it fresh." Future plans include carving out more time for small furniture work and, together with his wife, to open a furniture store/coffee shop out the front of the workshop later this year. [blackwoodcollective.com.au](http://blackwoodcollective.com.au) and [@blackwoodcollective](https://www.instagram.com/blackwoodcollective)



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**HAKE, THE HOUSE OF ART**  
**Creative champions**

Inspired to foster creativity and showcase the talents of both emerging and established artists, Ash Holmes and her partner, Jake Elliott, launched Hake, the House Of Art, in Sydney's Dee Why last year. "Hake currently represents 24 artists in total," says Ash. "We want to keep our stable of artists connected to one another and create a supportive platform – that's important to us. We want all our artists to feel supported when taking risks with their original artworks and allowing Hake to show their work." Aside from running the gallery, Ash is also an accomplished artist. Her work (shown) explores notions of colour psychology and is influenced by the environment all around her on the Northern Beaches. [hake.house](http://hake.house) and [@hake.house](https://www.instagram.com/hake.house); [ashleighholmes.com](http://ashleighholmes.com) and [@ashholmesart](https://www.instagram.com/ashholmesart)



PHOTOGRAPHY: ANICK CREATIVE (BLACKWOOD), CHRIS GRUNDY (HAKE)