

#80 March/April 2014 — projects Little Group / Zumbo / A. Baker / HASSELL Sydney studio / Paramount House / Bear Market Coffee / profile Dowel Jones / in review Melbourne Now / Cai Guo-Qiang: Falling Back to Earth / practice Folk Architects / discourse Patricia Urquiola / industry Leyla Acaroglu — australiandesignreview.com

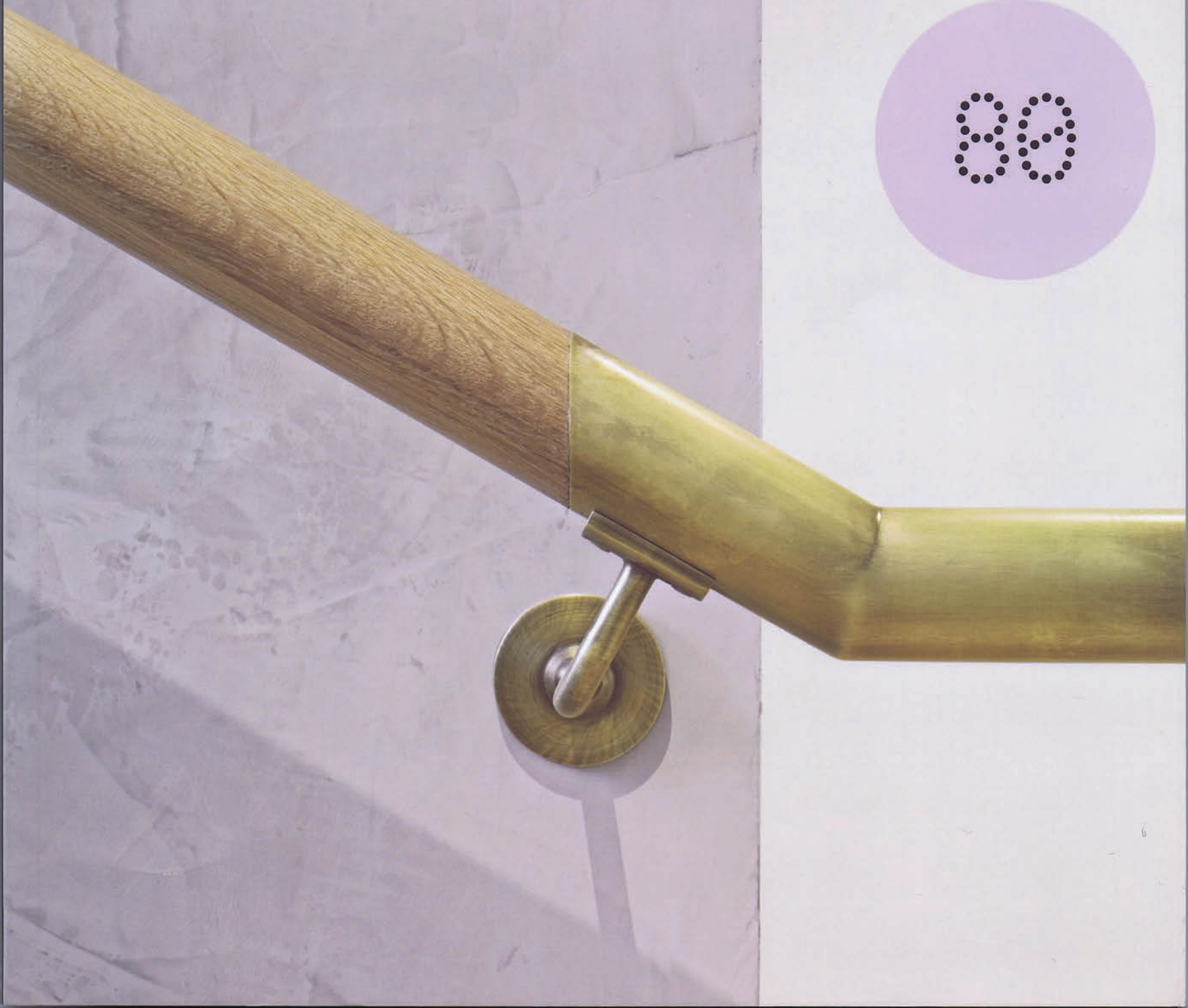


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(inside)

interior design review

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not strange at all

With youth on its side, Folk Architects is starting to make a name for itself. Working outside the box gives the studio an edge with a variety of projects that surprise and delight.

text Jan Henderson
photography Peter Bennetts,
Josh Robenstone

Above—Christie Petsinis
and Tim Wilson of Folk
Architects. Photography
Josh Robenstone

Opposite—Found items are
often used in projects, such as
this tree trunk that supports
the basin in the bathroom area
at yoga studio Power Living.
Image courtesy Folk Architects

Folk Architects is a Melbourne practice at the vanguard of a group of talented young professionals that view architecture and design with a different eye. Meet Christie Petsinis and Tim Wilson, two friends that decided to take the plunge and carve a future for themselves with the establishment of Folk Architects.

The pair have known each other for some 20 years, studied and worked together and the progression to set up business for themselves in 2011 was a given. Both have worked for Denton Corker Marshall, Petsinis in Melbourne and Wilson in London, and between them they have notched up quite a few frequent flyer points travelling the globe.

The philosophy of the firm is a simple one, with the premise that architecture is for the people and therefore must be inclusive. Today, it is not enough to just design a building and Folk Architects believes that architecture is a holistic endeavour. Each project that passes through the office becomes an organic entity and this is something that sets Petsinis and Wilson on their own narrative. Each part of the process of design is interconnected and the progression takes on a life of its own.

The variety of projects that the practice has undertaken in its short career illustrates the duo's adaptability and is proof of their convictions. With each project collaboration is key, not just with clients, but also with other designers from aligned but disparate fields.

For example, the Smart Works project was a modest renovation of a commercial space. To help establish a comfortable lounge area for clients, an installation by Lauren Berkowitz from Utopian Stumps replaced the large reception area. The space is both inviting and relaxing, and the artwork adds depth and interest. Collaborations such as with Berkowitz are the hallmark of Folk Architecture. Graphic designer team tin&ed has also added its touch to projects, with hand-painted graphics on the walls of the Power Living yoga studio in Fitzroy.

The projects that Petsinis and Wilson have been involved with are generally modest with a tight budget. With these parameters in place, invention becomes a necessity. Recycled materials, found objects and 'thinking outside the design square' ensures that every result is quirky and individual.

Of course, Medhurst Winery is not a modest project. Petsinis and Wilson designed



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a 250-tonne winemaking facility located in the Yarra Valley for Medhurst Wines. The building sits comfortably within the landscape. From one side it appears proud of the hill: a statement of modern design, and from the other side it nestles into the landscape: at one with nature. The scale of this project was large, but it was approached with the same precise methodology as with all their work – beauty, function and a refined aesthetic are the result.

The latest project for Folk Architects is the antithesis of the Medhurst Winery. In 2012, Petsinis and Wilson collaborated with Melissa Loughnan of Utopian Slumps to become Utopian Folk and entered an open competition to design a temporary building that would help activate Melbourne's Docklands. The Harbour Esplanade Temporary Activation Project was the perfect competition for the group to spread their wings, and their submission, proposing a greenhouse with an edible plant installation, won the competition. The premise of the project was to create a place of rest and relaxation for residents, visitors and workers at Melbourne's waterfront. The glass pavilion is located on the Harbour Esplanade, has the

capacity to hold some 50 people and will be on-site for 12 months. The pavilion, known as Hortus (Latin for garden), will provide a café from Seven Seeds during the day and become an event space and community centre at night.

The project budget was limited, but with the support of more than 20 organisations, including Viridian Glass, The Glass House Company, FDC, Montlaur Project Services, AECOM, Philip Chun, Three Thousand, Sustainable Table, tin&ed, Euroluce, International Paints, SKINC (St Kilda Indigenous Nursery Cooperative), materials and expertise were donated to help facilitate the build. Utopian Folk has also included discarded objects and timber foraged from the former docks to add 'place' and regional authenticity to the project.

The future is bright for Folk Architects with many projects on the books, including another winery on the Mornington Peninsula, residential projects in the Yarra Valley, Prahran and Malvern, a commercial office, cafés, restaurants and furniture design. There's nothing strange about these Folk – just a desire to create and accomplish the best. 