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INTERIOR DESIGN REVIEW

ISSUE #91 | MAY + JUNE 2016

# LUXURIOUS SPACES FROM SOHO TO SURF

PGMD | BATES SMART | OPERA AUSTRALIA

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF INTERIOR DESIGN



# THE MINDS

At the forefront of many of Australia's iconic restaurants, Pascale Gomes-McNabb (PGMD) is a force to be reckoned with in the world of hospitality design. She has carved out a stellar career as an innovator in this tough industry and she also knows a thing or two about truffles and Grand cru wines as well. However, it is her understanding that place complements food that gives Gomes-McNabb and her clients the edge. It's been a wonderful journey to date, but perhaps the best is yet to come.



DESIGN ON A PLATE

text - Jan Henderson  
portrait - James Morgan





When great design, food and wine come together it's a beautiful thing and Australia has a host of restaurants, cafés and eateries that are proof perfect of this. One woman who understands the intricacies of hospitality design, food and service is the inimitable Pascale Gomes-McNabb. A designer of note with a plethora of restaurant projects under her belt, Gomes-McNabb has made her mark on the national and international restaurant scene and continues to deliver outstanding design with each project she undertakes.

Gomes-McNabb has design in her blood: both parents are architects, as is her sister, who specialises in lighting design. Her mother, an excellent cook, ensured that the family table was a convivial place where sharing fine food with like-minded friends was key to life and living.

In the early years the family travelled extensively throughout Europe and Asia, and lived in Sri Lanka (her mother's homeland) and London.

Exploring the world at an early age helped shape a sophisticated view of life (and honed an excellent palate for food and design), so it was a natural progression for Gomes-McNabb to study architecture and continue the family tradition. She took her time, initially commencing a Bachelor of Architecture at RMIT in Melbourne then sometime later at the invitation of Haig Beck, Professor of Architecture, she moved to Melbourne University to finish her degree.

In the mid-90s with partner Andrew McConnell, Gomes-McNabb moved to London and they both worked in the exciting hospitality scene of the time. Restless, the duo moved to Chicago, then to Asia, Hong Kong and eventually Shanghai where they worked with Michelle Garnaut helping to open her new restaurant, M on the Bund. While in Hong Kong, Gomes-McNabb commenced work with the legendary hospitality designer, Hernan Zanghellini and so continued her love affair with restaurants and design. Concurrently, she commuted between Hong Kong and Australia while completing her degree in Melbourne, but returned to work with Zanghellini again when she finally moved back to Hong Kong.

Working for Zanghellini cemented her design instincts and developed her practical knowledge. She was encouraged to spread her wings and create concepts and form along with the art of 'theatre' that is an imperative for such projects.

In July 2000 Gomes-McNabb and McConnell decided to return home to Australia to open their own restaurant. It was to be a family affair – Gomes-McNabb designed and ran front of house, McConnell as chef. This first restaurant, diningroom 211, was a great success. The food was divine; however, it was the cool sophisticated interior that gave this restaurant the edge. The design reflected the style of the food; Gomes-McNabb understood that each is integral to the other. At diningroom 211 it was the small curated details that made the difference – flatware by Citterio, Riedel glassware, designer pieces and found objects, an uncommon mix at the time. This first project was to become the stepping stone to a bright future. The pair opened their second venue, Mrs Jones, in 2003 and again received accolades for their offering and then in 2006 they turned it into the much lauded 312. Two more landmark restaurants opened in quick succession, the game changing (and much emulated) Cumulus Inc. in June 2008 and Cutler & Co. in February 2009. By this time the Gomes-McNabb/McConnell partnership had established its place at the top of the Australian hospitality tree. As all things change, however, so did their personal relationship and each decided to follow their own path.

For Gomes-McNabb it was to do what she does best, design restaurants and bring her own inimitable style to each and every project.

Pascale Gomes-McNabb Design (PGMD) was established in 2009 and the studio was a success from inception. Designing a hospitality venue is multifaceted; the interior needs to reflect the style of the food, incorporate the necessities of practical service, adhere to budget, provide an experience for the diner and make money for the client. Through her experience Gomes-McNabb understands the complexities involved in the process and has the knowledge and background to achieve desired results.

There have been many projects over the past years: The Bentley Restaurant and Bar in 2010 and the redesign in 2014, The Stokehouse and Stokehouse pop-up, the Magill Estate Restaurant for the Penfolds Group (winner of an AIDA award and International Restaurant and Bar Design Award in London), Claude's, Monopole (winner of a Belle award in 2013) and Yellow (winner of another Belle award in 2014), to name just a few – each project different to the last, but each reflecting a level of expertise that makes it a winner.



Hospitality is a way of life for Gomes-McNabb. Envisioning, designing and operating a restaurant is something she understands completely and proof of this is the swag of projects on the drawing board in the studio. Add to this several high-end residential projects in progress and the practice is very busy. There are, however, other interests that are now being developed, complementary to her practice. A line of furniture in collaboration with Grazia & Co; products as varied as an ice bucket, an armchair and sofa, stools, tables and waiters' stations are in production; and together with a business partner Gomes-McNabb has established John Street Studios to provide quality affordable spaces for up and coming artists in the inner city of Melbourne.

Life is full for Pascale Gomes-McNabb and she is embracing every opportunity and employing her knowledge and experience to the utmost. Hospitality design work is of course ever central; however, her residential work is much in demand and there is so much more to look forward to from this gifted designer. The main course is yet to come.

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OPPOSITE TOP Monopole designed in 2013 and winner of the Belle Hospitality Award. Image Murray Fredericks

OPPOSITE BOTTOM The Stokehouse, a Melbourne dining institution. Image Shannon McGrath

ABOVE The Bentley Restaurant and Bar. Image Paul McMahon

LEFT Yellow, winner of another Belle Award in 2014. Image Paul McMahon