



WOMEN IN DESIGN

They've shaped our homes, fashioned an authentically Australian aesthetic and enriched our design culture. From trailblazers to rising stars, we celebrate our design talent.

STORY BY KAREN MCCARTNEY

Some of the biggest names in the architecture and design world are women. Take Iraqi-born British 'starchitect' Zaha Hadid, for example, who in 2004 became the first woman to win the prestigious Pritzker Architecture Prize. Then there are furniture designers such as Patricia Urquiola and Hella Jongerius, who tap into craft cultures and reinterpret them in revolutionary ways. Magazine editor-turned-designer Ilse Crawford

recently produced a new range of furniture for Ikea, and numerous female/male design duos are driving the design agenda globally.

In order to get a handle on the prevailing mood I sent questions to 14 successful Australian designers whose work I have admired for many years. I worded my questions carefully, addressing their profession first, gender second. I tried to glean what it was they did differently from their male colleagues. More often than ▶

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◀ inspirational starting point for creative thinking. While this is not only applicable to women in the creative professions it is something they are readily able to harness and weave into their work.

Hannah Tribe reveals that she recently asked an influential private developer why he had approached her practice. His reply? He prefers female consultants because building and development is 'a bloke's game', and so inherently sexist, that for a woman to make it, she must be twice as smart, twice as talented and twice as tough as her male counterparts.

'I BELIEVE THAT DESIGN CULTURE IS NOW MORE CLEARLY VALUED FOR ITS IMPACT ON EVERYDAY LIFE.' PASCALE GOMES-McNABB

While relishing the female networks they have, my respondents were united in their appreciation for their male colleagues, partners, mentors, collaborators and clients. The focus for women in design is firmly on life experience, intuition, perspective and – in my view – sheer talent. Talent they have coaxed, shaped and nurtured. In tandem with graft and dedication, this ultimately manifests as a successful career.

Award-winning interior designer Pascale Gomes-McNabb is extremely positive about the state of affairs. "I believe that design culture, in its many forms, is now more clearly valued in the wider community for its impact on our everyday lives," she says. "There have always been women in this industry, however, there are now, pleasingly, many more, which is reshaping our design future."

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Penny Hand
Head teacher – Landscape Design, Northern Sydney Institute TAFE NSW
After a career as a teacher, Penny studied horticulture and now combines her two passions by guiding young landscape designers into the world. "My greatest pleasure is seeing them build their technical skills and watching as their inner designer emerges."

Kate Low
Head teacher – Applied Environmental Management, Northern Sydney Institute TAFE NSW
Landscape architect and horticulturist Kate has been teaching at TAFE's Northern Sydney Institute, a premier centre for landscape-design education, for almost 20 years. Her mission is to instil sustainability principles in her students.

Text by Elizabeth Wilson. Styling by Janet James (this page). Photograph by Peter Ruscoe (this page).



Annie Wilkes (1)
Annie Wilkes Design
Guided by her belief that gardens should be "green on green with interest created by different textures, shapes and massed colour", Annie has shaped residential landscapes across the country for more than 30 years.

Peta Donaldson (2)
Natural Design
A popular multiple-award winner at the Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show, garden designer Peta has built a reputation for gardens based on strong architectural lines, lush planting and the elegant use of colour.

Kate Cullity (3)
Taylor Cullity Lethlean
Her company dominated at the 2014 AILA awards for landscape architecture excellence and Kate, who is an environmental artist as well as a landscape architect, is in demand here and overseas.

Nicola Cameron (4)
Pepo Botanic Design
With a focus on creating edible, functional gardens, Nicola has a strong commitment to supporting community projects, most recently a rooftop garden for refugees and a soup kitchen.

Fiona Brockoff (5)
Fiona Brockoff Design
Renowned for her uniquely Australian aesthetic, landscape designer Fiona's work celebrates indigenous flora, natural materials and sustainability principles. Her body of work is a natural inclusion in any survey of great local gardens.

Janine Mendel (6)
Cultivart
West Australian landscape designer Janine bases her designs on the philosophy that a house should look as if it has been planted in the garden. It's an ethos that has earned her many accolades.

Sue Barnsley (7)
Sue Barnsley Design
A landscape architect and horticulturist, Sue has a reputation for innovation across projects of all sizes. Her revamp of Sydney's Prince Alfred Park won the 2014 AILA NSW medal in Landscape Architecture.

ONES TO WATCH

Fiona Ericsson & Julie Thomas
Sticks & Stones Landscape Design

These recent graduates are attracting a lot of attention. Fiona (left) won a national student design award in 2014 for her innovative use of space. Shortly afterwards, the duo won a competition to design a show garden at the Grand Designs Live Expo.

