

DESIGN MEETS INTEGRITY



What will your home look like?
What will make you go to the office?
Where will people gather?
And how will everyone be included?
Six designers show us the future.

INTERIOR
DESIGN

**YASMINE
SALEH
GHONIEM**

Sydney-based interior designer Yasmine Saleh Ghoniem launched her multi-disciplinary studio YSG in 2020 and has made Europe *Architectural Digest*'s AD100 list, which recognises the world's most influential designers. She foresees natural materials and virtual reality screens in the homes of the new world.



Photography by Prue Ruscoe
Styling by Felicity Ng

The Budge Over Dover project by YSG, in Dover Heights, Sydney



Our vision of the future has always tended to be sleek, minimal. But that hasn't fully eventuated. What do you think interiors will look like in the future?

The Zoomer generation is absorbed by the digital world, which is delivered to them via their smartphones and laptops. The challenge will be to bring the digital world into their physical space. For example, TV screens could disappear as homes incorporate 360-degree sound and vision. In the next 20 years, rather than classifying rooms by type, such as study or living room, they'll be more adaptable. For instance, internal walls – except for bedrooms and bathrooms – could be removed to allow one living space, which expands and contracts using screens. These screens could be fitted with virtual reality technology, which allows people to change the décor to suit a purpose or mood.

What excites you about the future in your field?

The way we live is going to alter more dramatically than it did during my parents' lifetime. Millennials and Zoomers are constantly updating, which is an expensive approach to furnishing a home. I imagine that designers will release virtual editions of their designs on the digital marketplace.

We'll create digital furniture as single pieces or as packages that might include a rug, table, chairs and an upright. These designs would be projected onto neutral furniture bases.

What's the number one thing that influences interiors?

Given our home containment in recent years, interior designers and travel magazines on Instagram and TikTok have been our pandemic bibles. But now it's all about real-time travel, which will be reflected in our interiors – they might take on an adventurous flare. Perhaps we'll see nomadic tents and Turkish poufs popping up everywhere next year... Hopefully in the future, the word "trend" is no longer part of design language. Instead, we'll see interiors being more personality-driven and influenced by people's own unique histories and stories.

Social media can lead to homogenisation, which fits with the sci-fi vision of the future. How do you encourage individuality?

I always start with a client's story to get a sense of who they are and then we look at how they'd like to translate that into their homes. One client had a collection of textiles from her



travels over the years and that gave us a strong starting point for her design... What makes an interior unique and timeless is making it personal to the client.

What's emerging now in interiors?

Wall finishes that push the envelope – wallpaper with strong patterns and textural finishes and coloured Venetian plaster and limewash walls. Venetian plaster creates an instantly worn-in look that plays with light, while limewash surfaces have a matt depth that makes you feel cocooned in a room. Collecting art is on the rise as galleries with more accessible price lists pop up. And so is retro futurism, which is about taking something from the past and giving it a modern spin, similar to how Samsung's The Frame turned televisions into wall art when they're not turned on.

What about colour? What's on the horizon?

The 1970s chocolate-brown is back, baby. But don't expect clichéd pairings – like marigold shag carpets – to come with it. In the past year, classic forest-greens have been prevalent, particularly in marble, so I'm expecting jewel tones, such as amethyst and chartreuse, to come next.

Are the materials you use changing?

Right now, natural materials reign. Most of my residential projects incorporate custom-made joinery and furnishings, from marble coffee tables to feature lights made from poplar burl timber. The organic inconsistency of natural materials is what makes them special and poplar burl has a beautiful veneer that works well with light; it has a sense of translucency to it. I like to go off-piste with how I incorporate certain materials, such as tiles that creep out of bathrooms and climb walls or cover tabletops. I also love the robustness of external finishes and applying them in less conventional ways to create a seamless indoor-outdoor space, which makes rooms appear larger.

People generally see the choices for interiors falling into two categories – bespoke or mass market. Is there a middle ground?

Vintage, retro and newer second-hand pieces are a great way to go. It's convenient to hunt online using websites like Etsy, which is an entry-level outlet, or 1stDibs for premium items. Never feel intimidated by what you don't know. Befriend your local second-hand furniture dealers and explain what you're looking for. They'll call you when something comes in. ●

INDUSTRIAL DESIGN

PATRICIA MOORE

Renowned designer Patricia Moore has worked with NASA, Boeing and Whirlpool during a career spanning almost five decades. The recipient of the 2022 World Design Medal, Moore says products should be accessible to all, regardless of identity, age or ability – and that the future of design lies in personalisation and empathy.



The best design shouldn't be something that screams at you.

“Good design surrounds us from the moment we wake up to the moment we go to sleep at night, including the bed we sleep on. It should be a constant support and not a frustration or, even worse, something that harms you. It's looking at every element and asking, ‘How can I make this easier? Safer? How can I make this person happier by what we come up with as a solution?’”

All people are equal and design must address equity first.

“The future of design will be assuring all people that they'll have a quality life. Sam Farber, the founder of OXO Good Grips, was a wonderful mentor. His wife had arthritis in her hands but she adored cooking so I suggested we think of people who wanted the best peeler but not to have trouble with arthritis. When we

designed OXO Good Grips, the kitchen utensils that have become icons for accessibility and usability, we also designed a different line at a lower price point. It isn't just arthritis that affects people; sometimes the pain is in the pocketbook. Making a solution that costs less money is another way to be inclusive by design.”

Design will help the planet survive.

“In the past 10 years we've seen the addition of the CDO, the chief design officer, to the C-suite. Companies are realising designers don't just pick colours and make things look pretty; they're meant to drive the entire agenda of a company. Design is the heart and soul of every product on the planet and design will have a lion's share in helping the planet survive. What we saw at the start of the pandemic was the systemic failure of getting products into place – that we didn't have enough face masks. The lack of forethought is appalling and can only be fixed by design.”

Design will become highly personalised.

“The mass market is dwindling quickly and we're going to see more and more personalisation. The better we get in the digital realm, the easier it's going to be for someone to pick out exactly the clothing or footwear that they want. They'll have AI [artificial intelligence] presence within their household that helps them determine the best fridge and cooker, you name it.”

Design should address wealth imbalance.

“Rents are going through the roof and first-time home buyers are having a difficult time. The imbalance of riches is horrific and something design should address more aggressively. We're already seeing wonderful examples, companies that if you buy a pair of socks from them, they donate a pair to a homeless shelter. When startups and entrepreneurs show large corporations how it should be done, there's hope.”

The next generation has a more humane agenda.

“I've been speaking to students in the past couple of years about dignity by design and that resonates with this next generation of designers. We have so many ‘tent cities’ in the United States, in all of our major cities, because people can't afford housing. The IKEA Foundation came up with brilliant flat-pack emergency housing that has locks on doors and air filtration and is a much safer temporary home. This is where design has a serious, humane, holistic agenda.”

Manufacturers must make appliances that can be repaired.

“At the start of the pandemic, grandparents featured with their grandchildren on social media, showing how they stretched a dollar during the Great Depression. It was a charming recognition of the wisdom of our elders, who came from an era without a great deal of technology, where everything was done by hand. Darning socks and putting patches on the elbows of sweaters was a way of living. Now, with the passing of laws in the European Union, manufacturers have to make appliances that can be repaired instead of going into landfill – that's going back to the past for the future, which is brilliant.”

The opposite of good design is fashion.

“I love having cooking programs on in the background. Recently, a chef was being interviewed and the interviewer asked, ‘In your own kitchen, do you have air fryers and bread machines?’ And he said, ‘Oh no, every few years the industry comes up with some goofy gizmo that everyone starts buying.’ And I thought, bashfully, ‘I bought an air fryer.’ Design can be separated from decoration. Design that's just fashion is something that's fun in our lives but it's also something that we don't necessarily need.”

New materials drive innovation.

“I'm all about the circular economy; I don't like landfills and I don't think they should exist. We should be composting our junk and I don't just mean the scraps from the kitchen. I thrill at reclaimed materials – anything that we can do with all the plastic waste in our environment. Half of my portfolio is based on a company saying, ‘We have this new material and we don't know what to make with it.’ Material science has driven so much innovation and creativity and will continue to do so.” ●

DISCIPLINE

EXPERT

HOTEL
DESIGN

**BILL
BENSLEY**

THE BRIEF

With more than 200 hotels to his name, including Capella Ubud, crowned the world's best hotel in 2020, Bangkok-based American architect and interior designer Bill Bensley has long been a force for change in the hotel design industry. His vision for the future is every bit as surprising and refreshing as his work.





1

“Luxury is dead,” says Bill Bensley, whose hotel projects objectively occupy that space. “There’s no point in designing lavish hotels just to put heads on beds. Every project should have a purpose and a candle to light.”

Far from paying lip service to this idea, he seeks out – and funds – such projects; a stay at his Shinta Mani Wild eco-camp helps to protect the Cambodian rainforest and its endangered wildlife. “It’s not an issue for our guests to spend \$2000 or \$3000 per person per night. Their hobbies are collecting art and philanthropy so they’re looking for places in which to help.”

In the near future, Bensley wants hotel designers, owners and operators to contribute more. “Big hotel companies are part of nature and society, too, not just the economy. We should shoulder more responsibility concerning issues like education, clean accessible water and conservation.”

2

Technology is, as ever, changing the face of hotels, with electric-car charging stations, full-length mirrors that broadcast in-room fitness classes and fully automated rooms already a reality. While Bensley is reluctant to predict the next must-have gadget in hotel rooms, he does see a line he’d rather not cross. “I read so much science fiction about plugging into people’s brains. That’s a bit scary so I don’t want to go there.”

3

While recycling, minimal food waste and zero single-use plastics are now expected in high-end hospitality, the industry is only starting its sustainability journey. Bensley hopes to see hotels “prioritise reduction and reuse over recycling” and his Shinta Mani properties in Cambodia lead by example. “Systems have been set up to eradicate plastic in our entire supply chain. It wasn’t easy at first but it’s doable.”

He says plastic water bottles could be replaced by bottling facilities – “the payback of such an investment is less than 14 months” – and there’s scope to better manage food waste. “A huge number of hotels do not compost, instead throwing out cuttings and wasting perfectly good compostable materials,” says the architect and designer, whose next project (on Nusa Penida, an island south-east of Bali) aims to raise the bar once again. “We’re building the world’s first 100 per cent upcycled hotel.”



4

Bensley argues that we need to return to more traditional ways of building, combined with new energy. “We should be going back to the way we used to do things because it made sense and it worked,” he says. “A simple idea is to design rooms that have natural light coming into the space from two sides, which saves energy.”

Hotels that integrate solar panels into their architecture can generate enough power to run the whole resort and save up to 35 per cent on heating, lighting and more. Bensley’s designs often allow for cross-ventilation. “Air-conditioning is the biggest consumer of energy in most hotels, at about 32 per cent. The sexiest hotel rooms are only partially air-conditioned.”

5

Two hotels come close to perfection, he says, thanks to designs that work with the landscape and unique experiences. “The interiors of Huka Lodge in New Zealand are beautifully local and I like how interior designer Virginia Fisher brought light and air to the bathrooms. Also, I’m a big fisherman and outside your door there are two fly rods. You pad down the lawn and throw in a line. That’s paradise to me.”

The other is Hoshinoya Kyoto in Japan. “It’s a ryokan with 25 rooms. You arrive by boat, pattering up this crystal-clear river. It’s magical.” Every room in the hotel is different. “There was a conscious effort not to build what is traditional but to take it further with colour, simplification and sculpture – and the Japanese attention to detail is bar none.” ●



Hoshinoya Kyoto ryokan, Japan (top) and Huka Lodge in Taupō, New Zealand (above)

ARCHITECTURE

DILLON
KOMBUMERRI

Where we build our homes is as important as the materials we use, says Dillon Kombumerri, a principal design adviser for the Government Architect NSW. A Yugembar man who grew up on Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island), Kombumerri says we need to start working with First Nations Australians if we want our homes and communities to survive and thrive.



Dillon Kombumerri (c. 2000) by Penny Tweedie. National Portrait Gallery of Australia. Gift of the artist 2004. © Estate of Penny Tweedie.

“A lot of housing and construction strategies in Australia come from Europe or the colonial motherland [England] and those systems developed because they are relevant to those places. We are starting to consider that as a people of Australia, we want to truly belong here. This plays out in the way we design buildings.

There have been dramatic climatic and seasonal shifts over the past hundred – and thousand – years but there’s something afoot in recent radical climate change events. We have to fundamentally shift what we’re doing and building and how we source materials.

Our approach to this will change in the next 10 to 15 years. Timber isn’t as long-lasting as a brick and if the brick is sourced locally, yes, more energy goes into making it but it’s around for longer. It also depends on the application. An institutional or public building is likely to be around for a long time so it makes sense to use a resilient material. Whereas constructions with a shorter life might use a material that can be turned over more quickly.

New synthesised materials are emerging. An incredibly strong bonding material from Country is resin, which was used to bind flints to spear sticks. There’s research into bonding resin with synthetic materials to produce stronger latexes, for example. That sort of application, using cultural knowledge and science, creates innovative materials that could fill in concrete when it cracks. With technology, we’re on the edge of creating self-repairing materials.

Country has to be the foundation of all of our actions and we need to work together with First Nations peoples. The knowledge they hold of our weather cycles puts them in a unique position to address these challenges. Being led by First Nations communities means solutions that work for this place.

One of those solutions is cultural burning. Dramatic back-burning shocks Country, overstimulates it and can encourage the next wildfire to be more severe. Cultural burning helps to reduce combustibility. The same applies to flooding. Homes are built on wetlands and prevent water from soaking in or moving across the land. Water is diverted and blocked, leading to more severe flooding.

We’re not going to stop floods or fire in Australia so we have to understand those natural events and work smarter with them. It’s easy for me and others to say, “Don’t build in these areas”, but I understand that when people have bought properties there, it’s difficult to move. Their social networks are set up in these places.

Design industry awards consider appearance to be design excellence but we should acknowledge work that’s in harmony with the natural environment. We also need to take only what we need, not cater to every want. There’s been overdevelopment of domestic settings – McMansions with 10 bedrooms and four-car garages for one couple – beyond what anyone needs.

Wealth building is often to the detriment of our environment and has brought us to this important junction – we are part of the natural environment and if it suffers, we suffer. Where housing should go, in the near future and beyond, is more environmentally-friendly. We need to think about how materials are sourced and if they’re renewable, how we store and use water, manage waste and how we can use natural systems for cross ventilation. We need houses that don’t rely on mechanical systems as much.

Housing design affects our social behaviour; our interconnectivity with nature and one another. You see walls and fences going up higher. When communities drive cars everywhere, they’re not connecting with their neighbourhood and the social fabric suffers. Beyond offering shade and moderating heat, verandahs are important for social conditioning and connection. In places where there are verandahs and low fences, where people walk to the shops and school, they say hello to one another and make incidental connections – that’s a strong community.” ●

WORKPLACE DESIGN

BIANCA HUNG

Could working from home and the office be the hybrid recipe for more satisfied and productive staff? It can be, according to workplace designer Bianca Hung, a director at Melbourne-based architecture practice Hayball – if you get these essentials right.

The corporate office as we knew it has changed. And hybrid isn't going anywhere. "There's real value in having a workplace," says Bianca Hung, "but you want it to feel comfortable and inviting."

Tech giant Google famously took that concept to the extreme as far back as the early 2000s, offering free breakfast, lunch and dinner (including goodies in special snack rooms), on-site gyms and laundry facilities. But the come-to-the-office-and-never-leave model lost its lustre. "In some ways it was luring people to stay at work much longer. It was less focused on staff wellbeing and connection. Now it's more about creating spaces that support people, while accepting there's going to be movement in and out. But what you can't replace is people and community."

Different industries have their own unique requirements but there's one universal design element that encourages connection and collaboration. "Pre-COVID there was a focus on lobbies and breakout spaces and as we move forward, there's going to be more focus on shared spaces – be it a reception area where employees can have a coffee with colleagues in a less formal setting or a café or kitchen space that allows people to heat their food and sit together at a large communal table."

Technology will collate data on how spaces are performing, she adds. "Sensors can read air quality and how people are using the spaces, which will inform how design might progress or encourage companies to use an area differently."

Workplaces that are carbon-neutral, environmentally responsible and using green energy are important to employees.

"Having smart systems that adjust to occupation or register if the outdoor temperature means we can turn off the air-conditioning and open the windows is important because it goes hand-in-hand with sustainability and wellbeing."

We've known the benefits of healthy workplaces for decades. Research in 2003 identified 15 studies that linked improved air quality with an 8 to 11 per cent increase in productivity. Another study showed that workers who had window views of nature felt less frustrated, more patient and reported better health than those who didn't. And of the businesses that implemented healthy building features, 69 per cent reported improvements in employee satisfaction and engagement.

"Brighter spaces connected to views of nature are highly desirable but if you can't have that, have excellent lighting, air quality, plants and warm materials. I hate to say this word but it should feel like 'home'," says Hung. Or perhaps a hotel? "Absolutely, you want hotels to be like an extension of your home but there's something extra that makes you want to go there, like an amazing lobby bar or restaurant or the bathrooms are luxurious.

"For a workplace, you want your spaces to feel considered and premium. I don't think offices are going to look drastically different in 2030 but what will progress is how the spaces can become more flexible and underline the company's values. It's not about creating a workplace that is your home but one that's comfortable and inviting. It's just delineating between those spaces." ●

LIMINAL SPACE

CHARLES RENFRO

From New York's High Line to Zaryadye Park, Moscow's first new public park in 50 years, American architect Charles Renfro has helped create some of the world's most noteworthy public spaces. At New York design studio Diller Scofidio + Renfro, he's leading the design of Adelaide's Tarrkarri Centre for First Nations Cultures and says the future of liminal spaces is egalitarian and rooted in our past.

The High Line in New York

Cameron Davidson





Liminal space is a threshold or in-between space. An airport is a liminal space. But it's also the realm of public space and space that doesn't demand you use or understand it in any particular way; it's open to interpretation by visitors and isn't owned by anyone. A lot of what our built environment is and what architects do is for people with specific levels of money or education and that's what we're trying not to do.

For a space to be usable by all requires a certain level of accessibility. Liminal space needs to be designed for everyone so people who have impairments with hearing, sight, touch, motion or mobility can access it. While we think of the High Line as a park, it's also a space experience in the form of acoustics, heat and coolness, breeze and stasis, sound and especially smell because we use plants that have blooms. What we tried to do is make delight out of the everyday and universally appreciated conditions that everybody can take pleasure in.

Public spaces are combatants to problems we're often not aware of. With COVID-19 we've all been stuck in our own spaces and fed

the media we've inadvertently chosen to be fed. Our lives have become increasingly privatised and commodified. [The past two years have] shown our need for community, for being together, which also breeds tolerance and awareness of others – things that have been in short supply lately. Spaces of collectivity that are owned by the people they serve are everyone's place and that's very different to our modern condition of social media and online shopping.

Maybe the future is actually the past. The things we've enjoyed in our public realm have been consistent for thousands of years. In Western culture, we've had a tradition of public space since the Forum in Rome or the Metropolis in Greece and those are still some of the most delightful spaces to be in. The ingredients of shared space have been around for a long time and I don't think the basics will change that much. But the things that we bring to those spaces – smartphones, photography and, in the future, augmented reality [AR] – will inevitably impact the way people use shared spaces.

Liminal spaces should not be privatised, even in our way of engaging with them. You see it when people get to particularly photo-worthy places. Rather than stand there and enjoy them, they pull out their smartphones and take selfies to demonstrate they've been there, as opposed to actually experiencing the place; they're trying to make them into their own image. That's something we need to combat in making future liminal spaces. AR could offer a deeper understanding of places and their history, which is another way of generating empathy and curiosity and assists in making society more tolerant and inclusive.

I'm intrigued by marketplaces in Middle Eastern cities, which balance commerce with openness and civic engagement. I also love national parks in America – they're not built worlds necessarily but spaces that are welcoming to everyone and they're spectacular. I've come across more people of different opinions in national parks than I've ever met in New York City. For that reason, natural attractions are a model of how we could get together and share and be with each other in spaces that aren't thought to be controlled by anyone.

We should make sure the streets and sidewalks stay ours. There was controversy in New York when sidewalk sheds for dining became legalised during COVID-19 because a lot of people considered them to be privatisation of the public realm. But another thing they did was pull the elitist commercial activity that happens behind doors out of that rarefied space into the liminal space of the city. The design of these sheds could be atrocious and they're havens for rats but they enlivened the city and made it feel more democratic. We should look at what made them successful and whether we want to take that into our future environment. ●