

A POTENT FORCE — JULIETTE ARENT AND SARAH-JANE PYKE OF ARENT&PYKE

Words by Millie Thwaites • Photography by Julie Adams and Anson Smart

Sydney-based design practice Arent&Pyke is widely regarded for its vibrantly detailed and impeccably layered work. Each project expresses an appealing ingenuity and, above all, an intelligent interpretation of how design informs experience through clever palettes and fearless combinations. Inquisitive and strong-minded by nature, practice Co-Founders Juliette Arent and Sarah-Jane Pyke excel in crafting stirring interiors and, after 15 years navigating the industry side-by-side, they understand the importance of a solid creative partnership.

Whilst working together in their late twenties, Juliette and Sarah-Jane recognised an alignment in each other that set the foundations for the practice they would eventually co-found. “We both saw a way for design to feel really warm, inviting and natural, but ultimately, I think we recognised a certain spark in each other and thought we could do something fantastic together,” Sarah-Jane says. Juliette adds that their aesthetic struck them as “slightly different to what was being awarded at the time.” As such, a desire to bring a lesser-seen sincerity and friendliness to interiors coupled with an infectious, youthful energy saw the birth of Arent&Pyke in 2007.

As Juliette notes, there was another important factor at play in this decision. “We wanted to be in control of our lives and create something where we could do things differently because, by and large, I don’t think the workforce supports women very well.” The past 15 years has seen both women – and many women in their team – become mothers, as well as experience some “big life stages”. Yet, the studio has been a constant, allowing the pair to develop a dependable and trusting partnership defined by friendship and familiarity. “We created a business so that it could support us through those times as well as support everyone else who’s come into the business,” Sarah-Jane says. Succeeding in this is a constant pursuit, one that stems from a place of understanding and empathy towards women’s contributions both inside and outside of the workplace.





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Juliette and Sarah-Jane's initial exuberance at starting their own practice has only deepened over the years, no doubt shaped by the pair's joint experiences and learnings. It is unsurprising, then, that this sense of exultation is immediately perceptible in their work. "We call it being spirited," Sarah-Jane says. "What that feels like to us is something really dynamic – it's beautiful colour, living with textiles and art, and light and spaciousness. All those elements coming together – it's what we've developed over the years, and it's underpinned the work from the start." The work is indeed dynamic; for instance, Legato House is an effortless medley of midcentury Scandinavian, Japanese minimalism and classic Mediterranean styles; checkerboard terrazzo floors meet rough rendered walls among lush greenery at Garden House; and La Casa Rosa sees a myriad of timeless materials converge. This consistently rich alchemy of texture and tone defines the Arent&Pyke language, yet most importantly, these spaces are wonderfully relaxed and highly liveable.

This distinctive aesthetic is a clear product of the two women's collective aptitudes and tastes, yet it has also been moulded by the wider

Arent&Pyke team and their many collaborators over the years – from artists, architects and fellow designers to clients, some of whom have returned to work on second or even third projects. Their portfolio beautifully encapsulates this evolution, and it is now distilled and documented in a new book. "We're very tactile people so producing a book is such a thrill," Juliette says. "You can't really play that down – to see the culmination of all the years, the work, the clients and our team in a book – that really is thrilling."

The magic – or, perhaps, the challenge – in pursuing an enduring creative practice that surprises and delivers for a decade and a half is nuanced. It cannot be condensed to any one thing; however, Juliette does offer that "there's a process of unlearning at the beginning of each project that allows us to come at it with skills, but also with a want to do things differently." Determined as they are individually, the solidity of Juliette and Sarah-Jane's partnership is what allows them to unlearn with confidence, delve into waters unknown and produce robust work time and time again.