

# DESIGN IN SYNC

**The design chemistry of New Zealand's Form & Fable has resulted in elegant yet funky pieces now available in Australia. RACHAEL GAVIN speaks to the designers.**



It's rare to find a product that fills you with a sense of calm when you look at it. Even harder is a sense of stability or strength but that's what happens when you set eyes on the objects made by New Zealand design duo Form & Fable. Their pieces evoke a subtle emotional connection in people thanks to their clean lines and simple yet striking aesthetic.

This is all part of Kate McIntyre and Mark Buntzen's design concept. The pair describes themselves as purists in their approach to the physicality of an object. Decoration is not their thing, which is evident in their pieces as they let shape do the talking. Form & Fable is also inspired by design expert Jonathan Chapman's book *Emotionally Durable Design*.

"He explores how users develop long-term relationships with the objects they cherish—a lifetime story if you will," says Buntzen. "We both feel that from a sustainability perspective it is important to make beautiful, high quality pieces that people will cherish and will develop their own story with. We put a tremendous amount of work and love into what we do."

It was this shared perspective on design that sparked the duo's desire to work together along with a dream of making a living doing what they love instead of working for someone else. They met at a candle making studio at Golden Bay on the South Island where Buntzen had moved after leaving a 'dead-end' consulting job and McIntyre was visiting family. "When we first crossed paths, our eyes locked, and that was pretty much it."

Form & Fable was launched earlier this year though they'd been working on and making their designs for a few years prior. McIntyre is responsible for the ceramic pieces while Buntzen's



"Our designs are inspired by nature, and New Zealand presents us with a fantastic muse," adds Buntzen. "A lot of Kate's geometric work is inspired by natural patterns. We spend a lot of time outdoors on many of the beautiful beaches and landscapes that can be found here, and Kate can often be found taking photographs of weathering rocks, patterns on the beach or landscapes."

Form & Fable crossed the ditch last February launching to retailers at Life Instyle Sydney and appeared again at the Melbourne August show. Buntzen and McIntyre are pleased with the label's growth and remain true to their original design principles.

"Our work has been incredibly well received, though sometimes the amount of hand-work that we put into our work means that we don't meet everyone's price point. We're okay with that though. The last thing we want to do is produce cheap rubbish. It's not what it is about for us, and we don't think that works in anyone's favour—least of all the planet's."

Their goal is to get Form & Fable to a point where it can sustain itself financially allowing them more time to develop their designs. With Buntzen and McIntyre currently sharing other people's spaces and using their living room floor to run their business, they also hope to get their own studio space.

In the meantime they are keen to keep growing their skill set through residencies and collaborations with other designers and artists. "I think that doing this sort of thing, and other residencies and partnerships where you get to work with other artists and designers is a fantastic learning—and life—experience. We need to do more of that and perhaps some more skill-based study too. We both love learning new ways of making, especially from craftspeople that have been working with a particular material for years. You can't beat experience, and it's a great teacher." ♦



forte is the timber objects, but they design and discuss ideas together. "I think we're lucky in that we share such a similar aesthetic, and trust each other's judgement. Despite the fact that we are both complete perfectionists, we'll generally agree with each other's critical feedback or suggestions for how a design can be improved."

"Kate slips-casts and then hand-carves most of her ceramic work. I use CAD (computer aided design) and then CNC (computer numerical control) machinery, and finish products by hand-sanding and oiling. We're both completely anal-retentive about finishing our work to perfection, and probably spend far more time than is economically advisable," laughs Buntzen.

Pieces in Form & Fable's range include porcelain bowls and vessels, wooden and ceramic candle holders and serving platters. The most popular are McIntyre's small faceted bowls and hand-carved objects. Buntzen's platters and linelight tea candle holder are also strong sellers. The duo chose to focus on kitchen and homewares because they love to be surrounded by beautiful things in their own work and living space.

