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Profile

Waste Not, Want Not

text: Eleanor Scott photography: Josh Robenstone

An exhibition presented by Friends & Associates as part of Melbourne Design Week 2019, *Welcome to Wasteland* took a bold and holistic approach to both using and reducing waste.





top left Utilising an EBS 250 handheld inkjet printer with a highly-efficient cartridge, Friends & Associates were able to print the text for the exhibition directly onto the walls of the gallery space. **bottom left** Co-founder of Friends & Associates Dale Hardiman is no stranger to putting on groundbreaking exhibitions. **right** *Welcome to Wasteland's* website was run using a remote server that was powered by a single solar panel.

Are you a part of a cyclical iteration of style? That's what co-curators Dale Hardiman and Tom Skeehan, the duo behind process-based design studio Friends & Associates, asked of the creative practitioners exhibiting in their 2019 Melbourne Design Week show *Welcome to Wasteland*. By which they meant, are you contributing to the design cycle that has been adding to the world's waste problem for decades or are you, in some way, attempting to counteract your footprint?

It's a potent question and it's important to understand its context. In 2018, Australia was forced to stop exporting much of its recycled waste to China, which has led to a landfill problem that many other countries already face. For Dale and Tom, news of this issue prompted them to think about their material privilege as Australian designers and what creative practitioners could produce if that material privilege was taken away.

"The original brief was to ask contributors to produce work that was [made from] minimum 90 per cent waste but they also had to be commercial propositions," explains Dale. "So the idea was to ask, instead of just making

products, what if you had to check your privilege and think about utilising current waste streams? How would you do that?"

The results were incredible. Sarah Ceravolo created ergonomic cutlery handles for hospital patients, using salvaged HDPE syringes; Jake Rollins wove discarded golf balls together to make a tensioned chair that is akin to molecular structures; Danny Ngo and Adam Goodrum constructed a lounge out of denim pulp; and Guy Keulemans, with the help of Kiyotaka Hashimoto, revitalised the ancient practice of ceramic stapling with reclaimed sterling silver.

Some of Tom's favourite works were those that truly fulfilled the commercial aspect of the brief, including Ebony Heidenreich's stunning wall lights made from the silt trap waste of her own studio, Jonathan Ben-Tovim's recycled plastic and rubber "Standard Issue" desk, and Vert Design's "HuskeeCups" – which are produced using waste coffee husk mixed with eco-polymers and are already available for purchase. →

top left Inspired by the waste by-product of abattoirs, "Platelet(te)" by Basse Stittgen and Liam Fennessy is made entirely of dehydrated animal blood. **right** Guy Keulemans, with a little help from ceramicist Kiyotaka Hashimoto, used ceramic stapling to create a stunning piece that shows how repair crafts can breathe new life into items marked for disposal. **bottom left** Nick Rennie and Thomas Coward's "Marmor" items are made out of marble waste from building sites – which they dyed using a technique dating from 700 BC. **right** Smaller, more mass-producible works like "Grip" by Sarah Ceravolo proved to be some of the most commercially viable projects from the exhibition.



It wasn't just the exhibitors who had to consider their waste output. "We tried to look at how we could attack the idea of waste throughout all aspects of the exhibition," says Dale. For the show's signage they used an EBS 250 handheld inkjet printer to overlay any text directly onto the gallery walls, instead of a typical vinyl display. And, rather than hosting a closing night party with plastic, they opted to make the event "BYO cup" and have kegs with hand pumps in lieu of beer bottles. But the buck didn't just stop with Dale and Tom. Minimising waste was also a part of the brief for the duo behind the exhibition's graphic design and

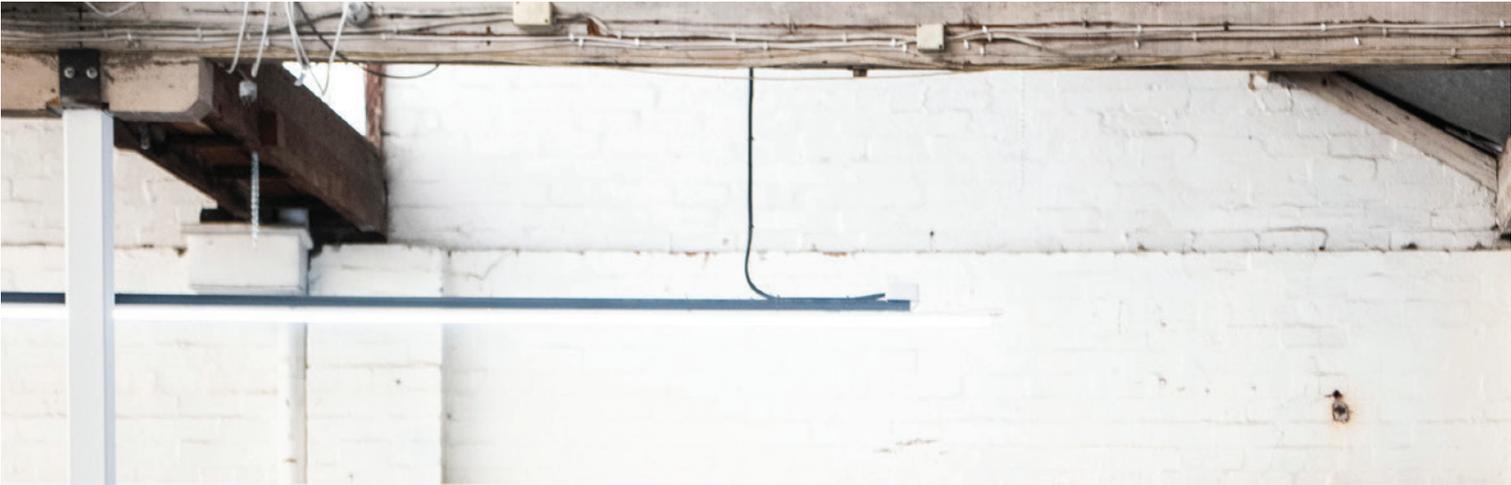
art direction, Matthew Tambellini of More Studio and Mr Kyle Mac. Simple but confronting facts like "If the internet was a country, it would rank sixth for electricity usage" inspired them to take *Welcome to Wasteland* beyond the four walls of the show. To do this, the pair created an energy-efficient website for the exhibition by purchasing a sustainable web server and powering it off a small, off-the-grid solar panel that will eventually find its permanent home on the north-facing roof of Kyle's apartment. Even the cursor used to navigate the website emitted virtual CO2 as you moved it around to represent user impact.

top left Danny Ngo and Adam Goodrum's gorgeous lounger is made out of denim pulp. **right** Mark Richardson used a combination of 3D printed components and discarded waste – like whipper snippers and shower screens – to produce a dimension-adjustable desk. **bottom left** Ebony Heidenreich collected the clay water waste from her studio's silt traps to create beautifully sculptural wall lights. **right** Jake Rollins' "GolfWeave" recycles golf balls and turns them into a homogenous building block that can take on many shapes. In this iteration he's created a woven and tensioned chair.



This might seem like extreme lengths to go to for some. But really, how can you produce an exhibition about waste without first considering the waste of the exhibition itself? Indeed, Dale Hardiman and Tom Skeehan's ability to build that concept into an extension of their show is what transformed *Welcome to Wasteland* into more than just an exhibition, but rather a clever and thought-provoking example of how to rethink design waste from the ground up.

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Welcome to Wasteland proved that creative practitioners from all types of disciplines are able to reuse waste in a way that is both aesthetically pleasing and commercially appealing.

