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YOUNG DESIGNER

# Creative forces

*Interior designer Joyce Wang's rapid rise to prominence comes as no surprise when you see the eclectic and unique taste reflected in her atelier-like office*

Stepping into interior designer Joyce Wang's office is like entering a *wunderkammer*, or cabinet of curiosities. Hidden in a quiet cul-de-sac near Star Street, the studio is brimful of materials that reflect her eclectic design sensibility. Fragments of copper chandeliers lay on the ground, drawers are lined with exotic stones, and cuttings of fur and chain mail lay strewn across worktables. "I'm constantly pulling things from everywhere and it's at my fingertips," says Wang. "It's that kind of space."

One of Hong Kong's most talked-about young designers, Wang is the creative genius behind Ammo, the Asia Society restaurant just up the hill from Pacific Place. She made a name for herself in 2010 after landing the renovation project

for the iconic Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel in Los Angeles. In 2011 she snagged an *Interior Design* magazine "Best of Year" award for her futuristic interior of fashion firm Kwok Hang Holdings. That year she established her eponymous design practice, and her star has risen since then.

Wang stumbled across her ground-floor office while strolling through a secluded terrace in Wanchai with her husband a year and a half ago. Set amid a creative community of architects, designers and artists in Sau Wah Fong, it was fashion designer Johanna Ho's studio. They knocked on the door and discovered that Ho was moving out. "We were just really lucky," recalls Wang. "We were considering a more traditional office space, but we chose this because there was so much soul."

Wang set up shop and began brainstorming ideas for the 800-square-foot studio. "It was important to me that it felt like an atelier, that it was something that was less commercially driven," she says. "It's kind of an extension of yourself and what you believe in as a designer."

Opening onto a leafy courtyard, the front office space evokes an industrial loft apartment. Six designers share a communal desk with rows of warehouse-

**Below: Wang in her office**

**Opposite, clockwise from top left: Pipe shelves; tractor seat; sample boards; bamboo seating; Curtis Jere sculpture**





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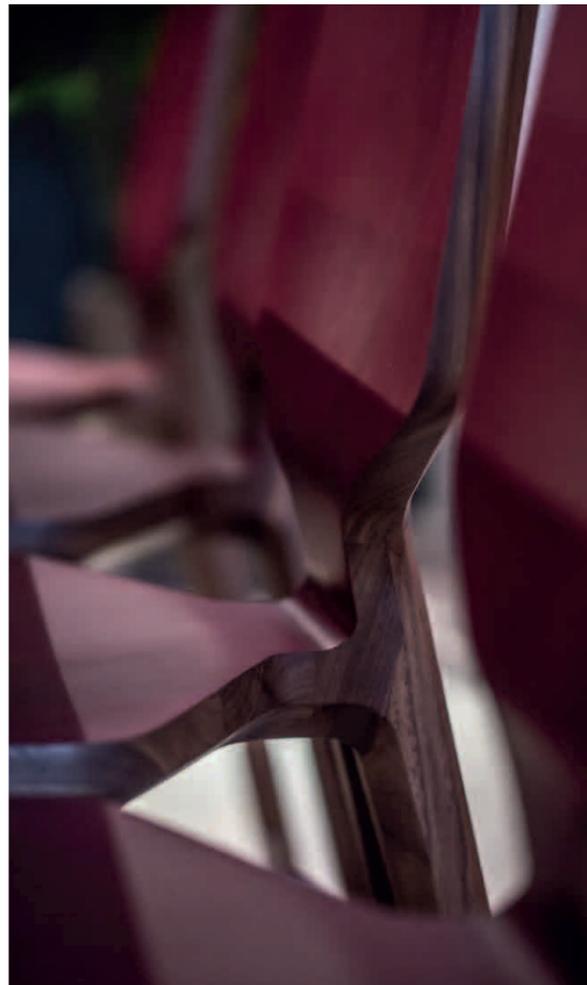
Above: The industrial Holophane lamps

Right: Limited-edition Mary's Chairs by Matthew Hilton

style Holophane lights dangling low from the ceiling. In the corner, a 1957 bronze Curtis Jere installation of a flock of birds sweeps across the wall. “[The studio] has a lot of character,” says Wang. “There are a lot antique pieces that I personally collect. It has that homey feel about it.”

Like many of Wang’s projects, her trademarks can be found throughout the space: edgy custom-designed pieces, natural materials and an abundance of metal. The centrepiece of the room is a sleek meeting table designed by the studio with a walnut wood surface resting on a bronze base shaped in a giant W. It is paired with four stylish Mary’s Chairs by Matthew Hilton also made of walnut with a red stain. Wang, who is constantly on the lookout for new pieces on eBay and at auctions and flea markets (“I’m a furniture addict”), bought the limited-edition chairs at the local Ambassador’s Ball last year.

A small doorway leads into the airy workshop. With two ceiling-to-floor



glass walls, skylights overhead and large potted plants, it feels like a greenhouse. In contrast to the cosy ambience of the front office, this room is unexpectedly bright and spacious. “I had the option of making the opening larger,” she says, “but I think it’s a little bit of a surprise bringing people through a narrow opening.”

On most days, Wang can be found here, perched on a vintage cast-iron stool (made from an old tractor seat), sketching on her antique Keuffel and Esser Co.

drafting table from the 1920s or poring over mood boards with clients. A stock of material samples sits in the corner on a custom-built shelving unit made from copper pipes. “I like surrounding myself with metal objects,” says Wang. “We use a lot of metal in our projects. Particularly at Ammo, where we had those staircase chandeliers made of the same pipes.”

Lately, Wang has been directing her creative energy into pitching for a 10,000-square-foot restaurant in the

Above: The atelier workspace

Police Married Quarters and others that aim to revitalise the Sha Tin Racecourse. Admitting that she has become selective when it comes to her clients, Wang says, “We take on projects because we can take risks with them. Part of the fun is being slightly afraid of what’s about to come up, embracing that and doing whatever you can to make it amazing.”

## Moving pictures

Cinema is a recurring theme in Joyce Wang’s designs.

The inspiration for the surrealist chandeliers in Ammo (*right*) came from the 1965 Jean-Luc Godard film *Alphaville*, in which spiral staircases are a reoccurring theme. “We watched the film together as a studio,” explains Wang. “It just so happened we were doing Ammo at the time.”

Last November she held a small film screening for friends in her courtyard. “The

whole idea really came about from my passion with film,” she recalls. “It has so much to do with interior design and what we do.” Wang and her team especially designed benches using bamboo poles and plumbing fixtures to serve as cinema seating for their event. Later, the benches were converted into shelves for the studio.

One of Wang’s latest projects, a penthouse in The Ritz-Carlton Residences in Singapore, is also deeply influenced by film. “It’s for a developer and we didn’t



have a specific client per se, so we made up our own: Tom Ford,” she says. “We love his aesthetic and the film he made, *A Single Man*.” Taking

inspiration from the movie, the penthouse interiors will feature elements such as smoky mirrors and textural menswear fabric.