

MOBILIA

ISSUE FOUR

THE ART OF DESIGN

FEBRUARY 2026

JORIS POGGIOLI CRAFTS DESIGNS WHERE CURIOSITY, EMOTION AND ART CO-EXIST • A CENTURY OF LESSONS: THE CHAIR AS A MODERNIST BIOGRAPHY • PIETRO TERZINI ON THE FUTURE OF LUXURY—CREATING NEW WORLDS SHAPED BY INNOVATION AND HUMAN CONNECTION • CASSINA RELAUNCHES A VICO MAGISTRETTI MASTERPIECE • AN EDITORIAL COLLABORATION AT MOBILIA'S SYDNEY SHOWROOM • LINDE FREYA TANGELDER BUILDS LAYERS OF MEANING • A BRIEF HISTORY OF ICONIC DINING CHAIRS • PLUS: TWO DESIGN STUDIOS USING THEIR SPACES AS PLATFORMS FOR COMMUNITY EXCHANGE



Open Door for Community Exchange

INSIGHT
BRONWYN MARSHALL



Flack Studio. Photography: Anson Smart.

A quiet shift is emerging among Australian design practices. From cultural events to mentoring and wellness initiatives, architecture firms are transforming their studios into cultural spaces of connection—ones defined not just by design provocations, but by generosity, care and collective learning. Two practices leading the way are Flack Studio and Studio Gram, who show how, through community exchange, the architecture of the designed workspace can itself take on a new role—both as a private and creative commercial place of business, and one of civic value.

Designing for Generosity

In an industry defined by innovation and ideas, many of the most progressive architecture and design practices have realised that leadership extends beyond the studio—into education, wellbeing, and through genuine contribution to culture. “I never wanted to be a studio that felt exclusive or unattainable. Creativity is about knowledge and exchange—passions should be shared, and we want to extend that offering beyond the studio walls,” describes David Flack, founder and director of Flack Studio.

For Flack Studio, this ethos takes tangible form in their Open Library initiative—a bi-monthly event series where designers, students and curious minds gather among more than 2,000 books spanning architecture, art, religion and Japanese design rarities. “Books are democratic—everyone can own one,” says Flack, who began the series in 2019 with the late Mark Robinson (a co-founder of the practice). “If I can give someone five minutes, offer advice or inspire them—that is special—and sharing knowledge sits at the foundation of that exchange.”

From a series of informal talks from designers and artists, the evenings cultivate a shared openness—a deliberate antidote to gatekeeping. What began as a few shelves has evolved into a cornerstone of Melbourne’s design community: part salon, part study, part sanctuary for shared curiosity. “We feel it’s a privilege to have access to so many varied publications. When we started the Open Library in 2019, it was about recognising that having such a collection is an opportunity—and wanting to share it. Opening it up has created a real sense of dialogue and community between everyone who attends, and that’s been beautiful to witness,” Flack adds.

A Circular Culture of Sharing

The idea is simple: every two months, Flack Studio hosts an evening where the doors are open to anyone—students,

designers, or simply the curious. Guests are invited to bring a book that has shaped their creative process, sparking informal conversations that flow across disciplines. “It’s really just about books, and the conversation goes wherever it needs to,” adds Flack. “People meet, they talk, they share ideas. It’s all very organic.”

Flack describes the studio as “a web that is always gathering.” This sense of inclusivity is deeply tied to Robinson’s background. “Mark grew up homeless and poor,” Flack reflects. “He was the instigator. It’s about honouring that and keeping the space open.” Visitors to the Open Library often find more than just books—they discover a lived-in studio that blurs the line between workspace, gallery, and gathering place. “Our studio isn’t static,” Flack explains. “People walk through, look at the art, our finishes library, our materials. Every part of it is connected.”

Informed by Making

Flack’s philosophy—of learning through doing—echoes through the practice’s work. “We create better work when we’re looking at books,” he says. “In a digital world, our algorithms feed us the same content. But opening a book changes that—it slows you down, connects you to material, and reminds you that design is tactile.”

That physical, crafted engagement resonates with Studio Gram director Dave Bickmore, whose Adelaide-based practice has similarly sought to expand what it means to lead and work within a studio space of their own. “When we moved into our new space, we wanted it to mimic the hospitality work we do,” he says. “Spaces that transition—from work to kitchen to gathering—spaces that can hold people.”

Studio Gram’s In-Residence program—inspired in part by Flack Studio’s openness, and the refreshing approach it offered the design community—invites students and emerging designers to work within the studio environment. “It’s a way to give back,” says Bickmore. “Students get to see how a practice operates day-to-day—joining resourcing meetings, going on site, being part of the everyday culture. It gives them a real understanding of what life after university looks like.”

Studio as Cultural Space

Studio Gram’s In-Residence Program opens the studio specifically to students studying architecture and interior design, offering not just a desk but an immersion—anywhere from attending meetings, seeing designs come



Open Library at Flack Studio is a bi-monthly event series where designers, students and curious minds gather among more than 2,000 books spanning architecture, art, religion and Japanese design rarities. Photography: Katy Roubin.

to life in person, or partaking in team wellness rituals. “As we couldn’t give students real project work,” says Bickmore, “we could however give them visibility, and access to our process and our culture. It helps give a broader ranging understanding of each of the elements that comprise practice.”

The firm’s new space (once a motor repair shop) has also been designed to mirror Studio Gram’s hospitality projects: fluid, communal, and with a clear openness to the streetscape. The resulting interface blurs the line between workplace and venue—instead highlighting the studio as a place for conversation, collaboration, and community. “Traditionally, architecture firms (and the physical studios themselves) are closed-door and quite unapproachable. We wanted transparency—to show that what we say and do, we actually do, and for our space to reflect that ethos,” adds Bickmore.

Wellness as Collective Practice

After Bickmore’s co-founder, Graham Charbonneau experienced a pivotal moment with his personal health, the partnership collectively shifted their perspective toward a more wellness-led way of living and working. From this reflection came Groundwork—a monthly ritual where the team steps away from desk-bound deadlines to prioritise physical and mental health through breathwork, movement and hot-cold therapy. “It’s about stepping away from the stress,” says Bickmore. “We realised we perform better when we care for ourselves (mentally and physically), and that shift has changed the way we design and the way we show up.”

“We’ve taken almost an athlete’s approach—looking after everything before the big game,” he reflects. “It has shifted our culture in a really positive way, while also bringing us together and overlaying clarity.” This quiet recalibration—valuing health, vulnerability and mutual care—stands in stark contrast to the ‘burnout’ archetype long embedded within studio life. For a younger generation of practitioners, wellness has become not a luxury, but a professional responsibility, and through reflection, Studio Gram have wanted to evolve their own approach accordingly.

A Shared Ethos of Care

Both Flack Studio and Studio Gram demonstrate that generosity and design innovation remain not as separate pursuits, but parallel ones.

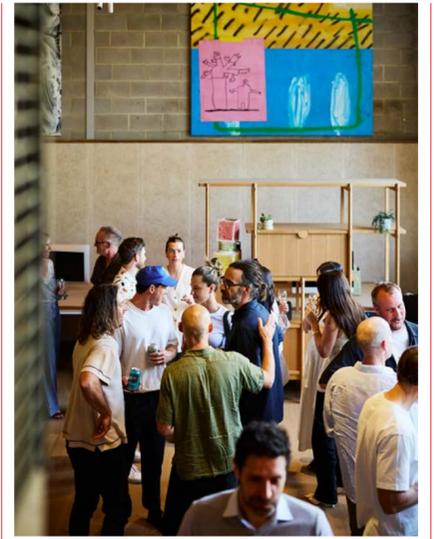


Studio Gram’s Brompton office. Photography: Timothy Kaye.

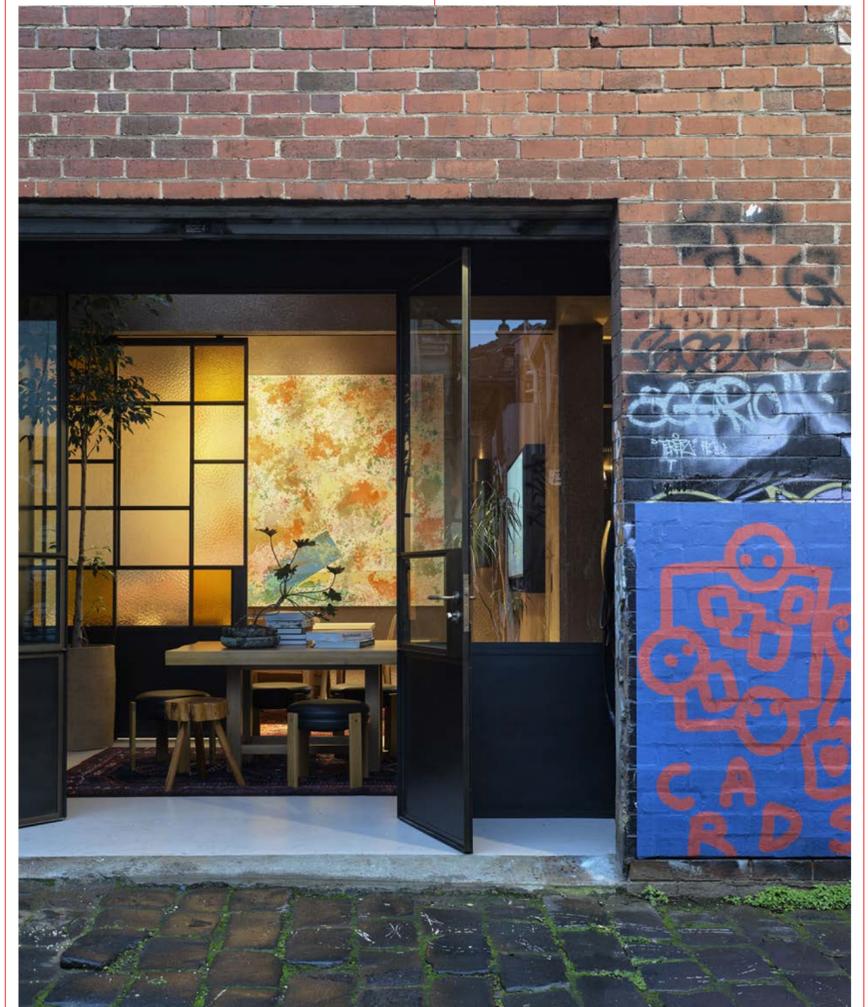
“The next 10 years isn’t about me,” Flack says. “It’s about the people here. Opening our studio is about giving them a platform too,” while also destigmatising the unapproachable-nature of design within the community.

With shifts in many of the hospitality projects that Studio Gram are designing also reflecting a broader cultural shift, “It’s the same principle in our own physical space,” describes Bickmore, “Hotels and restaurants are moving away from being places to party, and have become more about nourishment and rest.” He adds, “We wanted to create spaces that both support growth and nourishment, while also holding people gently.”

The outward-facing nature of both studio’s initiatives—one through literature and dialogue, the other through mentorship and wellbeing—expands the definition of what it means to be a design practice today. It is an architecture not only of form, but of culture and connection. “At its most meaningful, architecture and design builds community well beyond physical walls and buildings,” says Flack, “and here, by opening our door and our resources, we want to share a love of wonder and imagination, while also creating opportunities for connection.”



10th Birthday celebrations at Studio Gram. Photography: Andre Castellucci.



Flack Studio. Photography: Anson Smart.