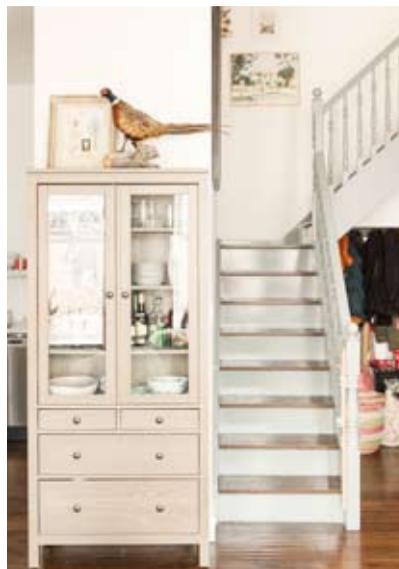




**Loft apartment conversion**  
Brooklyn Heights,  
New York



PHOTOGRAPHER: DUSTIN AKSLAND



### Why she's different

**Cross-discipline:** Having designed offices, retail spaces and a range of domestic interiors, Roberts' rich experience provides an understanding of the complex range of challenges home projects can present.

**Willingness to listen:** An opinionated diva she is not; understanding what clients are after is key.

**Unique point of view:** Roberts enlivens spaces with idiosyncrasies such as a salvaged table with vintage, mismatched chairs.

**Unfussy but warm:** There's a sense of order in her designs, natural surfaces and warm colours imbue life.

**Historic approach:** Having studied historic preservation at Columbia University, Roberts has an appreciation for original detail while making the necessary updates.



**DD**

Residential  
Interiors

## Five studios Global

### Preface

If you're going to employ someone to invade your living space for months and reconfigure your home, you really need to trust the person you call. Here are five design studios, from New York to Sydney, who know how to make your interior a thing of beauty.

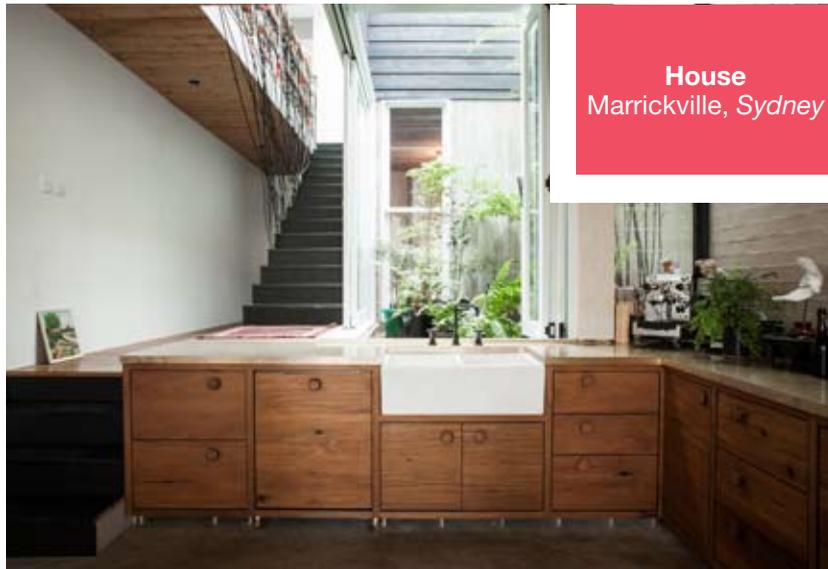
**1**

**Elizabeth Roberts**  
New York

We've long heard about the benefits of working from home and while it might not be right for all, it seems perfect for New York-based designer Elizabeth Roberts. Her office, in her recently renovated 19th century Italianate Brooklyn townhouse, provides the perfect advertisement for her work. Roberts studied historic preservation at Columbia University before establishing her design practice in 1998. She has become an expert in breathing life into residential projects, be it a loft in a former wax factory in Manhattan's West Village or a Brooklyn brownstone.

"One of the first things I try to do is understand a client's taste," she says. "Do they enjoy an eclectic home or one that's neat all the time?" She examines how clients live in their spaces, determining which rooms and even which seats seem to be favourites. "If a budget is tight, it's important to focus on one key feature and let the rest of space be a bit more quiet," she says. — BA

[elizabethroberts.com](http://elizabethroberts.com)



House  
Marrickville, Sydney

2  
Smith and Carmody  
Sydney

At this small design practice in Sydney, principal Cameron Krone (pictured below, on right) and a group of craftsmen work together to create residential and commercial spaces and objects that are contemporary, yet pay homage to each site's heritage. "People often comment that the spaces we have designed look like they have been around for a while and that it's hard to pick what is original and what is new," says Krone.

Established in 2011, the firm's first commission was to design a café. Corner-smith, in Sydney's Marrickville, was later awarded *The Sydney Morning Herald Café Guide* award for Best Local Café, in part for its sensitive design. The practice has since completed several hospitality projects including Sydney's Brickfields and Excelsior Jones cafés, in collaboration with artisans including carpenter and furniture maker Jonathan West of Tindall (pictured with Krone).

Krone also collaborated in designing West's home. "It was really about creating a working dialogue; Jonathan built everything himself so we were able to sketch and discuss the details as the building evolved, which is a really effective and fun way to work." — CR [smithandcarmody.com.au](http://smithandcarmody.com.au)



Why they're different

**Local expertise:** Krone handpicks traditional craftspeople appropriate for each job.

**Tailored to fit:** Smith and Carmody design bespoke handmade objects and furniture that are unique to a space and that will last a lifetime

**Practical background:** Krone also worked as a theatrical props bulider, so he has an acute understanding and appreciation of handcrafting.

**Knowing the limits:** The firm's experience with commercial spaces has ensured that it has become well practiced in dealing with small spaces and unique limitations.

**Old and new:** Their ability to retain heritage characteristics yet execute natural, contemporary spaces.



PHOTOGRAPHER: MICHAEL WEBB

Garden cabin  
Hampstead, London



IMAGES: DEBI TRELOAR, COURTESY OF RYLAND PETERS & SMALL

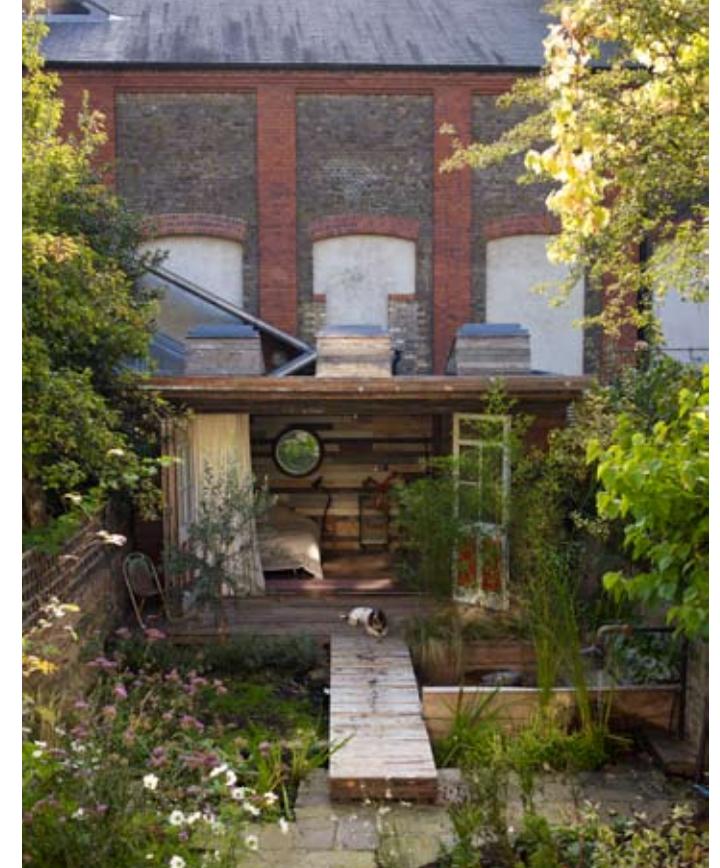


Why they're different

**Personal touches:** Retrouvius' approach to each project is extremely personal, resulting in uniquely designed interiors. "We tend to overindulge our customers," says Maria Speake.

**Sustainability:** Using salvaged materials not only brings personality to your home, but it's also an environmentally sensitive choice.

**Speedy service:** Whether it's a Barbican flat or secluded garden cabin, the practice is accustomed to delivering in very tight deadlines. Some projects have been executed in only two months.



3  
Retrouvius  
London

"Having a clear idea of the household dynamics is crucial when redesigning someone's home," says Maria Speake, co-founder (with Adam Hills) of architectural salvage and design practice Retrouvius. "Reconfiguring a house is a very intimate process. After all, you are invading someone's space."

Speake and Hills started Retrouvius in Glasgow in the early 1990s. Today, from a warehouse in London, it combines reclamation and interior design. Taking on mainly residential projects in the capital and beyond, Retrouvius has private clients from all walks of life. An example is the garden cabin the studio refurbished about two years ago. Located off a busy intersection, the space was redesigned entirely with salvaged materials, resulting in a warm, isolated retreat. "Designing a home with reclaimed materials forces you to be more creative — as you get to use the same materials in different context," says James Stevens (pictured, with Speake), the project's architect. — NG [retrouvius.com](http://retrouvius.com)



PHOTOGRAPHY: JESSICA LONG



**4 Hiroshi Seki**  
Tokyo

Hiroshi Seki (pictured) has worked on plenty of top-drawer interiors but has also transformed shoebox spaces. “The most important things are good materials, lighting and proportions,” he says. Seki’s contact book is invaluable. Whether you’re after a custom-made acrylic console or the perfect brass hook, he knows where to get it.

One of Seki’s most detailed projects to date is Indigo House (pictured), a family home in Tokyo. There he worked in collaboration with the architect Shinichi Ogawa. “The whole concept started with a landscape photograph the clients wanted to place in the living room,” Seki had free rein to call on some first-rate craftsmen including Mihoya Glass, who made the dining table and an artisan in Takaoka who created panels of oxidised copper that are installed along a wall.

Seki puts his feel for natural materials down to a childhood in rural Izu. “I like stone, wood and Japanese plaster – they all last a long time,” he says. — FW [sekidesignstudio.jp](http://sekidesignstudio.jp)

**Why he’s different**

**Experience:** After 28 years in the business, Seki is in demand for retail, restaurant and commercial projects. He applies lessons learnt from those commissions to his residential work.

**It’s not about expense:** His portfolio shows he can work his magic even with a low budget.

**A feel for what’s real:** Seki has an innate feel for natural materials and picks the right one for the project, whether it’s Japanese sugi or American walnut.

**He’s open-minded:** “I don’t say, ‘I only do this’ or ‘I never do that’. I try to put the client’s taste through my filter and give them something beyond their original proposal.”

**His address book:** He can find just the person to create a one-off artwork, a traditional finish or custom-made furniture.

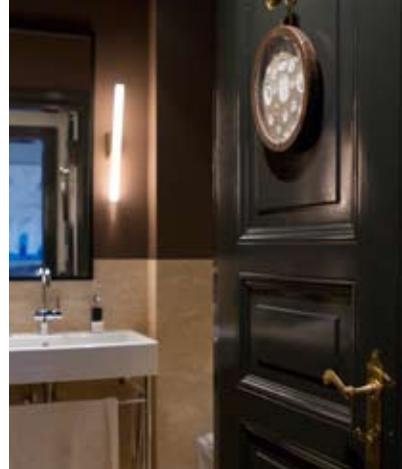
**His composed approach:** One thing that links Seki’s work is a sense of calm. “Your house should be somewhere you can find peace and serenity.”



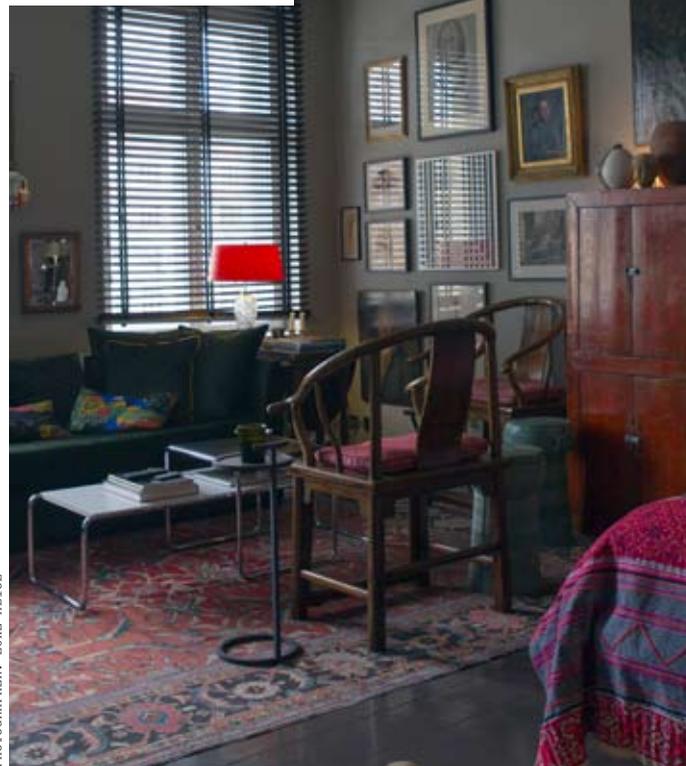
**Indigo House**  
Nishi Azabu, Tokyo



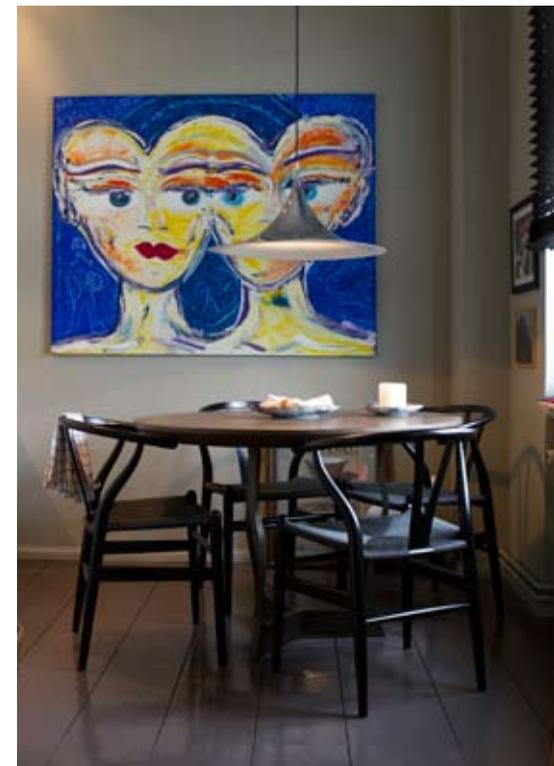
PHOTOGRAPHER: TOMOYASU MASUDA



**Remodelled apartment**  
Maybachufer, Berlin



PHOTOGRAPHER: LUKE ABIOL



**5 Gisbert Pöppler**  
Berlin

It’s rare to find an architecture studio that does interior design, lighting, furnishing and materials as well as it builds. But Berlin-based Gisbert Pöppler (pictured, on the right) and his team are true multitaskers. Under his belt are a gallerist’s apartment, a listed unit in a Walter Gropius building, a design museum, even a car wash. What stays consistent (and what clients have dubbed the “Pöppler Effect”) is spatial clarity and impeccable aesthetic quality.

In a tiny flat on Berlin’s Maybachufer, Pöppler and colleague Xavier Busch (pictured, on the left) redesigned the layout to maximise space. After removing a hallway and a wall, they added elements like door mouldings to the newly open spaces. Subdued yet unusual colour on walls and floors create a backdrop for the pieces of owner Georg Dunekamp, a furniture dealer. “In this case, Georg did the furnishings and art himself,” says Pöppler, who says he is careful not to impose a signature style. — KB [gisbertpoeppler.com](http://gisbertpoeppler.com)

**Why they’re different**

**Big thinking:** In his early career (Berlin’s late-1990s internet boom), Pöppler focused on creating office spaces so has a strong sense of harmonising the big picture.

**Clear guidance:** Clients primarily come by word of mouth. Each project gets its own manager chosen from Pöppler’s team of five.

**A flexible approach:** The studio is multidisciplinary and thus flexible. Some projects focus on architectural modifications, others on interior design.

**They stick to budgets:** Not everything has to be expensive. A little style can go a long way.

**They deliver the goods:** According to Georg Dunekamp, Pöppler is intuitive, trustworthy, on budget and on time: “We had the apartment in Berlin done in three months, with only two phone calls.”

**They’re fun to work with:** Best of all, the team is light-hearted. “We don’t take ourselves too seriously,” says Pöppler.