

Lighting the Way

UNITED BY A PASSION FOR THE FUTURE, THESE YOUNG FEMALE CREATIVES ARE CHARTERING SPECTACULAR NEW PATHWAYS IN THE WORLDS OF DESIGN, ART AND ARCHITECTURE.

WRITTEN BY MALE PINGEL



Christie Ward and Staver Gray of Ward + Gray stand in front of their new rug collection.

PHOTO: MANUEL RODRIGUEZ, MANUFOTO.

SIDE-BY-SIDE

Christie Ward and Staver Gray founded their Manhattan-based interior design firm, Ward + Gray, in 2020, and have been buzzing ever since. The duo, who met at Parsons School of Design, take a research-driven approach to design, especially their hospitality projects. A distinct, singular aesthetic has garnered them national and international clientele, as well as a dazzling new product line.

Hyper-local: Identifying the four pillars, or themes, of a project is where we begin. From there we research the buildings and locations so that each one has a clear sense of place and history. **Case studies:** A Florida hotel designed by a female architect is currently in progress and reading about her work has really influenced our vision. As for Wildflower Farms, an Auberge Resorts Collection property we recently completed in Upstate New York, we wanted to make something detailed and funky. You can also see a lot of Arts and Crafts references, which has a foothold up there. **Homey spaces:** Hotels are a big focus for us, but we look to give them a residential feel: collected, contextual and authentic. Hospitality experiences are temporal, so you want it to feel super immersive, a little bold, or even shocking. **DIY:** We put so much love and energy into creating custom rug designs that it was sad to see them installed and never used again. Hence, our new line was born! We hope to have smaller furnishings and lighting follow soon. **wardandgray.com**



ARTFUL IDEAS

In 2019, Abby Bangser, former Artistic Director of Frieze for the Americas and Asia, launched Object & Thing, a roving exhibition concept where site-specific installations are held at historically significant homes across the country. By curating each event with hand-picked pieces, she created a new gallery model where the physical encounter is critical.

Origin story: Our first exhibition was at architect Eliot Noyes’s home in New Canaan, Connecticut. His family keeps the residence as a time capsule of sorts and I thought a show with contemporary art and design would introduce the house to a new audience. We were appointment only and had a waitlist of more than a thousand people. When we closed, everyone said, ‘Where’s the next one?’ **House party:** Historic artists’ and architects’ homes already have a creative presence. When we add thoughtfully considered contemporary pieces, a dialogue between past and present is created. **Giving back:** We’ve partnered with nonprofits and given them a percentage of our sales so that the exhibition doubles as a fundraiser. **Shop talk:** The forthcoming permanent home of Object & Thing will be at a historic destination and represent multiple artists—including Johnny Ortiz-Concha and Frances Palmer—as a traditional gallery would. We will be able to display their work with greater frequency. **object-thing.com**



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GOLDEN STATE OF MIND

Nature and place are the guiding forces behind the work of Rachel Bullock and Molly Purnell, partners at the Los Angeles design firm Laun. Bullock, an architect, and Purnell, a designer, not only have a successful furniture line (expect new materials and colors in the near future) but they also have several home renovations and new builds underway in the L.A. area and beyond.

Eyes open: We love the built environment in Los Angeles—it’s liberating and fun—but we’re also influenced by art, fashion and photography. We think about form and color in all aspects. You can’t get stuck in a feedback loop of contemporary architecture. **Guilty pleasure:** Collecting vintage architecture books for our office library! It’s important to look at a wide array of references for every project. For a new build in Vermont, the client recommended *Big House, Little House, Back House, Barn* to learn more about New England’s heritage. **Artful touches:** Connecting clients with local artists to create custom elements is important. We recently commissioned a beautiful shower tile mural by artist Sara Bright for a project in Los Angeles’ Silver Lake neighborhood. **State of affairs:** People aren’t as interested in the idea of “starchitects” anymore. Today, it’s about real people and real budgets. In the past, spaces were often built in service to the vision, not to the user. **launlosangeles.com**

