

name to know

Duelle

This female-led interior-design studio, based in London and Milan, brings a high-end yet low-key look. Here, we chat with founders Melanie Liaw and Micaela Nardella

Toronto-born Liaw and Italian Nardella founded their studio, Duelle, in 2020, to fuse together their unique, international outlook and client-focused approach to design. With over two decades of interiors experience between them, the pair focus on creating richly layered spaces that unite the artistic and the architectural.

How did you decide to found Duelle? We met while we were both working for the same design agency in London and collaborated closely on a number of projects, one of which was the new Alex Lake Zürich hotel. We designed it together, from the joinery, restaurant, bar, rooms and finishing touches. We were both living in Dalston at the time, so we'd travel into work together and it felt very natural. That whole experience cemented us as not just design partners but friends. Micaela decided to move to Milan, where she was born and raised, and we came up with the idea to join forces and expand dynamically across Europe. We were already working on international projects, so it felt like the next step.

What's the studio's ethos? 'Duelle' is borrowed from the moody, 1976 French arthouse film of the same name. We looked for something that referenced our duality, but would also remind people of characterful interiors. Micaela is great friends with a film curator, who suggested it to us – it felt like a perfect fit, and we've really made it our own. For us, archival interiors, the processes of fine artists and design movements from



'For us, archival interiors and design movements from the past are always influences'

From top Micaela Nardella [left] and Melanie Liaw; a Duelle-designed apartment in London; Benk&Bo workspace; the A Gallo Colors boutique in Assisi

the past are always influences, but the translation of them is very important. Context is everything and we are always client and site specific. We need to be responsive to what the project needs.

Can you tell us about your favourite projects so far? We're so proud of the boutique we designed for A Gallo Colors, a luxury Italian watercolours brand in Assisi. It was a serendipitous match: I [Melanie] have a background in art and with Micaela based in Italy, we immediately said yes. We used all our connections so well. We're working on some residential projects that we love, including a house in Walthamstow, London, which uses a lot of clay wash paint and natural, easy colours, which are typical of our aesthetic. **What's next for you?** We're in the process of finishing a converted Victorian home in Balham, for which we're currently sourcing art. Meanwhile, we're continuing to work with A Gallo Colors, this time on designing an heirloom box collection. After that, we're renovating an art studio in Rome. *duelle.studio*

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