



From the ashes

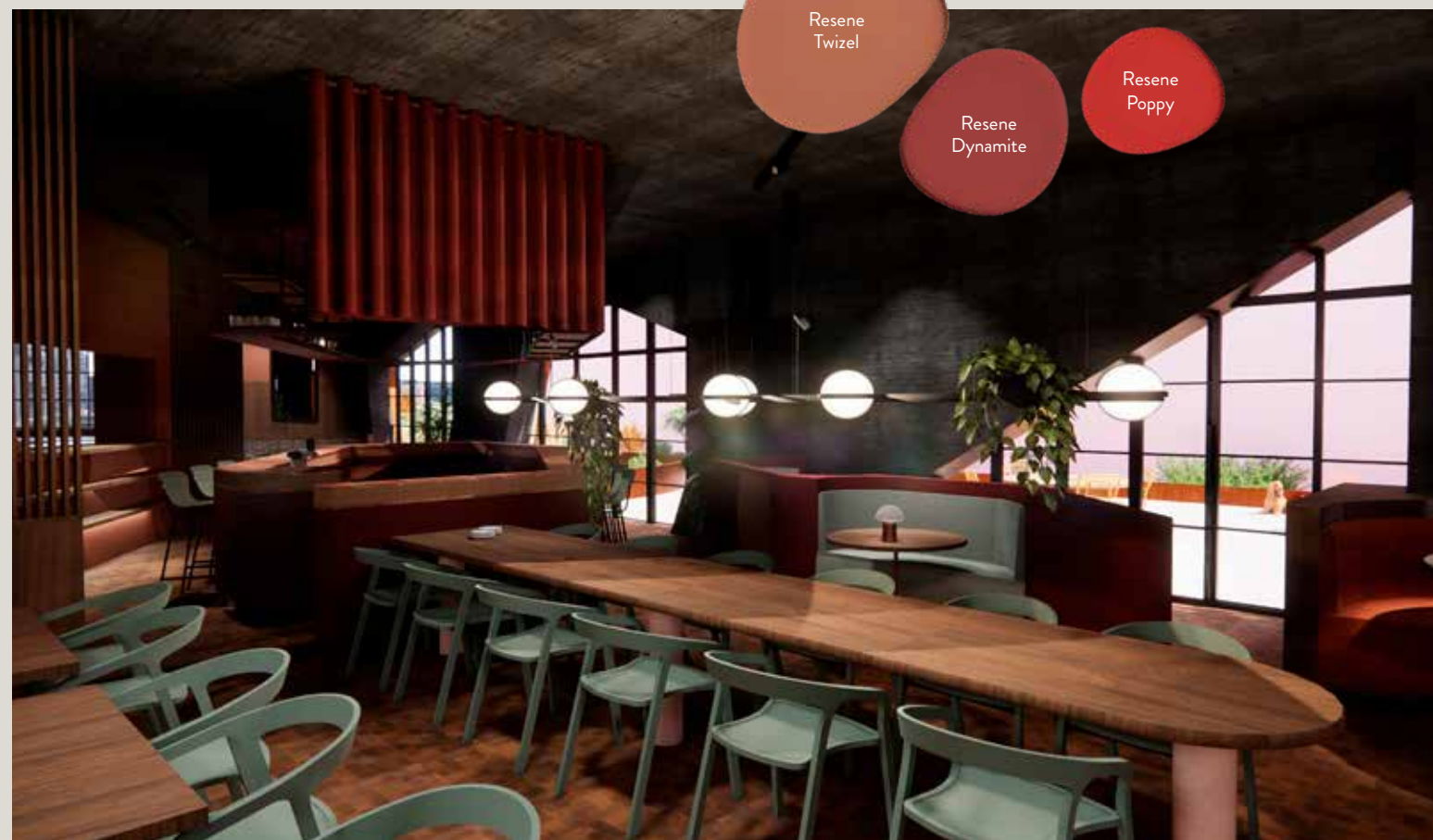
Ellie Brunning designs a restaurant concept inspired by the resiliency of fire-ravaged landscapes.

It's rare to find a designer or artist who doesn't cite nature as an inspiration in their work. From blazing sunsets and mighty mountains to cascading waterfalls and crashing ocean waves, the colours, shapes, textures and materials that nature offers are as diverse as they are beautiful. But in the face of a changing climate, we are also bearing witness to nature's more destructive forces with increasing frequency. When we are exposed to the devastating effects of disasters like bushfires, it's common to feel a variety of complex emotions – including awe and reverence for nature's extraordinary power, adaptability and resiliency. For at least one designer, this in and of itself has been a key source of inspiration.

Ellie Brunning grew up in Coffs Harbour, a town halfway between Sydney and Brisbane. "For as long as I can remember, I've always drawn house plans," she recalls. "I loved drawing as a kid and I can remember always wanting to change my furniture in my room around – which I'm sure drove my parents nuts – so I would have a new aspect I wanted to design."

Through these frequent edits and tweaks to her décor, mum and dad clearly recognised her prowess and potential. Since both of them are in the education field, Ellie says they always drove home the notion that, in order to succeed, she needed to work hard and excel at school – which would hopefully lead her to pursue a career in architecture. Ultimately, it did.

below and right: The concept for Ellie's Up The Ante restaurant was based on real-life chef Normie Bero's resiliency through her career as a woman in a male-dominated industry and her focus on native ingredients. Ellie says she specified Resene Lustacryl semi-gloss waterborne enamel for the chairs, joinery and mirror frames throughout her design for the robustness and sheen level of the product's finish to stand up to the heavy wear that restaurant furnishings are subjected to. On the painted walls, she selected Resene Zylone Sheen Zero – which she was drawn to because the formula contains no added VOCs without sacrificing durability. For increased visual texture, she decided to also add a concrete-like paint effect using Resene FX Paint Effects Medium. Accent walls in Resene Twizel with Resene FX Paint Effects Medium mixed with Resene Dynamite applied on top, chairs in Resene Blue Smoke and joinery and plant pots in Resene Poppy.



Resene
Twizel

Resene
Dynamite

Resene
Poppy

Resene
Triple Sea Fog

Resene
Blue Smoke



above: Colours pulled from the Australian landscape, like rich earthy reds, ochre and a gumtree blue-green inspired Ellie's colour palette. General walls specified throughout in Resene Zylone Sheen Zero tinted to Resene Twizel with Resene FX Paint Effects Medium mixed with Resene Dynamite applied on top, halls and bathrooms in Resene Zylone Sheen Zero tinted to Resene Scorched Clay with Resene FX Paint Effects Medium mixed with Resene Dynamite applied on top, mirrors and chairs in Resene Lustacryl semi-gloss waterborne enamel tinted to Resene Blue Smoke and joinery and other chairs in Resene Lustacryl tinted to Resene Poppy.



Ellie first received her Bachelor of Design in Architecture from the University of Sydney before completing an Interior Design Diploma at Sydney Design School. While completing both programmes offers plenty of benefits to her prospective clients, it also offered Ellie a better understanding of herself. "I think when I studied architecture, I really would have loved to study interior architecture – but the option didn't exist then. I always liked the interior details more than the external ones. After spending time in the industry, I knew I wanted to go back and pursue more of the interior side. When I started studying interiors, I realised just how different the two disciplines are. Architecture is more linear and structural whereas interiors are very playful, colourful and textural. It took a while to break down my linear and rigid ways and incorporate them into something more fun," she explains.

As part of her course work at Sydney Design School, Ellie was tasked with creating a conceptual restaurant in Marrickville on a site currently occupied by a defunct warehouse. She was assigned a real person to be the client for her concept: Nornie Bero, a renowned chef and indigenous Torre Strait Islander who champions both women and native ingredients.

Ellie chose resiliency as the inspiration for her design, material choices and colour palette. "After taking an in-depth look at Nornie, I realised she's had to overcome so much through both her personal and professional life but that she kept soldiering on and bouncing back. That to me was resiliency, which I then needed to translate into a design and palette," she says. "I kept thinking

about nature and a recent trip I took around Australia where I noticed just how resilient our landscape is. What cropped up for me was the aftermath of Kangaroo Island's bushfires and how half the island was decimated by flames two years prior to my visit. But while we were there, we kept seeing these new green shoots popping through. I think a lot of people underestimate how beautiful our landscape is in its resilience – and it became the primary influence for my palette."

Amidst Kangaroo Island's blackened landscape, Ellie saw new sage greens sprouting up and bits of red clay – inspiring a palette of deep reds, ochre and blue-green set against the char from the bushfires. She envisaged the exterior of the project as the shell of a tree with cracks in the bark making way for the greens and reds to show through. This dictated the colour and material choices internally, where rich and earthy red and terracotta hues Resene Twizel, Resene Scorched Clay, Resene Dynamite and Resene Poppy along with a gumtree-inspired green blue, Resene Blue Smoke, were chosen to reflect the native ingredients of Nornie's cooking as well as the resiliency of the Australian landscape.

During her research, Ellie also came across an image of ants working together to create a raft. "Ants are these tiny creatures which manage to create something larger than the sum of their parts, so I sketched that a number of times, broke it down, and this became the basis for my plan and the shell of my building," she explains.

Ellie visited a Resene ColorShop at the start of the project and was given fandecks and an understanding



above and right: Ellie wanted ample texture within her design, so she specified Resene Zylone Sheen Zero tinted to Resene Scorched Clay with Resene FX Paint Effects Medium mixed with Resene Dynamite applied on top for walls throughout the restaurant, including the bathrooms, to give these surfaces a subtly mottled look. Mirror frame specified in Resene Lustacryl semi-gloss waterborne enamel tinted to Resene Blue Smoke and dining chairs and joinery in Resene Poppy.

Resene Triple Sea Fog

of the service, paint types and colour tools that Resene provides – but it was the free online Resene Colour Palette Generator (www.resene.com/palettegenerator) that has so far been her favourite tool to use. “That really sold me, and I think that really helped me to develop what I was after. I also really like the family-owned aspect of Resene as well as the service they provide. The staff at Woollahra were amazing.”

Since graduating, Ellie has spent time both working for others and as a self-employed consultant – which she says has helped her to discover and understand her design process and working style. “I think for each of these experiences they reflected who I was as a person and a designer and what I needed both professionally and personally. I think, for a designer, collaboration is key – and I love bouncing ideas off other people. Another person may have worked on a project similar to yours and have learnt valuable lessons, but if you only work solo, you may not get the benefit of those insights.”

Currently, Ellie works as a Junior Designer for Alexander & Co and she says both the team and

the projects there have helped her to gain valuable experience. “I don’t think a day has passed where I haven’t learnt something new, which is exciting. We get to work with amazing clients across a range of different styles.”

In the future, she hopes to work on more hospitality projects. “At the moment, I’m working on residential projects – which is where my previous experience lies. But I love the holistic approach to hospitality design in that it incorporates brand, functionality and design.”

Ellie says her favourite part of creating her Up The Ante project was building the colour scheme. “I loved bringing that palette to life. Most of my friends joke that I am a desert palette through and through.”

The Resene colours she used for the project continue to influence her current design work, too. “I’m really

into burnt oranges and reds at the moment. The colours I’m loving are Resene Tuscany, Resene Scorched Clay, Resene Hairy Heath and, to throw it off, Resene Spindle and Resene Triple Sea Fog. I’d love to see these used in a funky lounge room or waiting area,” she says.

With her keen eye for colour and combined understanding of both architecture and interior design, we can’t wait to see where Ellie’s career takes her. **BW**

To see more of Ellie’s work, check out her Instagram feed at www.instagram.com/theinteriorstandard.

