

Interior design studio CTRL Space is on a mission to make good design commonplace. Operating across two countries, with offices in Auckland and Brisbane, the award-winning 10-person practice is well positioned to shift the status of hospitality design.

Founder and New Zealand Director Chris Stevens is originally from the UK, while Brisbane-born Jessica White heads up the Australian office. CTRL Space was established in 2009, “in the midst of the GFC! By all accounts, a good time to start a business,” laughs Chris. The challenging market taught him lessons of resilience and buoyancy, setting a solid foundation for the practice. Since its formation, the studio has designed a multitude of highly recognisable hospitality fit-outs, including Lilian and Hotel Ponsonby in New Zealand’s

capital and Paper Crane at the Riley Hotel in Cairns, Queensland.

CTRL Space opened its Brisbane outpost at the beginning of 2018. “Working across both landscapes, you get the best ideas, products and materials from each country,” Jessica explains. “The quality of produce and the high standard of general hospitality service across both countries is perhaps some of the best experiences in the world.” The slight differences that exist – for example, Australia’s love of clubs and pubs is less common across the ditch – provide CTRL Space with a fertile ground of inspiration. “There is definitely a shared aesthetic between the two regions but also a nice individuality; it feels very complementary,” Chris observes.



Salt Meats Cheese is invigorated with botanical tones and a light, airy atmosphere.



Mission Control—

CTRL Space

Words by Jessica Bellef • Photography by Cathy Schusler and Sarah Grace



Picnicka mixes vintage aesthetics with a contemporary functionality, resulting in an immersive and distinct dining experience.

CTRL Space works collaboratively with clients, viewing each site and brief as a unique opportunity to explore new and unexpected directions. “Clients often determine the enjoyment facet of a project,” Chris says. “Picnicka, which opened in early 2022, was a joy to work on. Design-led clients with an exacting eye for detail make for the very best results.” The restaurant and bar in Tauranga, on the northern tip of New Zealand’s North Island, recently won gold at The Designers Institute of New Zealand, The Best Design Awards and continues to impress the design community and adoring patrons. It brings an eclectic vintage aesthetic into a contemporary context, manifested by an immersive scheme of lush textures and handcrafted elements. Wicker, travertine terrazzo, recycled bricks, antiqued brass and charcoaled cedar combine to create beguiling vignettes and cosy nooks.

Mastery of materials aside, Picnicka’s carefully planned layout allows for seamless

all-day trading, from breakfast to last drinks. Jessica reports that optimised functionality is fundamental to the success of any hospitality project. “It needs to work to ensure the operational aspects of the space run smoothly. The comfort of the patron is equally important, and this includes all ergonomic and spatial considerations,” she says. This ethos defines the CTRL Space approach to every design. “Form follows function – in all instances!” Chris expresses.

Looking to the future, CTRL Space is excited about expanding its portfolio of workplace fit-outs and widening its reach across Australia. “We’ve just completed our first project with The Big Easy Group in Adelaide, called Bandit Pizza and Wine,” Jessica shares. “They are such a fun and interesting group of hospitality gurus, and we have projects in the pipeline with them for next year, which is a very exciting project for the city of Adelaide.” Watch this (CTRL) space.