



Work and life harmonize in surface artists Lisa Donohoe and Brynn Gelbard's Los Angeles home studio: The pair collaborated with tape artist Flekz on artwork (above), which resembles a warrior's breast plate. *Know Your Truth* (right) is part the couple's power symbol series, and a selection of objects (opposite) are a reminder to the artists to live as wildly and as authentically as possible.

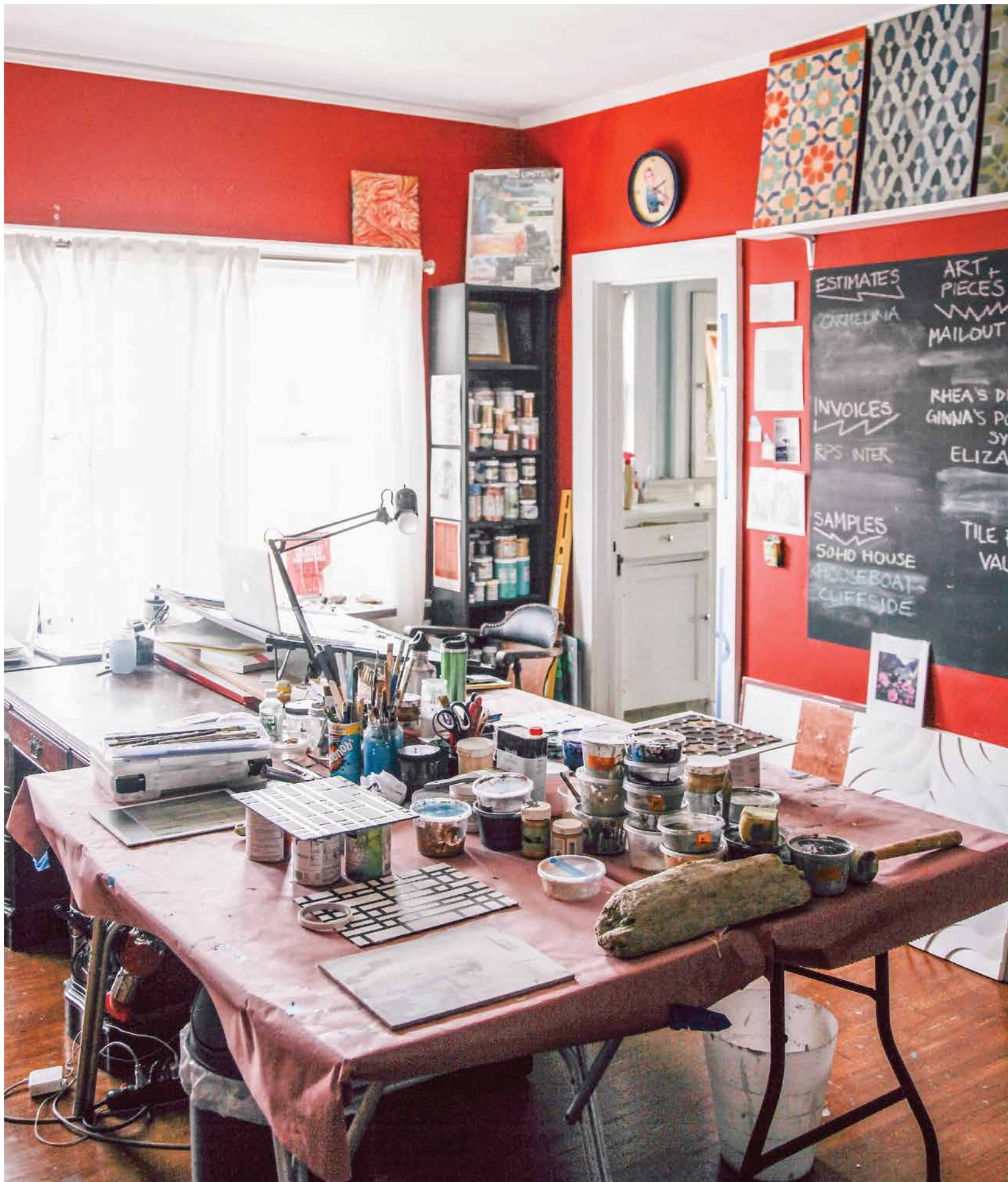


decorative Smarts

INSIDE THEIR JOYFUL HOME STUDIO, A PAIR OF LOS ANGELES ARTISTS TAKE THE PRACTICE OF SURFACE DESIGN TO ANOTHER DIMENSION.

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Donohoe (left, at right) and Gelbard (kneeling with their dog, Pickles, a Hurricane Katrina rescue) work out of a studio filled with the tools of their trade (opposite). Legendary art director Cedric Gibbons inspired the design for a headboard (below), which features 12-karat white-gold leaf and black gloss.



On any given day, Lisa Donohoe and Brynn Gelbard's dogs might be walking around with gilded noses. Such is the potential fate of anyone who stays with the artists behind Londubh Studio, a Los Angeles creative practice with a focus on surface design. "Our home sometimes looks like an ABBA video, which is not necessarily a bad thing," says Donohoe. Their work space is filled with dozens of surface samples—plaster, textured panels and tiles, as well as the metal leaf, metallic paints, precious gem dust and crystals that make up the tools of their trade—and, more often than not, work spills out into the dining room. "If we're painting, it's all over the place," says Gelbard. "All the dining room chairs will have stencils stacked on them." Jokes Donohoe, "We must have been magpies in our previous lives."

The studio is as much a site for inspiration as it is a lab for experimenting with how traditional materials, including Venetian plaster and metal leaf, can be used in contemporary projects. Donohoe, who has a background in interior design and art history, can spend days working out application kinks to avoid any potential pitfalls on site. Gelbard, on the other hand, learned her skills on the job but has a background in film, writing and social activism, which often sparks ideas of sheer possibility. "Our visions gracefully build upon one another," says Gelbard. "We kind of dare each other to be something exponentially greater than our individual voices."

Since launching their company in 2011, Donohoe and Gelbard have discovered that clients are willing to take risks—and this optimism gives their work incredible purpose. Take floor design, for instance. "It's cool to see



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that people are viewing this surface as another space to express themselves," says Gelbard. One of their first floor projects was done for a loft complex: three 14-by-18-foot stenciled rugs on concrete, using a semitransparent material to give it the illusion of nostalgic permanence. "It seems as though our clients are more willing to push the boundaries with color and pattern on their floors than on their walls," says Donohoe. "They see a painted rug as an art piece."

The duo have since tackled ever-more complex work, including a 40-by-8-foot painted-concrete rug inspired by Antoni Gaudí's Sagrada Família. It required meticulously transferring pattern upon pattern, as if the surface was a layered puzzle, mixing custom colors to match the surrounding fauna and inserting personal touches such as astrological signs and symbols to represent the client's family. "That project was the biggest gift because it allowed us to view ourselves as true artists rather than simply decorative finishers," says Gelbard.

Donohoe and Gelbard have a “we want to see what we can do” mentality that drives the creative spectrum of their portfolio. “It really comes down to people who are super excited about doing new things,” says Gelbard. Their shared love of collaboration extends to partnerships with fellow artists, designers and craftspeople. One such collaboration is with 21-year-old street artist Gustavo Fuentes, also known as Flëkz, whose chosen medium is tape, which he uses to create geometric designs. They met almost two years ago and have since finished a myriad of projects—Art Deco-inspired wall art, a prism-like painted patio rug, and a mod diving board design. “We are artists and extractionists,” says Donohoe. “Designers have an idea and a vision, and we basically extract that information and filter it through our creative process to create something where everyone’s voice is present.” ■