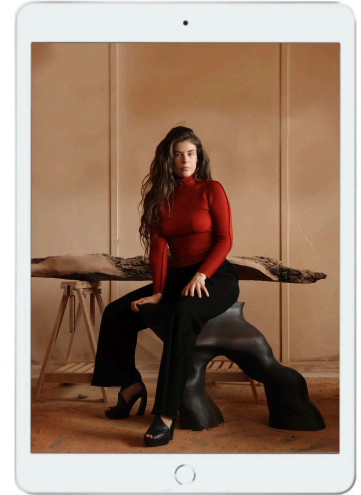


# OLIVE GILL-HILLE, - STYLE PROFILE

\_DILETTANTE\_, SEPTEMBER 21, 2021

Close your eyes, step inside Olive Gill-Hille's studio, and take a deep breath in. You are overwhelmed by the aromas of wood; dry, complex, and earthy. Open your eyes, and you discover a softly sunlit room, cast all in apricot tones by the thin veil of sawdust adorning every surface. You find the artist at a workbench, labouring to transform a raw mass of wood into one of her signature, softly undulating works of art.

This was precisely where Dilettante found Olive on the bright September morning we paid her a visit, eager to seize an opportunity to learn more about the young sculptor cum furniture designer in the lead-up to her new exhibition *TRUNK* at [Gallery Sally Dan-Cuthbert](#).



Olive wears [classic longline blazer](#) by Rick Owens and [flared blue-cut trousers](#) by Song for the Mute. Vintage Ann Demeulemeester heels.

**Dilettante:** Olive, thank you for having us! Many of the works around us are being prepared for your new solo exhibition in Sydney - can you share what has inspired you in making these works?

Olive: The exhibition is titled *TRUNK*, opening at Gallery Sally Dan-Cuthbert in October. It is comprised of a body of work made up of both functional art and sculpture that have been made exclusively from ethically sourced Western Australian timbers. I relocated from Melbourne almost three years ago because my Dad was getting very sick, the works in this exhibition are inspired by my time since returning home to WA and the natural landscapes and flora here. There are reflections on human bodies, my own body and there are themes of life and death.



Olive wears [tonal tie top](#) and [black-cut skirt](#) in honey satin by Rick Owens.

**What is it about working with timber that you find so compelling?**

I like almost everything about working with timber.

I like the warmth of timber - although it's physically hard, there's something soft and grounding about the material. When working with it I get a sense of the material's history, I feel connected to where it comes from. I like that timber has a narrative, it starts as a living thing situated in a specific place, goes through a death, and then as I work with it in my studio it begins another story, begins another life as an object - my object - before going on to have more stories somewhere else in someone's home.

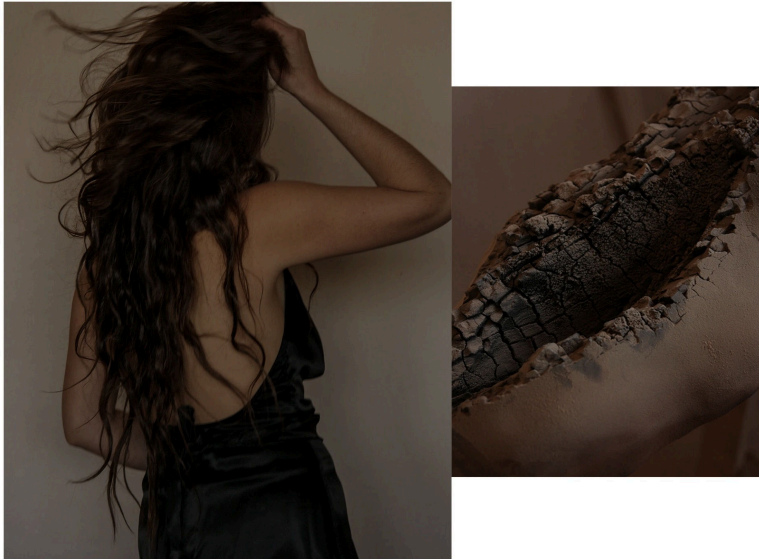
That process from sourcing the material in nature, bringing it to my studio and manipulating it from such an unruly state to where it ultimately becomes this polished art and design object is also very satisfying to me.



Olive wears [text wrap: top](#) and [bias cut skirt](#) in black satin, both by Rick Owens. [High patent boots](#) by Ann Demeulemeester.

**Conversely, what's most challenging about working with timber?**

As I mentioned before, timber comes from something alive. It comes from trees, and trees hold moisture and oxygen, and when a tree is felled it takes a lot of time to release this moisture, with every cut into the wood it can move or react to the temperature and humidity. I would say this sometimes unpredictable nature of timber is probably what's most challenging.



Olive wears the Rick Owens [top](#) in black satin.

**You must be constantly bringing home interesting pieces of wood that you find.**

Yes definitely, I'm always looking for unusual or striking pieces of timber. I've trained my partner, friends and family to do the same! So fortunately I'm often being gifted gnarly roots and salvaged bits of wood.

**How heavily does a piece of wood dictate a work's final form?**

This varies. With my functional works, the timber is laminated lengths for stability and to allow for more design - in these instances I have a lot more control and the timber plays a smaller role in the final form. In the sculptural works, the natural grain and shapes of the wood are intuitively carved and sometimes only minimally manipulated so the final artwork might be very influenced by the wood.



Olive wears the [Baseange apron dress in textural wild silk](#).

**Which plays a more important role for you: function or form?**

Definitely form. My take on function might be somewhat controversial, as I think achieving function is mostly easy. As long as something is stable and has a surface, it's functional. I think achieving a thoughtful or interesting form is the challenge.

**Your work has attracted the attention of many admirers. Do you enjoy working on commission, or do you prefer creating self-guided work?**

I like both for different reasons. I like commissions because they can push me to do work I wouldn't normally do, but I like self-directed work because I have so many ideas of my own that I want to execute.



Olive wears a [Basange top white](#) while working in her studio. Photo by Emma Pegum.

**You seem so married to your practice, and you embody the role of artist so well. But if you weren't creating art for a living, where might we have found you today instead?**

I grew up with my parents owning restaurants and bars, these communities and spaces were a big part of my childhood and adolescence. My mum, Juanita, loves feeding people and looking after people. She's the most wonderful cook and I'm lucky to have inherited that. I love cooking - I think if I wasn't making art right now I'd probably be in the kitchen running a little venue with my mum.



Olive wears the [quilted cotton trench coat](#) in slick black by Christian Wijnants. [Textured polka-dot dress](#) by Song for the Mute worn beneath. [Patent boots](#) by Ann Demeulemeester.

**The last couple of years have encouraged us all to focus on our self-care. How do you nurture yourself? Do you have any beauty rituals?**

While I do get a lot of satisfaction and comfort from spending time in my studio, there are days or weeks that are physically gruelling and what I most look forward to is being able to get down south. In those times I cook, I read, I swim and lie in the sun. I get to be in the bush, on the coast, in the natural environment - which is my greatest source of inspiration.

Just about my only beauty ritual would be going to the beach, in summer I go every day, making sure I get a bit salty is a big part of maintaining my equilibrium.



Details from Olive's work room.

**You seem to look amazing in everything you wear! What's your approach to dressing?**

My approach to dressing is similar to my approach to all design. I like wearing pieces with longevity in mind. When I buy clothing, I want it to be aesthetically timeless but also very physically durable.

**And finally, Olive, what extravagance do you enjoy?**

Sleep ins.



Olive wears the utilitarian [DIRKSHW jersey dress](#) with [platform sandals](#) by Rick Owens.

Olive Gill-Hille's solo exhibition *TRUNK* will be on display from 21st October to 21st November at [Gallery Sally Dan-Cuthbert](#) in Rushcutters Bay, NSW.

See more of Olive's work on her [Instagram](#) and her [website](#).

Additional photography courtesy the artist and [Emma Pegrum](#).