

Studio Nicholas Schmidt  
*Office for Advisory, Strategy, Design*

Studio Document



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Studio

Studio Nicholas Schmidt is an advisory, strategy, and design firm shaping outcomes through a critical understanding of aesthetics and the radical economy of form. Our work is defined by rigorous, broad-spectrum research and unambiguous representations of complex thought. Central to our practice is the production of value conceived both economically and as an expression of cultural capital. Through the conceptualizing of nuanced forms, spaces, and narrative systems, the studio formulates design strategies that respond coherently to the specific conditions and intentions of each project.

Obstacles to a more just and equal world are no longer material; they are political, cultural, symbolic. In this condition, cultural resonance matters more than innovation and novelty. What is needed is not the new, but frameworks that are enduring and universally significant. Guided by the principles of simplicity, reflection, and non-reference, the studio advances strategies that prioritize sustained cultural significance over ephemeral visibility.

Over the past decade, Nicholas Schmidt has advised clients through critical phases of transformation, developing precise, definitive solutions to complex communicative, experiential, and strategic challenges. The studio operates collaboratively with cultural institutions, established enterprises, and private clients seeking nuanced stewardship, offering aesthetic clarity, strategic insight, and culturally attuned positioning.

A selection of our clients includes Aidan Matthews, Apt.200, Asics, AWGE, Basic.Space, catalog:three, Clarks, Edition Hotels, END., Four Seasons, Garage, Helmut Lang, Highsnobiety, Holt Renfrew, MURAL Festival, ONDO, Red Bull, Retrosuperfuture, Saintwoods, Selfridges, Sporty & Rich, SSENSE, The Webster, Throwing Fits, TikTok, and Veuve Clicquot.

Ideology

*What if work is produced not as a neutral service, but as a profound act of reflection?*

Each project is approached as a form of mediation—between the self and the world, narratives and their contexts, the past, present, and future. The results do not represent the conclusion of formal exploration alone, but rather serve as a means of inquiry into the perceptions that define them. This approach resists dualistic distinctions, unifying concept and material, mind and body, idea and act. Embedding our work within this dialectic of theory and practice allows the outcome to function as a site of continuous negotiation, where meaning emerges not in isolation but as a perpetual duet with form.

Our practice engages with the world through a critical lens. This critique of the present is not an act of negation but a method of reflection. It is a generative act—an incessant investigation into what could be refined, reconsidered, and made more meaningful. Rather than incorporating critique as an end in itself, the work calls for transformation, offering a positive impression that shapes a more introspective and nuanced experience. We embrace the potential for growth not as an idealized abstraction but as a tangible possibility for a more introspective and meaningful world.

We reject the tendency to rely excessively on allusions and references, speaking instead through a universal language of aesthetic expression, independent of external associations. Outcomes are non-referential, seeking clarity and simplicity that is inherently significant beyond predetermined iconography and its contemporaneous context. We are committed to moving beyond



metaphor, representation, and allusion, seeking to construct propositions that are direct, objective, and self-contained. In this pursuit, we partake in a radical economy of form—distilling every element to its most essential expression. This is not minimalism for its own sake, but minimalism as a way of allowing meaning to emerge without excess. The ethos behind this approach is one of discipline, restraint, and respect for the material world. Through this radical economy, we allow space for reflection, enabling the work to unfold its significance in the mind of the viewer.

These are the foundations of our practice, the horizon toward which our efforts are oriented. We strive to enact these ideals, though we are not blind to the inevitability of imperfection in the process. These principles are not meant to dictate or dominate; they are neither a manifesto nor a mandate. We resist the temptation to impose our vision of reality as definitive, knowing that such acts of imposition risk collapsing the pluralities and contradictions that give complexity to experience. Our commitment is not to fixed truths, but to the pursuit of understanding, always provisional, always open to critique and reimagining. We are “contented so to look on mists in idleness—”.

Services

*In which forms do these reflections become tangible?*

We work across disciplines through a methodology grounded in a critical understanding of aesthetics and the radical economy of form. The barriers to a more just and equal world are no longer material; they are political, cultural, symbolic. In this condition, cultural resonance matters more than novelty and newness. What is needed is not the new, but strategies that are enduring and universally significant. This ethos shapes our practice across:

- 1 Creative Advisory
- 2 Strategic Narrative & Positioning
- 3 Visual & Spatial Design Direction

## 1 Creative Advisory

We work with cultural institutions, established enterprises, and private clients to guide the long-term evolution of their projects through a collaborative, often durational process that addresses questions of aesthetics, cultural positioning, and critical alignment over time. This dimension of the practice encompasses aesthetic and strategic advisory, cultural stewardship, and the development of editorial, curatorial, and discursive initiatives. Operating within the expanded field of design, our approach frames strategy as an outcome of sustained reflection and critical inquiry.



John Pawson, Apartment. 1984.

## 10 Services

## 2 Strategic Narrative & Positioning

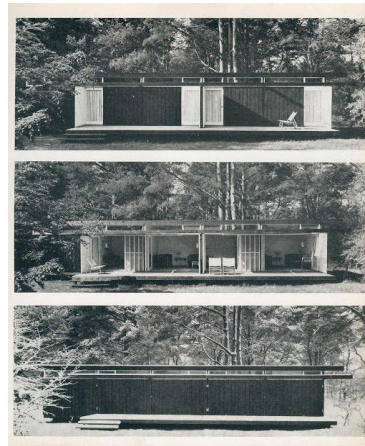
We develop conceptual frameworks that position a brand, project, or institution within its temporal, cultural, and ideological context. Drawing from critical theory, cultural analysis, and strategic communications, this process seeks to generate meaning that is both analytically grounded and publicly resonant. Through narrative construction and ideological framing, cultural positioning and contextual analysis, as well as editorial architecture and discursive planning, our aim is not merely to communicate, but to locate. We seek to articulate where a project stands, what it signifies, and to whom it matters.



Dan Flavin, "monument" 1 for V. Tatlin. 1964.

### 3 Visual & Spatial Design Direction

Design is understood as a structure rather than decoration. We develop systems of visual and spatial expression that are inseparable from the conceptual frameworks they embody, treating form as a cognitive tool that enables, clarifies, and extends meaning. Through visual identity and semiotic systems, campaign design and art direction, and architectural and environmental strategy, we approach aesthetic clarity as a means of orientation within culture.



Vilhelm Wohlert, Niels Bohr's  
Guest House. 1956–1957.

## Selected Projects

- 1 Aidan Matthews – *Being Alive Twice*  
Creative Direction and Design  
2025

*Being Alive Twice* is the first book by the photographer Aidan Matthews. In collaboration with the artist, the studio designed the publication and exhibition materials. At its core, the project sought to privilege the relational dynamics between images over any singular narrative.







2      catalog:three  
Creative Direction, Strategy, and Design  
2021 – 2024

catalog:three was developed to create a modern glimpse into the world of traditional rugs. With a focus on quality and authenticity, we sought to create an atmosphere for contemporary consumers that does not sacrifice historical methods of woven production. The studio designed the visual identity, developed strategy, and provided creative direction throughout the duration of the project.









3 ONDO  
Creative Direction, Strategy, and Design  
2025 – Ongoing

The studio remains deeply embedded in shaping the strategic and aesthetic formation of ONDO, an innovative platform establishing trust and transparency in the art market through tokenized provenance and catalogue raisonné systems. A select group of blue-chip artists and estates have already committed to safeguarding their legacies through this emerging protocol.

Private

Currently Under  
Development

Date: 05/20/2025



4 Apt. 200 Montréal  
Interior Design  
2024

Shortly after their 10-year anniversary, Montreal's Apt. 200 embarked on a transformative journey, redefining its spatial narrative to mirror the shifting contours of its identity. Guided by the paradigm of residentiality, the project wielded the rich tapestry of European modernist architecture, channeling the spirit of Le Corbusier's dwelling in Boulogne-Billancourt. The interior emerges as a spatial narrative, blurring the lines between domesticity and revelry, offering patrons an immersive experience at the nexus of comfort and vivacity. Our practice provided interior design and continued consultancy.





5      Dorchester Project  
Interior Design  
2023

The conception of this project came from the idea of using my existing apartment (a 1 bedroom + dining room on the first floor of a 14 unit building) as a template to explore notions of reduction. The idea was to keep the existing structure as it was built in the 1920s, but to remove any adornment and personal effects. Often does one imagine making a pilgrimage to the Abbey at Le Thoronet or the Ryōan-ji Temple, but not often do we get to engage with these monastic fantasies without the aspect of relocation. The project served to create a reductive beauty where I still reside, taking architectural features from Cistercian abbeys and incorporate them to a life that is not quite as austere. One can want a place where it is possible to be still, without necessarily wanting to pray in it.



6 Restaurant Suisse  
Creative Direction and Design  
2024

This self-initiated project investigates the aesthetics of austerity as both formal strategy and ideological position. The branding operates as a kind of manifesto, eschewing the superfluous in favor of a distilled visual language that privileges clarity, restraint, and intention. In a cultural climate saturated by excess and overstimulation, the brand's starkness functions as a form of resistance. It rejects the imperative to entertain, opting instead to cultivate a contemplative visual environment. Here, the absence of distraction is generative; it creates space for reflection, for the viewer to reckon with form as content. What emerges is a quiet polemic against ornamentation: a return to fundamentals. The work proclaims an austere, almost monastic sensibility that mirrors the broader ethos of the restaurant itself.







## Index of Client Work

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2022

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2023

Four Seasons  
Research  
2023

## Epilogue

The practice would not be what it is without the significant influences of Donald Judd, Sir Alex Ferguson, Rosalind Krauss, *The West Wing*, Richard Prince, *Light Years* by James Salter, Catullus, Henri Lefebvre, John Pawson, Walter Benjamin, Peter Markli, *Franny and Zooey* by J.D. Salinger, Arthur Russell, the Sculpture Collection at Western Washington University, Helmut Lang, Frederic Jameson, Brice Marden, *The Swimmer* (1968) by Frank Perry, Westmount, Richard Serra, *The Official Preppy Handbook*, Hal Foster, Jacques Herzog, Ernest Hemingway, Mies van der Rohe, Cy Twombly, Dan Flavin, Whit Stillman, The New Left Review, and many others.



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