

Growing up gracefully

A new approach to tone and mood infuses the latest project by YSG, a 19th century heritage-listed former corner store in Sydney's Inner West.

As told to Verity Magdalino Photographed by Prue Ruscoe Styled by Felicity Ng

THESE PAGES in the kitchen of this Sydney home, designed by YSG and produced by Jonathan West, **island** in Black Fantasy quartzite and **back bench** in Cortona quartzite from Artedomus; poplar burl timber veneer **cabinetry** with solid timber American ash handles; integrated French door **fridge** from Fisher & Paykel. In the main living area, Black Tie Island **sofa** from Moebel; merino **blanket** in Navy Sailor from Curio Practice; custom Cambia ash **coffee table** designed by YSG and produced by Maiden; American oak **handrail** designed by YSG and produced by Jonathan West; Marmorino **plaster walls**. *Details, last pages.*



THIS PAGE the former 19th-century corner store exterior of the home. **OPPOSITE PAGE** in a corner of the main living area, Reeno mini **benches** from Grazia&Co upholstered in Pierre Frey Opio mohair and alpaca bouclé wool; custom **dining table** designed by YSG in silver travertine from Mediterranean Marble; Louise Roe Balloon **vase** 01 from Spence & Lyda; antique Scottish **plate** from Chee Soon & Fitzgerald; Suvira McDonald **bowl** from The DEA Store (on top shelf, from left); **artwork** by Michelle Connolly from Spence & Lyda; DCW Editions Boucle **lamp** by Éric De Dormaël from Spence & Lyda (on second shelf, from left); vintage **vessel** from Rudi Rocket; *Celeste* **vessel** by Stephanie Phillips from The DEA Store; Wobbly **bowl** by Felicity Ng (on third shelf, from left); antique Japanese **plate** from Chee Soon & Fitzgerald; *Rhodnite* **sculpture** by Bettina Willner from Saint Cloche; antique Japanese **vase** from Chee Soon & Fitzgerald (on bottom shelf, from left); *Halimeda 2041* **vase** by Mel Lumb from Saint Cloche.

Yasmine Ghoniem's star is in the ascendent. The Sydney-based interior designer and founder of YSG is blowing up the city's preponderance for safe white-box luxury with her colour-fuelled, experimental aesthetic. At the most recent Australian Interior Design Awards the studio was bestowed a holy trinity, taking out prizes for the Best Residential Design, Best Residential Decoration and Best of State, NSW. Her latest production — a two-storey, four-bedroom, heritage-listed sandstone home in Sydney's Inner West — pares back her trademark maximalism to reveal a more mature but no less boundary-pushing approach. Here, we talk to the refreshingly candid Ghoniem about the trials and celebrations of reworking a heritage site into something completely, yet subtly, different.

The owners got in touch with us originally because everyone in the family was using the same bathroom. The household was expanding as their daughters' partners moved in and one bathroom was getting too much — this had to change. The bathroom was in the centre of the first floor, was very dark, and had no ventilation. We ripped out all the flat plasterboard ceilings and revealed this incredible, tall vaulted ceiling that we later handpainted. It felt very natural to us to then re-purpose the space into a light-filled library. This room is still one of my favourite spaces.

The home was originally a store and is heritage-listed. The project started about three-and-a-half years ago. The main thing I wanted to do was to open it up [by knocking down a sandstone wall] so we could create a better connection between the interior spaces. I think if we couldn't achieve that then the project was going to die — it was just pointless. There was a lot of perseverance to get it through council regulations but it was almost like, if we didn't do it, the owners were going to sell the house.

With the main living area now opened up, the family use every single space in the house. The owners' daughters are at university so there's always someone studying in the kitchen or down in the living area playing the piano or reading a book. It's really lovely.

There are a lot of sandstone walls and we revealed some and rendered some — I know some people will hate that we've done that — but I feel like the sandstone needed to be celebrated in moments and taken away at other times. We replaced all the timber flooring, which we felt was detracting from the sandstone, and installed these beautiful sandblasted, travertine pavers with a gorgeous fat grout line, which felt more European. It was a bit of an unknown move at the time as it could've felt quite hectic in terms of combining travertine with the texture of sandstone but I think it works quite beautifully. There was so much brown everywhere before, which made it feel so dark and we had to lighten it up. >>



“It’s a toned-down version of what we would normally do – a different, slightly more sophisticated take” YASMINE GHONIEM



« **We wanted to celebrate under-utilised areas.** Like the space by the front windows, which now has a rendered seating area and a custom travertine dining table. I think one of the reasons we won the project was our idea to build up the level of the kitchen to match that of the dining area for better flow between rooms. This also worked to create an inviting and cosy sunken living area.

Overall, the interiors are very tonal. We used a hemp render on the fireplace in the living area and 12 different Venetian plasters, a variety of renders and material mash-ups of many different stones and timbers throughout the home. We carried the use of timber through to the custom lights. The fitting above the dining table is our take on a Barovian crystal chandelier but carved from Australian red cedar. When you come down the stairs, you can see through the top of the chandelier. It’s quite magical.

The new main bedroom suite used to be a secondary living area but it was never used. It had the most gorgeous natural light and so the owners didn’t love the idea of me dividing it with a wall to add an ensuite. There was a lot of reworking of the plan. I said ‘We don’t need that much light in the bedroom — you go to bed there!’ They just love this space now. It has all original timber flooring that we ended up painting because again, everything was just wrong — the dark colour of the timber felt very aggressive next to the natural sandstone.

The owners’ daughter found us when she was living in New Zealand. We used a sofa in a project and the sofa-maker had used an image of it for his promotional shot. Their daughter sent the image to her mum, saying “This is the couch you need.” Her mother wanted to know who did the rest of the house, the daughter put the image into Google, and that’s how they got in touch.

I actually get that a lot — kids liking what we do and saying, “Mum, I think you need to be a bit cooler.” I always look on Instagram to see who’s actually interested in our posts and it’s never older people, it’s always the 25-year-olds and I’m like, [Ghoniem smiles and jokingly sighs] ‘Ahh, this is not good for me.’ But maybe the kids are telling their parents so it’s not too bad...

For us it doesn’t feel like a very YSG project because it’s less colourful. It’s a toned-down version of what we would normally do — a different, slightly more sophisticated take. It’s been interesting for us even while we’ve been photographing the home. I’m like “Oh my God, we need to put that bright yellow artwork right there,” and the photographer is like, “No.” Although it’s been challenging for me to pare it back and reduce, I do love that it’s more mature.

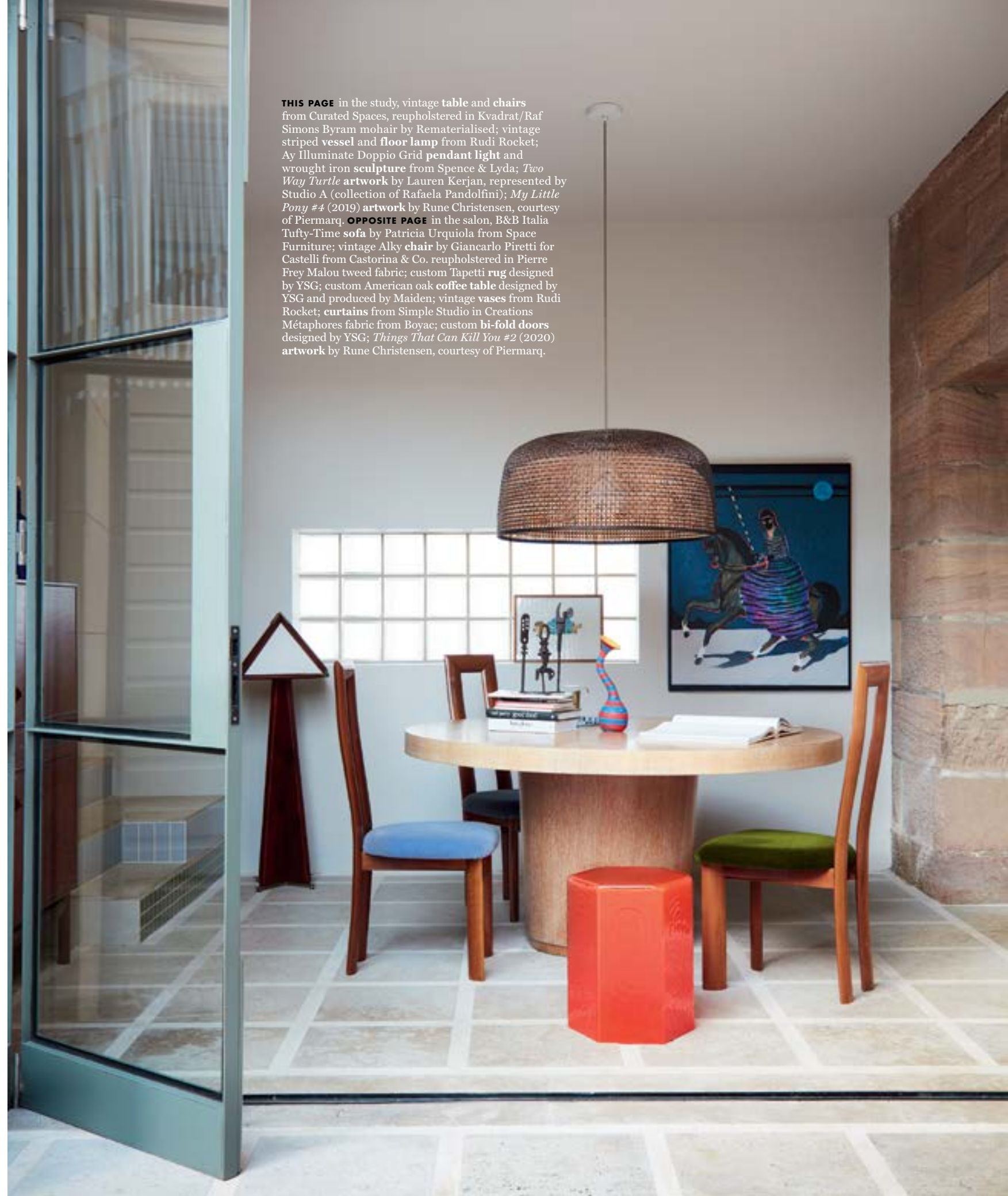
I also loved the heritage part of it and figuring out how to make it modern, but not too modern. It was challenging but I really enjoyed that. Just working with a different envelope than we’re used to is great, too. We always do the Eastern Suburbs [in Sydney] and it was just nice to be in the Inner West and give it a bit of YSG. **VL** ysg.studio



THIS PAGE in another view of the main living area, custom **daybed** designed by YSG and produced by Rematerialised in Kvadrat/Raf Simons Phlox cotton and Maharam Pressed Linen; custom **bolsters** produced by Rematerialised in Pierre Frey Country jacquard fabric; Missoni Tibet #48 **cushions** and Bomma Hex **side table** from Spence & Lyda; Wobbly **bowl** by Felicity Ng (on coffee table); *Relief plate with honey glaze (2020)* **piece** by Stephen Bird, courtesy of Olsen Gallery; custom **television screen** designed by YSG and produced by Jonathan West using hand-woven textile from Planet; Oluce Plume **wall light** from Moebel; custom Tapetti **rug** designed by YSG. **OPPOSITE PAGE** the homeowners and their dog in the kitchen, **curtains** in Kinnasand Domain linen from Simple Studio.



THIS PAGE in the dining area, vintage **chairs** from Curated Spaces, reupholstered in Kvadrat/Raf Simons Byram mohair by Rematerialised; custom timber **chandelier** designed by YSG and produced by Maiden. **OPPOSITE PAGE** in another view of the dining area from the main living area, Nau Molloy **chair** by Adam Goodrum from Cult; Ten **table** from Great Dane; Aeyre Cascais **cup set** in Purple from Reliquia Collective; sandblasted Chambon travertine **flooring** from Eco Outdoor; **stairs** in honed Rocca Bianca limestone from Artedomus; *David and Rocks* **artwork** by Maggie Brink, represented by ReadingRoom (collection of Rafaela Pandolfini); enamelled steel **sculpture** from Rudi Rocket.



THIS PAGE in the study, vintage **table** and **chairs** from Curated Spaces, reupholstered in Kvadrat/Raf Simons Byram mohair by Rematerialised; vintage striped **vessel** and **floor lamp** from Rudi Rocket; Ay Illuminate Doppio Grid **pendant light** and wrought iron **sculpture** from Spence & Lyda; *Two Way Turtle* **artwork** by Lauren Kerjan, represented by Studio A (collection of Rafaela Pandolfini); *My Little Pony #4* (2019) **artwork** by Rune Christensen, courtesy of Piermarq. **OPPOSITE PAGE** in the salon, B&B Italia Tufty-Time **sofa** by Patricia Urquiola from Space Furniture; vintage Alky **chair** by Giancarlo Piretti for Castelli from Castorina & Co. reupholstered in Pierre Frey Malou tweed fabric; custom Tapetti **rug** designed by YSG; custom American oak **coffee table** designed by YSG and produced by Maiden; vintage **vases** from Rudi Rocket; **curtains** from Simple Studio in Creations Métaphores fabric from Boyac; custom **bi-fold doors** designed by YSG; *Things That Can Kill You #2* (2020) **artwork** by Rune Christensen, courtesy of Piermarq.



THIS PAGE in the main ensuite, **vanity** in Corteccia quartzite from Euro Marble; custom American ash **cabinet** designed by YSG and produced by Jonathan West; Sharon Alpren volcanic **vase** #3 from Mr Kitly; **soap dish** from The DEA Store; Anton Mini **sconce** from Volker Haug; **flooring** and **skirting** in Aren Bianco limestone from Onsite Supply + Design; Black Pearl Square **mosaic tiles** from Surface Gallery. **OPPOSITE PAGE** in the main bedroom, custom walnut **bedhead** and **bedside table** designed by YSG and produced by Jonathan West; **bedhead upholstery** in Misia Calusa fabric from The Textile Company by Rematerialised; **cushion** in Pierre Frey Arlina velvet from Rematerialised; **bed linen** from In The Sac; **blanket** from Cultiver; Vide Poche Rond **tray** from Studio Henry Wilson (on bedside table); Night **desk clock** by George Nelson for Vitra from Living Edge; Monolith Italian-style reading **light** from 1stDibs; Berber **rug** from Loom. *Details, last pages.*