

THE EYE MUST TRAVEL

Words Karine Monié
Photography Prue Ruscoe
Styling Felicity Ng



Half-Egyptian, half-Australian, Yasmine Saleh Ghoniem's tactile interiors reflect a mix of global influences, as this Sydney home reveals



The kitchen, built by Jonathan West to Yasmine's design, has poplar burl timber veneer cabinetry with solid timber American ash handles. The island is topped with Black Fantasy quartzite from Artedomus.



UNCONVENTIONAL COLOUR SELECTIONS AND NATURAL MATERIALS like timber and stone are my go-to's," explains Yasmine Saleh Ghoniem. "And I'm always drawn to tactile surface finishes. My interiors are intended to age gracefully – in fact, they look better with age."

This very personal aesthetic pervades the three-story, heritage-listed property that Ghoniem renovated in Sydney for a family of four. Preserving the historical essence of a late 19th-century Victorian Georgian corner shop while turning it into a 700-square-metre, four-bedroom home with different stylistic influences was at the heart of the concept of this extensive transformation.

Born in Kuwait to an Egyptian father and Australian mother, Ghoniem is accustomed to mixing references, using her nomadic upbringing as the starting point for her projects. "I grew up in a desert," she says. "Given the unforgiving heat, I spent a lot of time indoors in the AC. When I looked out the window, soft brown shades reigned for miles. So my imagination became my oasis."

After swinging from Kuwait to Egypt to Saudi Arabia and Australia in her childhood, Ghoniem studied at the Savannah College of Art and Design and went on to work at three different architectural firms in the United States. This was followed by a stint as an aid worker in Kenya, where she helped to build schools, and a year-long trip across southeast Asia and Europe.

With such a rich range of experiences, it comes as no surprise that Ghoniem's interiors are inimitable. "My travels have left a very tangible collage of memories in my mind, which I constantly draw upon," she says. "That's why texture plays such a strong role in my work."

Ghoniem founded Sydney-based studio YSG last year after realising a number of award-winning projects with her sister, the land-

In a corner of the main living area, Reeno benches from Grazia&Co have been covered in Pierre Frey mohair and alpaca bouclé. The silver travertine dining table was designed by YSG and the pendant is from DCW Editions.

OPPOSITE PAGE FROM TOP: The designer; the former 19th-century corner store exterior of the home.



In the main living area, Yasmine designed a custom daybed and a sliding screen with a hand-woven textile from Planet to conceal the television. The Oluce Plume wall light is from Moebel.





The study has a vintage table and chairs from Curated Spaces. The striped vessel and floor lamp are vintage pieces. The large artwork is by Rune Christensen, courtesy of Piermarq.



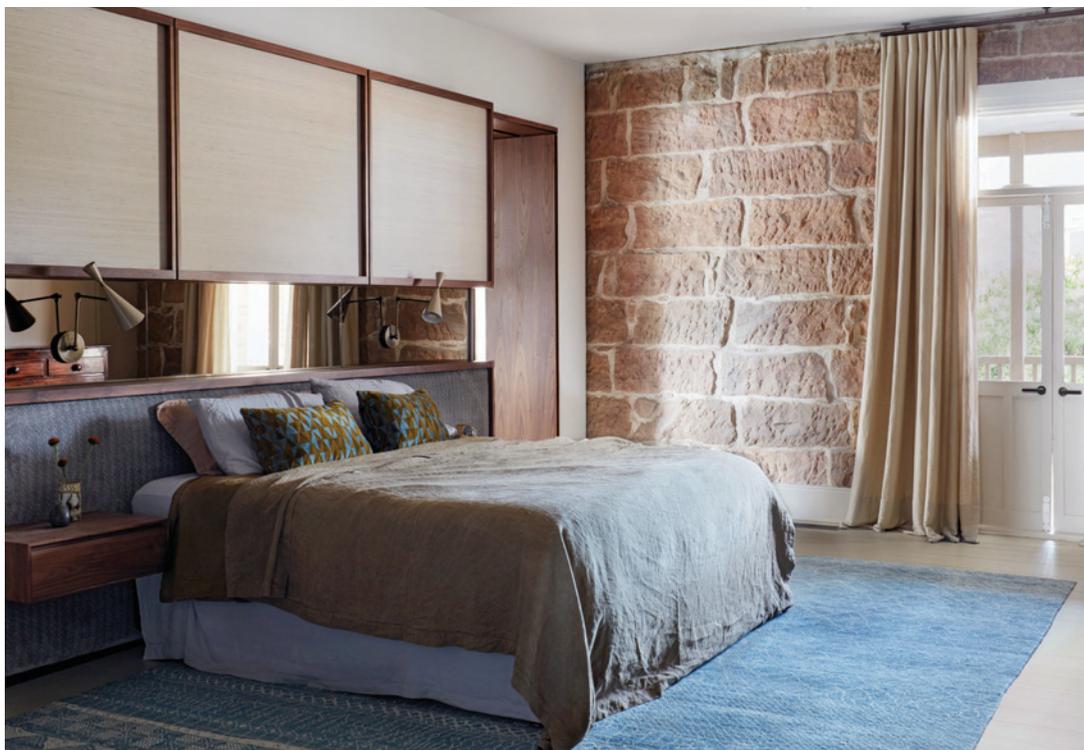


scape architect Katy Svalbe, and shapes spaces to tell stories. “I guess I’m a choreographer of sorts because space occupies my mind as much as tangible furnishings and fixtures,” explains the designer. “All my interiors are sculptural and interconnected to create an overarching narrative.”

This project took three years to complete due to council approvals and structural alterations to maintain original features. Initially characterised by its oddly configured pokey rooms, the intent was to open up the main living area to unite the kitchen, dining and living room on the ground floor. Upstairs, some of the major changes included creating a light-filled library and a principal suite with a bathroom and a walk-in-wardrobe. In addition to providing a better flow, the remodeling reflects Ghoniem’s innovative use of materials. In the kitchen, for example, the worktop is crowned with leathered quartzite and a joinery wall that also conceals the refrigerator is covered in a mottled poplar burl veneer. Oversized vertical handles act as framing devices to the natural grain patterns. “I love the sensation you get from running your fingers over its pitted surface,” says the designer.

In keeping with the building’s heritage, Ghoniem also introduced salvaged granite steps leading to the kitchen from the front door and to the adjoining dining room. They were bush hammered to look as though they belong to the original build. Elsewhere, Ghoniem took inspiration from the quiet restraint of traditional Japanese interiors: a batik-covered sliding shoji frame to conceal the TV, and the main bedroom’s wardrobe and bed frame are lined with a tatami-like matting of vintage seagrass.

A refined, tonal colour palette has been used throughout with a few bold flourishes: citrine and amber in the lounge area’s dip-dyed rug, a honey hue in the kitchen, peridot velvet chairs at the head of the dining table, and aquamarine in the principal bedroom. “Perfection in my book is about cohesive clashes and unpredictable conclusions,” she says. “It’s imperative that design outcomes supersede our clients’ wildest expectations. [ysg.studio](#)”



FROM TOP:
A Cortecchia quartzite vanity unit in the main ensuite; contrasting textures have been brought together in the main bedroom. The custom walnut bedhead and bedside table were designed by YSG, the Berber rug is from Loom and the Italian-style reading lights were a 1stDibs find.