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Above the clouds

At the summit of this Sydney icon, a penthouse embodying YSG's signature colourful and tactile variety squares off with a modernist framework.

By Amy Campbell Photographed by Prue Ruscoe Styled by Felicity Ng

THIS PAGE in the living area of this Sydney home, Maker & Son **armchair** and **footstool** in patchwork vintage linen fabric from Alm; Grande Soffice **sofa** by Francesco Binfare for Edra from Space Furniture; **coffee table** designed by YSG in Sunset onyx from Euro Marble; **cushions** designed by YSG in Dedar textiles from South Pacific Fabrics, produced by Rematerialised; Stacking **floor lamps** from Leucos; Missoni Thea Kuta **suspension lamp** from Spence & Lyda; Horizon **rug** from Kvadrat; **sculpture** by Natalie Rosin. **OPPOSITE PAGE** on the balcony, Minotti Cortina outdoor **armchair** from Dedece; Adam Goodrum Volley **loungers** from Tait; custom **lounger seat pads** in Hermès Pavage outdoor **fabric** from South Pacific Fabrics, produced by Rematerialised; **coffee table** designed by YSG in blue granite from Mediterranean Marble; **glass** from Maison Balzac; **bowl** by Felicity Ng; **landscaping** by Dangar Barin Smith. *Details, last pages.*





THESE PAGES in the dining and kitchen area, **island** in blue granite from Nefiko, produced by Mediterranean Marble; custom black-stained oak veneer **joinery** designed by YSG, produced by Winchester Interiors; custom Dita **stools** from Grazia&co; custom Adam Goodrum Birdsmouth **dining table** from Broached Commissions; Molloy **chairs** by Adam Goodrum for Nau from Cult; Studio pottery **sculpture** and vintage **platters**, all from Rudi Rocket; Apollo 6 **chandelier** from McKenzie & Keim; Viabizzuno **lighting** from VBO Australia; *Pink Bull* (2020) **artwork** by Cannon Dill from Piermarq.





THIS PAGE in another view of the kitchen, Men Sole shelving system from VBO Australia; mugs and bowls from Mud Australia; sculpture by Natalie Rosin from Saint Cloche; vintage Art Glass vase from Rudi Rocket; glasses from Ikea; jug (on benchtop) and vase from Dinosaur Designs; Ancestor Amber sculpture (2020) by William Versace from Curatorial+Co. **OPPOSITE PAGE** in another view of the living area, Cipria armchair by Fernando and Humberto Campana for Edra from Space Furniture; Rrres Studio Point + Line 03 throw from Koskela; custom Tibetan wool and art silk rug from Tappeti.

I love to create little moments that feel a bit... James Bond,” says Yasmine Ghoniem, the founder and principal of her eponymous design studio YSG. “I call them ‘conversation starters’. They are these wacky moments that make for entertaining stories to tell your guests.”

Sitting pretty on the 16th floor of Altair Apartments — a modernist Sydney architectural icon in Rushcutters Bay that was named the best residential block in the world by the World Architectural Awards in 2001, the year after it was completed — is Ghoniem’s latest conversation starter. The penthouse apartment is home to a couple who recently became empty-nesters. Seeking to downsize on space while dialling up on artistic expression, the pair gave the in-demand designer, who had outfitted their family home several years ago, a call.

“It’s ultimately a playhouse for the folks,” explains Ghoniem. Standing at the entrance, in front of a door that’s embedded with a tinted glass panel the colour of orange marmalade, she presses a button and it zips open. She wasn’t kidding about the 007 moments.

Before Ghoniem got her hands on it, the interior of this penthouse was ultra sleek and minimalist, with cool, metallic surfaces like glass and stainless steel throughout. It was a version of ‘modern’, but the designer was interested in playing with that dominant notion of modernity and putting her studio’s own, inimitable spin on the space through custom furnishings, intelligent pops of colour and, of course, cuts of otherworldly stone.

“I’ve never really worked within such a strong architectural frame, so I was excited about reinterpreting that sense of modernism, and I think that’s where the futuristic ideas came from,” she details. The designer points to the apartment’s unique proportions — the ceilings aren’t particularly high, and furniture pieces that are wider than they are tall have been carefully selected to create an unconventional sense of balance and contrast.

“There’s this sense of grandeur, with the low heights in the furniture selections,” muses Ghoniem. “I think it’s quite reminiscent of great architects like Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier — they have this really great sense of grandeur, but also simplicity.”

Colour and texture play starring roles in every YSG project, and here, these elements were realised in an armchair and ottoman purchased from Alm at the very beginning of the renovation — it unexpectedly came to steer the direction of both.

The chair, which rests in the middle of the living area, is upholstered in vintage surplus army material that’s been hand-dyed in a rich spectrum of plum, aubergine and olive tones. Each little square has been stitched together like patchwork, which intuitively sparked another theme that reveals itself in vignettes throughout the apartment.

In the kitchen, this tapestry effect is captured in the stone island benchtop. This wasn’t entirely intentional though. The original slab of blue granite was too large to be carried into the apartment, so Ghoniem and her team got creative — they chopped it up into squares.

“We spun each tile around to transform its grain into different directions, so it

became an artwork itself, almost like a quilt. And it also allowed us to bring it up in the lift,” adds the designer with a chuckle. “What was really great about breaking up that slab like that, I could pick and choose which areas of the stone I really loved, and then we brought them all together for a much punchier outcome.”

The directional kitchen is the multifaceted jewel in this penthouse’s crown. It’s outfitted with so many unique, custom-made talking points, dinner parties couldn’t possibly grow boring. Hovering on a pylon beside the island is a petal-shaped cheeseboard, also in blue granite, that rotates 360 degrees.

“You can put cheese on there, cut it up, prepare it and serve it just by swinging that disc around,” says Ghoniem, swivelling it around to give us a demo.

Nearby, a custom YSG bar trolley begs the question: ‘Where did you get that from?!?’ “I’ve always wanted to do a drinks trolley but it’s actually quite hard, because there are so many different things it needs to do,” says Ghoniem. She presented the clients with upwards of 10 ready-made options before they insisted she just make her own. “I was like, ‘I thought you’d never ask!’” says the designer.

In the afternoon, the pearly white tiles of the gallery wall behind the trolley host a spectacular light show. “It dances. It’s like this ball of amber bounces across that wall as the sun goes down. It’s so reflective. That’s why we did that along that wall, to capture that afternoon glow.”

With panoramic views that stretch right across Sydney Harbour, it’s safe to assume this apartment will see its fair share of New Year’s Eve parties — outside, clever landscaping by Dangar Barin Smith has transformed the balcony into an arid jungle, suspended high in the sky. But for Ghoniem and her team, it’s the fun, interactive quirks — like that rotating cheeseboard — that lend this penthouse its intrigue, and that inspired the project’s name: Dream Weaver.

“I’m obsessed with anything magical,” says the designer. “And the fact the property is located in the penthouse, in the sky — that’s where dreams are created.” **VL** ysg.studio



THIS PAGE in the main bedroom, **bedhead** and **bedside tables** designed by YSG in Viola marble from Euro Marble, with mulberry-stained timber veneer, produced by Winchester Interiors; **bedhead inlay** in hand-knotted art silk carpet from Tapetti; **cushions** in Dedar Nouvelle Vagues col.6 Rubis fabric from South Pacific Fabrics, produced by Rematerialised; panelled timber **walls** in Dulux Hogs Breath paint, produced by Winchester Interiors; Bocci 28 Series **pendant lights** from Moebel; **jug and glass** from The DEA Store; Wallace#Sewell **throw** from Spence & Lyda; hand-knotted art silk **rug** designed by YSG, produced by Tapetti; **outdoor planters** from Dangar Barin Smith. **OPPOSITE PAGE** in the powder room, **vanity** designed by YSG in Viola marble from Euro Marble; perforated privacy **screen** designed by YSG; walls in Purple Iris Zellige **tiles** from Zia Tile; basin **mixer set** from Vola; N55 Sospensione **pendant light** from VBO Australia; Tim Webber Press **mirror** from Cult. *Details, last pages.*



