

VOCAL LIVING

AUSTRALIA

AT HOME WITH ZOË FOSTER BLAKE & HAMISH BLAKE



*THE BEST OF
AUSTRALIAN DESIGN*

VL50 THE LEADING CREATIVES OF 2022

For Zoë Foster Blake, moving back to Sydney presented the opportunity to go full tilt at creating a fun-filled family sanctuary with YSG's Yasmine Ghoniem proving to be her formidable pattern-loving design collaborator.

ASPARIK OF JOY

By VIRGINIA JEN Photographed by ANSON SMART Styled by FELICITY NG



STYLIST: JOSEPH GARDNER. STYLE ASSISTANT: LAURA ALEXANDRA. FASHION STYLIST: MIGUEL URBINA TAN. FASHION ASSISTANT: ISABELLA MAMAS. HAIR: SOPHIE ROBERTS. MAKE-UP: KRISTYAN LOW

THIS PAGE homeowner Zoë Foster Blake in the living room of her Vaucluse home, vintage Amanta modular sofa by Mario Bellini for B&B Italia; Arflex Marengo armchair and pouf from Space Furniture; Floris Wubben metallic glaze ceramic stool and vase (on right) from Alm; Nalgonia wicker armchair by Chris Wolston from The Future Perfect; timber tables designed by YSG and produced by Maiden; Akari floor lamp by Isamu Noguchi for Vitra from Living Edge; Babatree Nosere Yure Art basket and Bomma Hex side table from Spence & Lyda; *Pink bramble II* (2022) artwork (on left) by Lynda Draper and *Fuji no namida – Mother and child* (2020) artwork by Hiromi Tango from Sullivan+Strumpf. Zoë wears dress from Gucci and earrings and bangle from Tiffany & Co. **OPPOSITE PAGE** in another view of the living room, mixed Tropical Leaf pendant light from Casamidy; shelf commissioned by YSG from Saint Cloche. cushions by Christina Lundsteen from Amara; custom velvet seat pads from Rematerialised. *Details, last pages.*





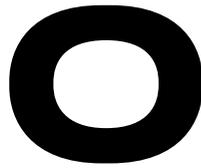
THIS PAGE the family cat Meowbert in the eat-in dining zone, red lacquer **dining table** designed by YSG and produced by Maiden; Volcano **bowl** by Arnaud Barraud from The DEA Store; **banquette** designed by YSG and produced by Rematerialised in Pierre Frey Opio wool in Pesca from Milgate and Murano leather in Rust from NSW Leather Co; Strikha **pendant light** by Faina from Tigmi Trading; custom **blinds** in Tigger Hall Fermoie Sicily fabric from Simple Studio; Missoni **cushions** from Spence & Lyda; custom **flooring** designed by YSG in travertine pavers from Ocean & Merchant; *Vermillion/Turquoise* (2022) **artwork** by Will Lynes from China Heights. **OPPOSITE PAGE** in the entry, **door** designed by YSG and produced by Maiden; **landscape design** by Even Spaces; **project builder** Promena Projects.





THESE PAGES in the kitchen, custom **island** in Brocatello Di Spagna and White travertine from Euro Marble; Iva **bar stools** from Grazia&co; Icon + Lever **mixer** in Tuscan Bronze from Astra Walker; Hook and Pull Forme No7 **handles** from Mi&Gei; Bikini **wall lights** in Rust #4 by Servomuto from Artemest; Pierre Frey Sur Le Nil Naturel **wallpaper** from Milgate; cork **ice buckets** from Spence & Lyda; **Structure artwork** (on left) by Lucy Anderson from Saint Cloche; brass **wall clock** by Oji Masanori for Ihada from The DEA Store; **Nancy vessel** (on right) by Alice Gavalet from Jordan.





f all the rooms Zoë Foster Blake loves in her Sydney home — and she loves them all unreservedly — you need to look beyond the embrace of the inviting living area, the eye-catching kitchen complete with eat-in booth and character-packed bedrooms in the family escape she shares with husband, TV host and broadcaster Hamish Blake, children Sonny and Rudy plus cat Meowbert, for her favourite.

“The powder room is one of my favourites because it’s so unexpected to have such a pretty guest bathroom,” she says of the mottled green-walled, tumbled marble cobblestone-floored space she makes sure every guest experiences. “I love it because it operates on the same philosophy as the one that runs through all my work and particularly Go-To: it has no right to be that fun. I mean, it’s a *toilet*.”

The author and entrepreneur’s skincare business was how Foster Blake met designer Yasmine Ghoniem of YSG. “I felt like there was so much more we could do together,” says Foster Blake after collaborating with Ghoniem on an office redesign for Go-To. “When we decided to move to Sydney, we bought a house that was definitely in need of love and energy and a whole new feeling. Yas was the only choice.”

Amid the pandemic-ridden backdrop of a turbo-charged life upheaval — purchasing the property in 2020, moving to Sydney from Melbourne on New Year’s Day of 2021, designs put into motion in February, moving out in May then moving back in a few days before Christmas — the re-imagining of the four-bedroom home in Vaucluse somehow happened in just nine months.

“A project of this scale and detail would take about 18 months to two years,” says Ghoniem. “When someone’s excited to do something cool, you go above and beyond the call of duty to make it happen because it excites you, too. You’re invested and it keeps you motivated but it was tough.”

The key to working so efficiently drew from the “perfect marriage” of client and designer, stemming from a kindred-spirit appreciation of the energising force and celebratory play inherent in the blending of colour, pattern and texture. “For me, it’s about how far can you push a room to delight the eyes without it feeling overstimulating — there’s a fine balance between going nuts with wallpaper, art and rugs and it feeling chaotic, like you don’t know where to look,” says Foster Blake. “Yas and I are both creatives, and get excited easily. We had to work together to go, ‘All right, how do we make this house rad without it being too much?’”

Questions were asked from the outset. “We did a questionnaire — both Hamish and I — without sharing our answers, which was great,” says the author. “Favourite music, movies, what do you do on the weekends, how do you spend an evening, where do you spend most of your time? It was a clever way of figuring out how and where we really live in the house, which parts were going to get hammered.”

“One of the questions was, ‘How do you want guests to feel when they come to visit your house?’” recalls Ghoniem. “And I remember Zoë’s answer was she wanted to show people that she was fearless with colour and wasn’t afraid to take risks, while still making sure that she created a beautiful and inviting home. Hamish — I have to laugh — he wanted it to be a seven-star hotel but still have the heartbeat of the little family home.”

Foster Blake’s style influences informed the brief, none more so than hotel design (Kelly Wearstler’s “rich, texturally exciting and interesting” mix of “browns, neutrals, burgundies and oranges” and “elements of Nanna” at Santa Monica Proper was one inspiration) and grounding out-of-the-box thinking was Ghoniem’s signature expressive take on tone and texture seen in the combination of Cambia ash, gold-speckled Portuguese cork, Marmorino plaster and travertine. A retro-leaning aesthetic was a given in this “case study in the effectiveness of wallpaper”. “The ‘60s and ‘70s were wild, that is my favourite design era,” says Foster Blake. “Loads of pattern, unbridled colour and lots of joy.”

Despite the property’s good bones, the configuration of the existing floor plan also needed a serious rethink. “There was a strange energy in the old living and kitchen area,” says Ghoniem. “I took away the rest of the house and was left with that one space. That was where the family would, in my eyes, be day in and day out. And that’s true to this day.”

“We spend most of our time in the kitchen looking out to the salon and it’s such a visual treat,” confirms Foster Blake. “I love the artwork, the sunlight, the giant daybed that the kids love to sit on and read and muck about, and you can see the cactus through the window with its little scalloped curtain. It sparks so much joy, the whole house does. We still can’t believe we get to live in it.”

Perhaps honing in on creating retreat-like bathing spaces draws on simple reflection. “I do so much of my creative thinking in the shower where I am getting ready for the day and the momentum starts,” says Ghoniem. “And that’s where you end up before you go to bed. For me, that area is gold.”

A spirit of generosity filters through this home, not only with confident style ideas and design details but through casting character via a multi-focal lens. “It offers so many different ideas, patterns, textures, eras and art,” admits Foster Blake. “Nothing matches and I love that. Collectively, so many competing elements probably shouldn’t work. But with the right eye and the right designer, it has all come together so perfectly. It’s playful yet cosy and there is so much surprise and delight.” Adds Ghoniem: “This is a beautiful project showcasing what can happen if you have trust, because sky’s the limit.” **VL** ysg.studio gotoskincare.com

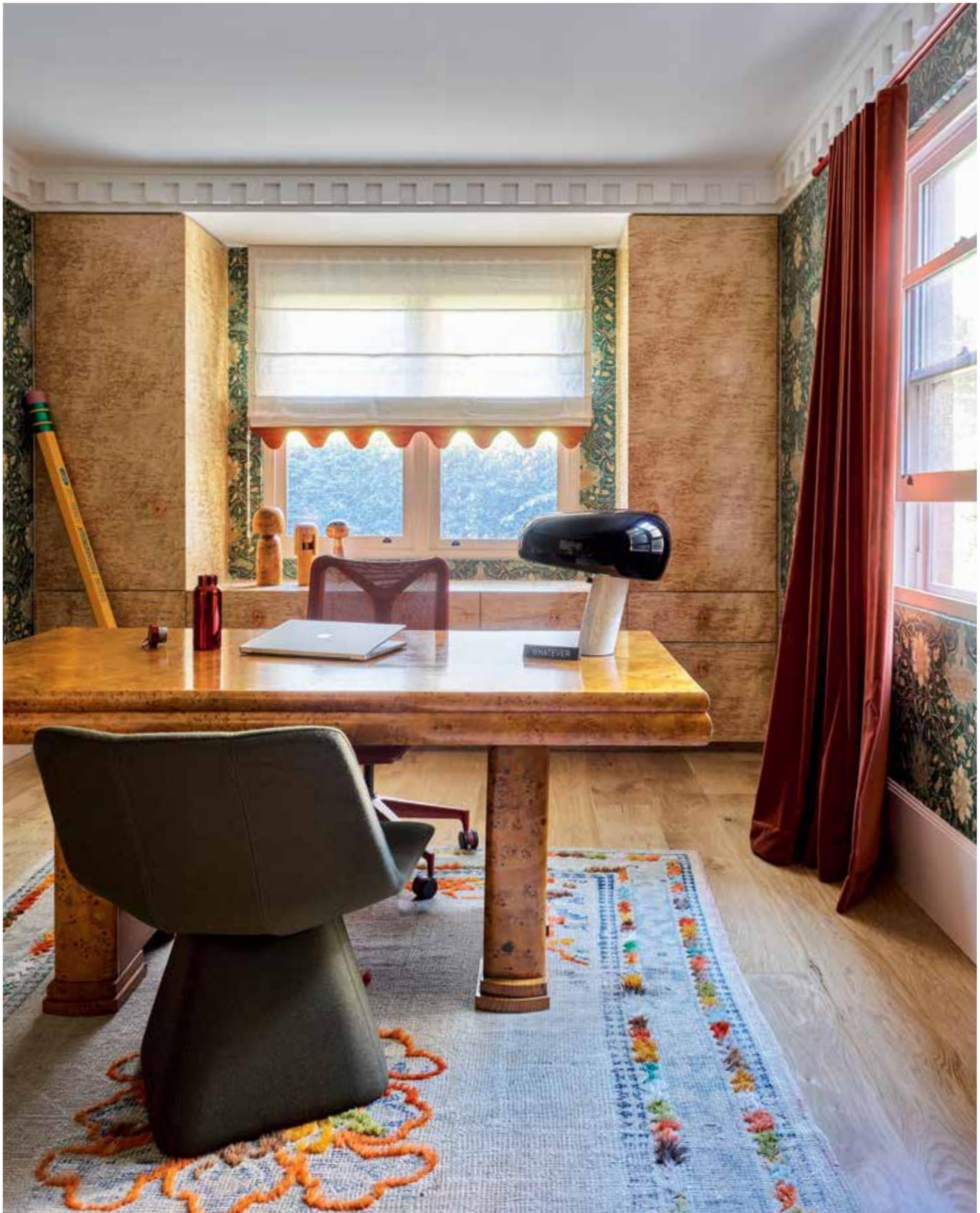
OPPOSITE PAGE in the outdoor area, Mara **armchairs** by Lorenza Bozzoli for Slide from Artemest; Chroma **ottoman** from Shore Rugs; Philippe Model Maison Low Stool **side table** from Alm; **dining table** designed by YSG and produced by Promena Projects in Vixel tiles from Artedomus; Philippe Model Maison Bent **dining chairs** from Alm; **glass** from Maison Balzac.



THESE PAGES, FROM LEFT Zoë Foster Blake with husband Hamish Blake in the kitchen, Rattan terracotta **vase** by Stephanie Phillips from The DEA Store; vintage **pendant light**. In the dining room, **dining table** designed by YSG with top produced by Maiden and legs produced by Mark Surtees of Anomalous; Artifort Suit **chairs** from Ke-zu; **chair** (at front) in vintage upholstery produced by Rematerialised; vintage **chairs** (at rear); **bowls** (stacked) from Alex & Trahanas; **vase, platter, candleholders** and **coupes**, all from Maison Balzac; '60s Czech glass **bowl** (on shelf, top right) from Rudi Rocket; Havana **decanter** and **coupe** (on bar) from Mr Pinchy.



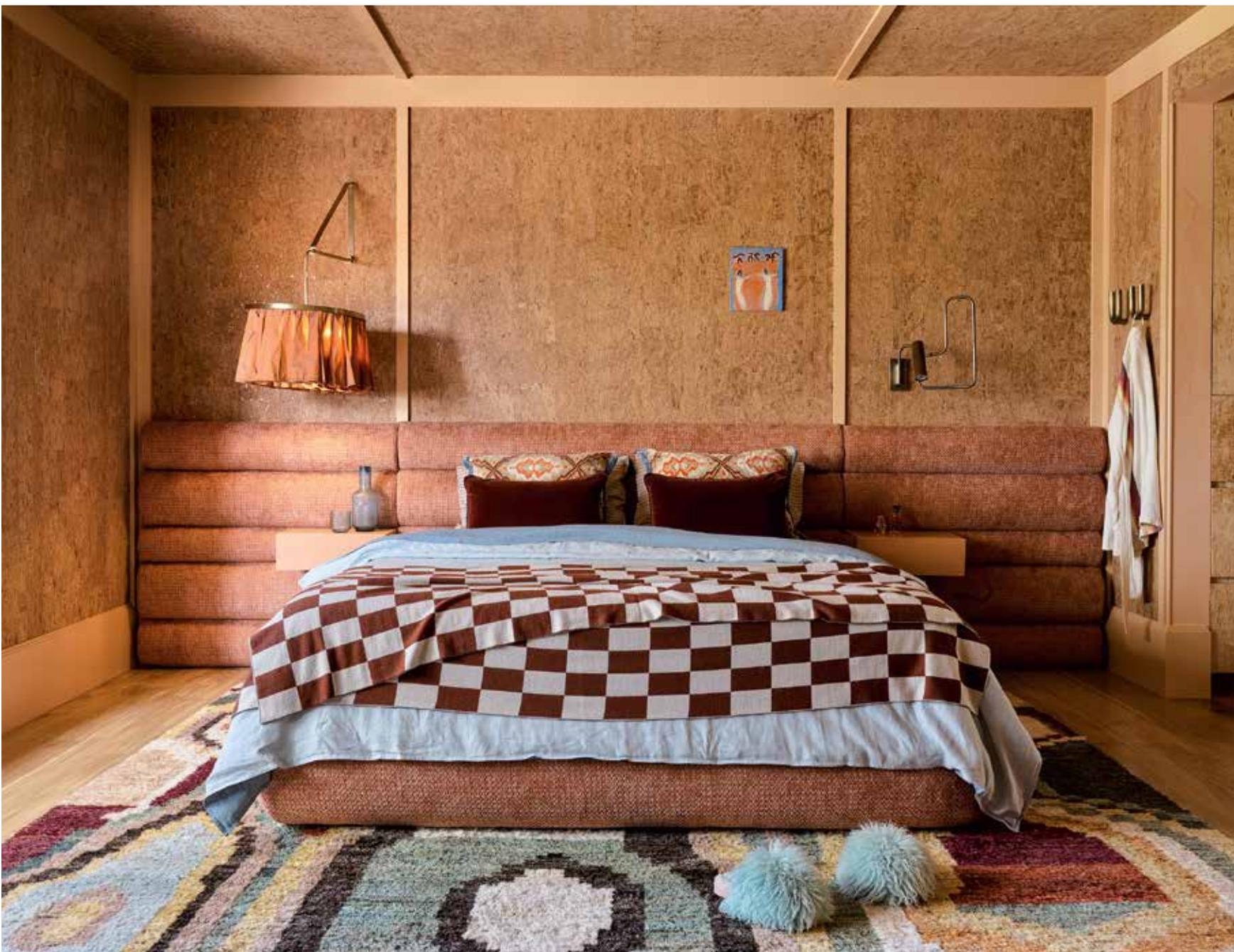






THIS PAGE in the main ensuite, **vanity and shelves** in honed turquoise marble produced by Euro Marble; **Eden handles** from Astra Walker; custom mosaic **tiles** from Ocean & Merchants; **flooring** in Cotto Manetti tumbled square mosaics from Artedomus; custom Okki **downlights** from Sphera; *Alpha sculpture* (top left) by Stephanie Phillips from The DEA Store. **OPPOSITE PAGE** in Foster Blake's office, vintage **desk**; Herman Miller Cosm **chair** from Living Edge; Resident Volley Swivel **chair** from District; Snoopy **lamp** by Achille and Pier Giacomo Castiglioni for Flos from Living Edge; **cabinetry** in Poplar Burl produced by Winchester Interiors; Kokeshi **dolls** from The DEA Store.



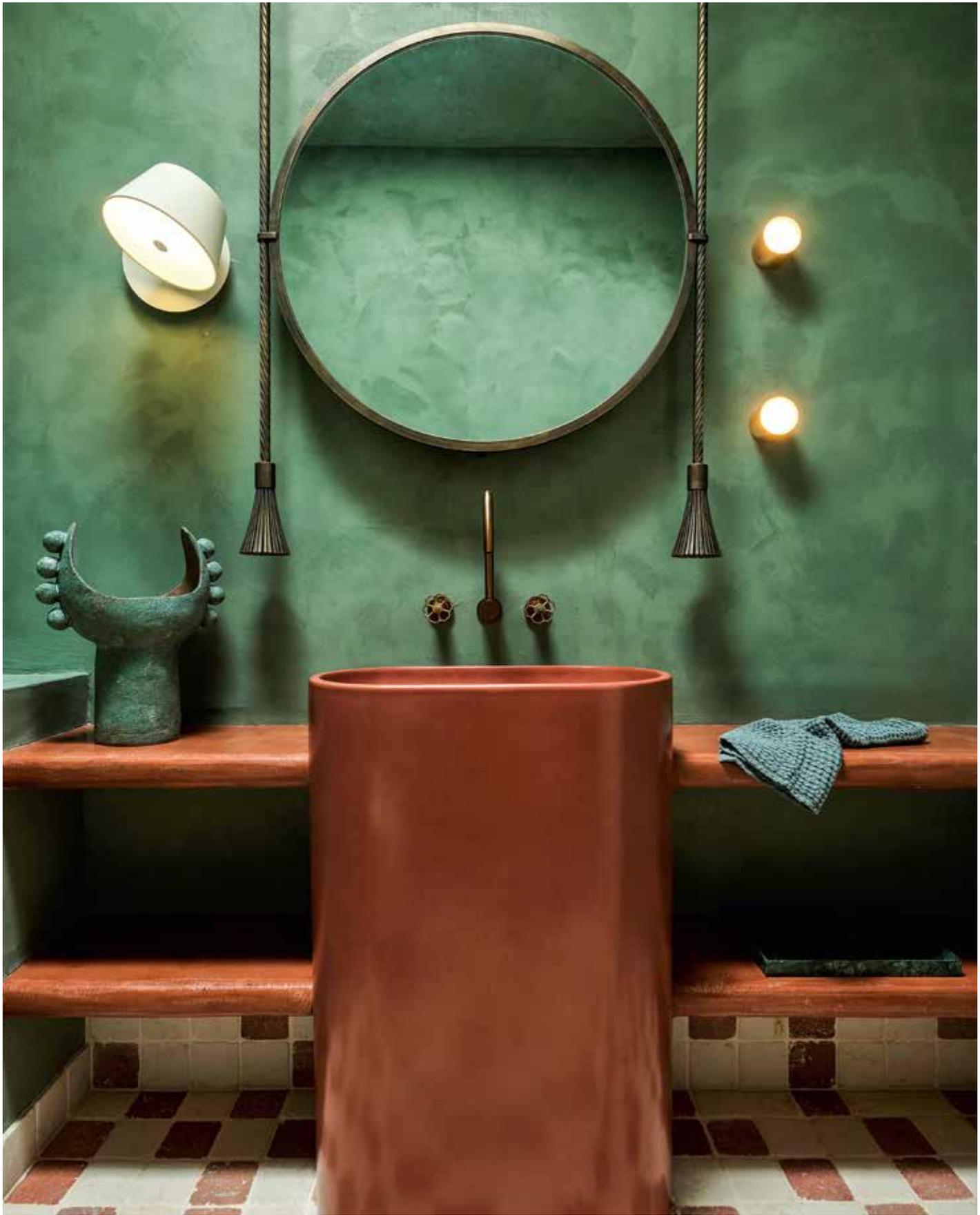


THIS PAGE in the main bedroom, custom **bedhead and base** in Chivasso Yang fabric from Unique Fabrics and produced by Rematerialised; linen **quilt set** in Liberty/Cloud and **pillowcase set** in Chaplin Stripe from In The Sac; **throw** in Chocolate Mousse Check from Curio; custom **cushions** designed by YSG and produced by Rematerialised; **wallpaper** in Monarch Cork from Eurowalls; Plisse **lamp** by Adolf Loos (on left) from Woka; Pivot Single **sconce** (on right) from Gentner Design; Lepus **hook** from V.brokk; **Merchandise artwork** by Lucy Anderson from Saint Cloche. **OPPOSITE PAGE** in daughter Rudy's bedroom, custom **bedhead** designed by YSG and produced by Rematerialised; Ruiskaunokki **cushion** from Projektityyny; **wallpaper** from Spoonflower.



THIS PAGE in the entry hallway, custom **carpet** designed by YSG and produced by Tappeti; commissioned ceramic family portrait **artworks** (on wall) by Ebony Russell. **OPPOSITE PAGE** in another view of the main bedroom, **pouffe** designed by YSG and produced by Rematerialised in Thibaut Makena fabric; **window seat** with concealed storage designed by YSG and produced by Winchester Interiors in C&C Milano Pienza Scalino fabric; **seat pad** designed by YSG in Thibaut Makena fabric; **cushions** in vintage fabric produced by Rematerialised; Roman **blinds** produced by Simple Studio in Dedar Be Bop A Lula fabric from South Pacific Fabrics.







THIS PAGE at the entry, Cactus ceramic wall light by Alana Crosby; door designed by YSG and produced by Maiden; Riven 550 handles from Philip Watts Design; column base designed by YSG in custom travertine mosaic tiles from Ocean & Merchant.

OPPOSITE PAGE in the powder room, Tropez freestanding concrete basin from Concrete Nation; Icon + wall set tapware and Eden tap handles from Astra Walker; vintage mirror; Maset Tam Tam wall light (on left) from Est Lighting; flooring designed by YSG in Rosso Persia and Botticino tumbled marble cobblestones from Aeria Country Floors; vase by Stephanie Phillips from The DEA Store. *Details, last pages.*