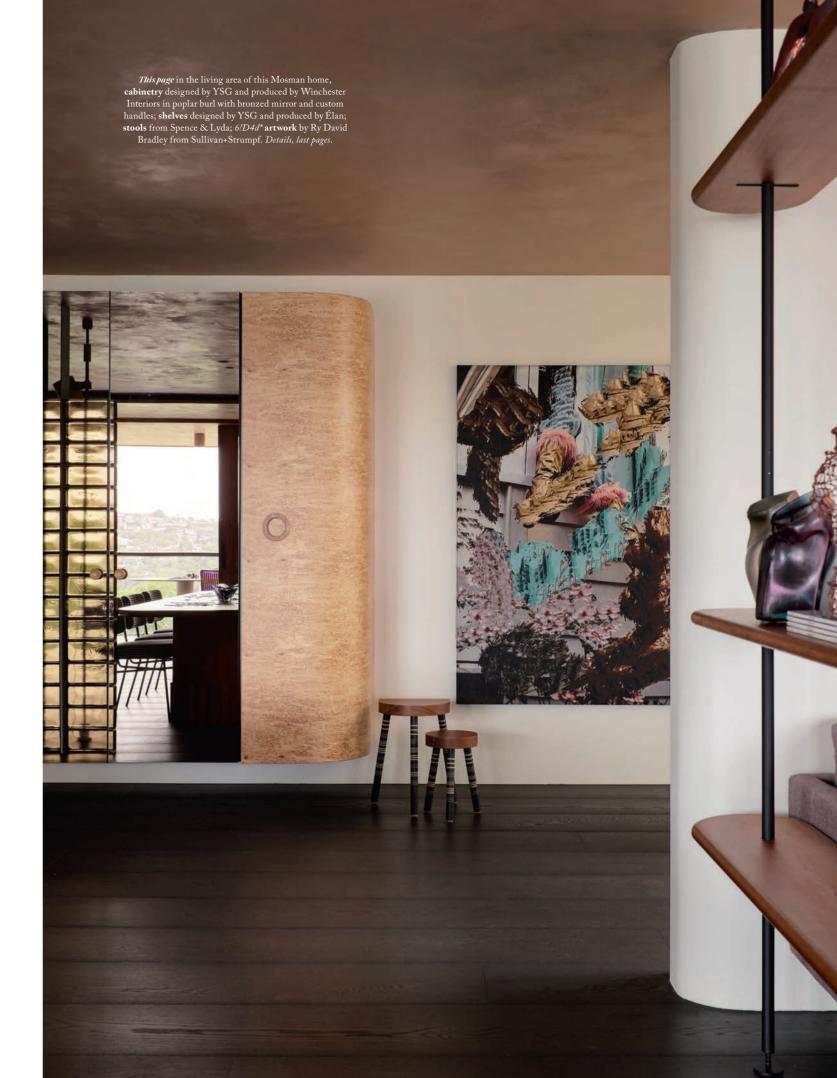
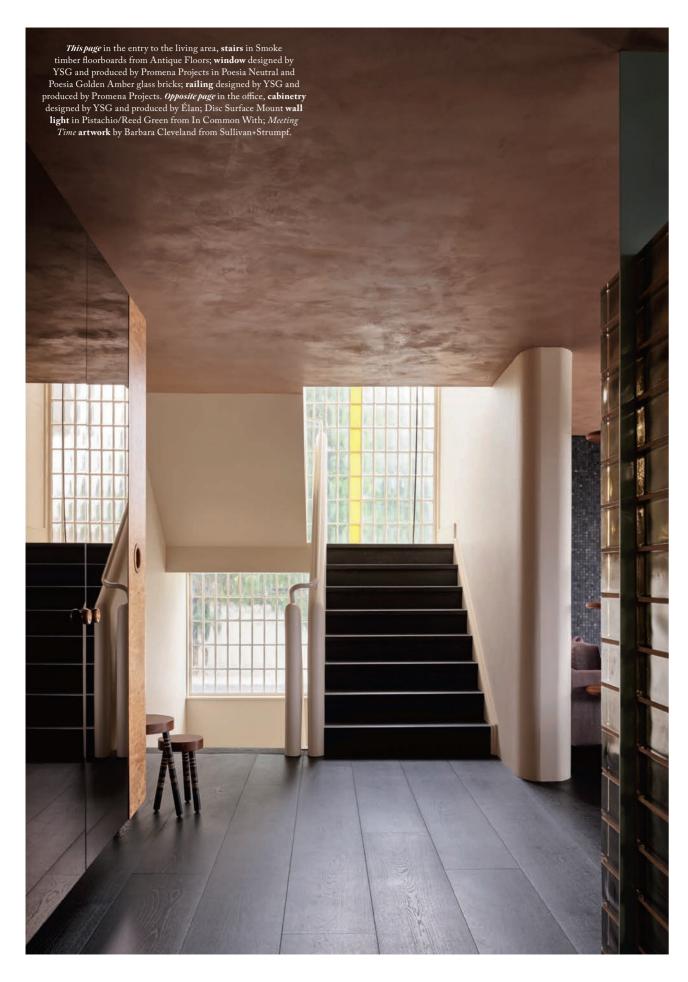
## DIAMANTE BRILLIANTE

A DETAIL-DRIVEN renovation gives this elevated *Sydney* waterfront home a refreshed aesthetic and new life as a COVETED JEWEL in YSG's residential *crown*.











ft-identified as the hub of the home, the kitchen may be a hustle-bustle zone but the beating heart within it is the island. It's where all the action takes place, where life gathers and flows. But in the case of designer Yasmine Ghoniem's latest residential project, a three-storey harbourside property in Sydney's Mosman three years in the making, it's emblematic of the scale of the dwelling's considered, refined and boundary-pushing renovation — but more on the specifics of this standout piece later.

The potential for the waterfront family home warranted dramatic spatial rethinking and structural re-imagining from its cookie-cutter '90s coastal aesthetic to something more heightened, layered and interesting. "We wanted to completely flip that narrative," says Ghoniem. The homeowners had specified inspiration from boutique hotels, a line of thinking that the designer has translated into a warm spirit of hospitality in this ambitious everyday retreat. "For me, still, when I go to a hotel, I get giddy because it's

not home, and there's always something beautiful about it whether it's lighting or proportions," says Ghoniem over the phone from Bali, where the ever-busy creative is overseeing a project among several abroad. "What's attractive about hospitality is that sense of being comfortable and casual in a refined space. It's all about setting the scene for immediate relaxation, and the embrace of home as soon as you step in."

Of course, the now cool, calm and collected atmosphere of the Sydney home is at complete odds with how it came to be. "The project was incredibly tricky," says Ghoniem. "We had this very disjointed series of little rooms separating views between areas on that middle level. It was just a massive extension of the living space." Enjoying such a premium position and making the most of this enviable vantage point demanded a substantial and expensive change in the floor plan, something that was an undertaking from that start. "It took a lot of convincing, although the clients loved the idea," says the designer. Internal space was given back to the balcony to expand the alfresco entertaining area and utilise the formerly neglected barbecue zone. Partition walls were also swapped for steel posts worked into architecturally minded feature elements to further open up the home to its picture-perfect outlook. "Without removing them, it probably wouldn't have been worth doing the renovation at all," she says. Opening up the space also allowed more sunlight in, with a glass brick wall in the kitchen and dining area filtering this light, separated by sleek blue struts in a nod to the sea beyond.

And then there is that island. This is no mere paint-by-numbers piece, of course, masterminded by someone best known for her instinctive expression of tone and materiality. Ghoniem could have easily created "an all-in-one form, but I felt like I wouldn't be doing that space justice," she says of the impressive plinth crafted in leathered quartzite with a tumbled stone mosaic feature. "I dislike islands where you sit and cook at the same time, so I always like to try and separate those functions, because I feel like people then use those spaces more. They're intended just for one task, purely just for someone to sit and enjoy a cup of tea while talking to somebody cooking."

In a confident showcase of her sixth-sense understanding of colour and texture, Ghoniem connected the two island zones with "a poppy turquoise and we inserted glass blocks in the middle as a fun way to hold oils and sauces for the cooking station". Surrounding jacarandas informed the hero hue in the lounge section of the living area. Bringing in such tonal elements has echoes of a traditional Milanese apartment, where each feature makes a statement yet somehow fits seamlessly into the overall scheme. The glass element also lends levity to the island's visual weight, while linking it to the glass brick wall. It's a gesture demonstrating how Ghoniem never loses sight of the whole, no matter how focused she is on the detail.

"I love texture, it's an important part of palettes," says the designer. "And I kind of start backwards. I look at all the materials first and then figure out how I'm going to apply them." This finely tuned blending of tonal palette with character plays earthy in the middle living level, to bold in the lower level — home to a rumpus room, laundry, guest quarters, office and cellar — while the upper main suite revels in a lighter selection of pure sand and plaster shades, recalling the home's coastal contemporary style in a heightened, tactile way.

Reworking the internal envelope by unpicking the seams, marking new hemlines and creating a fresh narrative thread determined the project's new direction and philosophy. "The main area and the way it was spaced and planned is probably my favourite in the home," says Ghoniem. "What I love more than anything, more than details or textures or overall aesthetics, is if somebody uses a space they didn't use before, then I've done my job. The reworking of the plan allowed every inch of it to be used in a very effective way. As hard as this project was, it was worth every push." 
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