

MAGIC EYE

Informed by the *imagination* of YSG's Yasmine Ghoniem and the heritage of its owners, a Melbourne home's new extension embraces Egyptian iconography, Danish *classics* and a magic carpet of MULTI-COLOURED tiles.

By LINDYL ZANBAKA Photographed by ANSON SMART



These pages in a lounge area of this Fitzroy North home, Erik Ole Jørgensen EJ315 sofa from Radar; &Tradition Wulff **footstool** from Cult; New Volumes Echo low **table** by Thomas Coward from Artedomus; Flower Swirl **plate** by Seala Lokollo; Hangin-on-a-String **tumbler** by Issy Parker from Craft Victoria; Mist Slip ceramic **vase** by Dawn Vachon from Pépite; Wildwood square **cushion** in Mandarin (left), and Palmer **cushion** in Calippo (right), both from Jardan; custom silk **rug** designed by YSG and crafted by Tappeti; Lampe De Marseille **wall light** by Le Corbusier for Nemo; Apparatus Talisman Loop **wall scone** (in hallway) from Criteria; *Embodied Watery Entanglements 16' (2022)* **artwork** by Jahnne Pasco-White from Station Gallery. *Details, last pages.*



This page in the living room, Maralunga sofa by Vico Magistretti for Cassina from Radar; Marengo armchair by Arflex (back), and Nepal Mongolia armchair by Paola Navone for Baxter, both from Space Furniture; Fritz Hansen PK61A coffee table and PK62 side table, both from Cult; blue cushions designed by YSG and produced by Rematerialised; Poppy rectangle cushion from Jardan; Unfunky UFO vase (on coffee table, left) by Issy Parker, Rambut vase (on coffee table, right) by Tantri Mustika, and Splashing me in silver squares vase (on shelf) by Maia Robin McDonald, all from Craft Victoria; Baba Tree Dulga basket, and Flower Pot 8 basket, both from Koskela; Showtime vase N.4 (pink), and Showtime vase N.5 (blue) both by Jaime Hayón for BD Barcelona Design, enquiries to Mobilia; Rabari 1 rug from Nanimarquina; CTO Lighting Array Opal floor lamp from Spence & Lyda; 4 Bowl Pendant with Arch pendant light from Anna Charlesworth; *The Weight* (2019) artwork by Teelah George from Neon Parc. *Opposite page* in the entry, Jellies coat hooks by Patricia Urquiola for Kartell from Space Furniture; bag in Acca Stripe from Kvadrat; Tartan pendant light by Ludovica and Roberto Palomba from Foscarini; leadlight window designed by YSG; floorboards from Havwoods with custom Eukula stain from Peerless JAL; *Untitled* (2017) artwork by Elizabeth Newman from Neon Parc.





These pages in another view of the lounge area with the kitchen in the background, Womb **chair** by Eero Saarinen for Knoll from Dedec; Møller 63 **bench** from Great Dane; Elk bolster **cushions** in Donkey (left) and Copper, both from Jardan; Mist Slip ceramic **vase** (on windowsill) by Dawn Vachon from Pépite; porcelain **tiles** from Ocean & Merchant in custom YSG pattern; *Rampage* (2023) **sculpture** by Georgia Harvey from Craft Victoria.





In 1849 the French novelist Gustave Flaubert left Paris in search of faraway ancient cities. Arriving in Egypt, Flaubert was met by “an astounding hubbub of colour” and in his writing he compared his time there to being alive in the middle of a Beethoven symphony. “Your poor old imagination, as if it were at a fireworks display, is perpetually dazzled.”

Bellyfuls of colour is what we’ve come to expect from a Yasmine Ghoniem project, but it takes a client who’s not afraid of letting off a few fireworks to turn it into a symphony — a client just like the owner of this family home in Fitzroy North. It was quickly established that Ghoniem and the owner’s mothers share the same name, their husbands have similar careers, and to top it off, “she, like me, is half Australian, half Egyptian,” Ghoniem says. “It’s a hilarious pairing for a designer and client to have such similar aesthetics, experiences and heritage, so from the get-go we understood what she wanted.”

The project is YSG’s first residential endeavour in Melbourne, and the first to get a taste of the VL50-listed studio’s new in-house architecture services. Spatially, the original floorplan didn’t make sense for a couple with two children — the natural light and prettiest views were hidden away in the four bedrooms, leaving communal spaces dark and under-utilised. “We spent a long time figuring out the areas the family would live in and how we could inject the most light into them,” Ghoniem says. But the problems weren’t just architectural. The Victorian house didn’t represent its owners at all — not the client’s longing for the familiar colours of Egypt, nor her husband’s Danish background and dyed-in-the-wool desire for streamlined timber features — so the team knocked out the rear “and started again”.

The new extension is built on a magic carpet of tiled floors designed to read like rugs, which are “a big part of interiors in the Middle East”, Ghoniem notes. “It was inspired by the fact the client is Egyptian,” she adds. “I don’t think there’d be many clients who would be up for tiling their entire extension in a very colourful geometric pattern.” Ghoniem modernised the concept by creating a pixilated design with vitrified porcelain tiles, letting them creep up the walls, curl around the kitchen, splash out across the dining area, and dance their way through the bathrooms and main bedroom suite.

Those tessellated tiles opened new realms of exploration, culminating in the use of coloured glass along the windows. Around the curved kitchen seating nook, squares of stained glass mirror the colourful floors and perfume the room in aromatic shades of turmeric and saffron. “The niche at the end of the room informed the shape of the façade and its beautiful stained-glass mosaic that overlooks a lush garden,” Ghoniem describes. “We wanted this to be a light-filled space and colour is part of that story, so naturally stained glass was the way to go.”

Like a cook balancing the sweet with the salty, Ghoniem ensured the kitchen was to everyone’s taste. A breakfast table is hemmed with a scalloped edge, and the timber island is kept clutter-free with the addition of turquoise granite recessed niches where the family can display fresh fruit — or discreetly hide their ‘stuff’. These details are “a spin-off of the traditional”, says Ghoniem, “but that’s as far as one of the clients would let us go in terms of messing with the beautiful timber”. She plates up the best of both worlds in the dining area, where Fritz Hansen chairs circle a custom straw marquetry-topped table that was brought over from Egypt. A green Las Ánimas pendant cuts through the richness of the timber joinery like a squeeze of lime and Louis Poulsen lights illuminate the presence of Danish influences.

Ghoniem’s best ideas often present themselves in the shower, so the design of a bathroom, she says, needs to “vibe accordingly”. In the main ensuite, a walk-in shower with a full-length checkered glass window nails the vibe — the “jewel-toned bling is pretty special, especially on sunny mornings”. In the kids’ bathroom, a tiled tub with a curved seating perch recalls the slow luxury of a hammam, where the act of sloughing off the day is meant to be savoured.

A mutual interest in Egyptian mythology produced one of the most special pieces — a textile bed runner commissioned by the client and made by the French designer Louis Barthélemy, who is “also obsessed” with Egyptian iconography. “Everything she loved, we loved, and vice versa,” Ghoniem says of her client, who, when in Cairo, would text Ghoniem asking “do you want me to pick up anything while I’m here?” and hung Middle Eastern metal lanterns from the branches of a tree in her Melbourne backyard. “It really does feel like you’ve stepped back in time in Cairo,” says Ghoniem.

Stepping into other worlds is something Ghoniem knows a thing or two about. As a host on the new Australian lifestyle series *Grand Designs Transformations*, Ghoniem is bringing her heart-on-sleeve authenticity to television screens. “I grew up watching Kevin McCloud,” she says of the original *Grand Designs* presenter. “The format changes slightly with *Transformations* — I’m co-hosting with Anthony Burke from *Grand Designs Australia* — and we follow a lot of different stories and people.” Encouraging these renovators was “humbling” for Ghoniem, who’s grown accustomed to working with more generous budgets and timeframes. “At the end I’m excited to see if they have taken on some of my advice,” says the award-winning designer. “And nine times out of 10 they haven’t!” ■ *ysg.studio*

This page in the kitchen, **island** in solid maple timber with turquoise granite produced by Taylormade Cabinets; **cabinetry** in stained birch, and **cabinet pulls** designed by YSG and produced by Taylormade Cabinets; Harvest terracotta **bowl** (on island) by Megan Morton from Artedomus; Leaf and Thread ceramic **vessel** (above cabinets, left) by Laura Veleff, and ceramic **vases** (above cabinets) by Emily Ellis, all from Pépité; Elle custom-coloured **ceiling lights** from Sphera; *You are loved and protected I* and *You are loved and protected III* ceramic wall **artworks** both by Ara Dolatian from Craft Victoria.





This page in the outdoor area, Luciano custom-coloured wall lights from Sphera; landscape design by Blackbird Horticulture; *Opposite page* in the breakfast nook, banquette seat designed by YSG and produced by Taylormade Cabinetry; tabletop designed by YSG; Sanca! Pion custom-coloured table base, and Frames chairs by Jaime Hayón for Expormim, both from Ke-zu; jug by Seala Lokollo; Yes Please bowl by Mathieu Frossard from Pépîte; Stack glass tumbler by Studio Dokola, and Monument (2023) sculpture by Caro Pattle both from Craft Victoria; PH5 pendant light by Poul Henningsen for Louis Poulsen; leadlight window designed by YSG.





These pages in the dining area, Egyptian bronze **dining table** by Shewekar Elgharably; Series 7 **chairs** in velvet by Arne Jacobsen for Fritz Hansen; **cabinetry** in maple veneer designed by YSG and produced by Taylormade Cabinets; Hat **bowl** in Peach Bloom (on table) by House Editions, Yoke the Hole **tumbler** (right), and A Moment to Myself ceramic **dish** (on shelf, top right) both by Issy Parker, Contemporary Artifact IV **vessel** (on middle shelf, right) by Claudia De Salvo, and *Marebu* (Woven Pandanus Mat) 2023 **artwork** (on left) by Indra Prudence, all from Craft Victoria; fruit **bowl** (on bottom shelf, left), Sausalito **bowl** (on shelf, top left) and Blue **plates** (on middle shelf, left) all by Seala Lokollo; Adorned **vessel** No. 14 for Exuberance (2023) (on floor, left), and Adorned **vessel** No. 18 for Stillness (2023) both by Minaal Lawn; Archæ N.411 **pendant lamp** by Las Ánimas from Adorno; *Currents* **sculpture** (on table) by Bastard Ceramics from Pépite; *#201 Park Meus* (2023) **artwork** by Jake Walker from Station Gallery.



This page in the main bathroom, **bath** designed by YSG and produced by Locbuild; **tapware** in Tuscan Bronze from Astra Walker; &Tradition Tung **side table** from Cult; **cabinet handles** and **towel rail** from Mi&Gei; Baina **towel** from In Good Company; Wyldefel Mosaic **tiles** from Onsite Supply and Design; Inax Triangle **tile** border from Artedomus; *Sun Face Plate, A Friend's Face, Face 5, Face 4, and Face 6* **artworks** all by Seala Lokollo. *Opposite page* in the main bedroom, **headboard** designed by YSG and produced by Rematerialised; hand-embroidered custom **bed runner** by Louis Barthélemy; Cone **wall light** from Warm Nordic; Zen Quartzite **floor tiles** from Surface Gallery; Popham Design Bow Tie **tiles** (as cornice) in Milk from Onsite Supply and Design; ceramic **vase** by Lene Kuhl Jakobsen, *Intervals - Diatonic* (2023) **artwork** by Camille Laddawan, and *Leonid* (2023) ceramic **sculpture** by Georgia Harvey, all from Craft Victoria. *Details, last pages.*



