



Otherworldly

The new Alémais Sydney headquarters reflects the brand's flair for colourful prints and embellishments

WORDS – ANEESHA RAI



Located above street level in the triangular footprint of a Surry Hills warehouse, creative confidence and spirited discovery underpin the playful yet polished aesthetic of the Alémais Sydney headquarters, designed by YSG Studio. Here, myriad realms co-exist as design references to lunar planets, mythological kingdoms, aquatic worlds and folklore, loosely inspired by the company's renowned print design collaborations with artists, craftspeople and illustrators since its founding in 2021.

The space's central nucleus comprises a conjoined design and pattern-making zone, with a lounge-like design hang nestled within the very tip of the wing-shaped floorplan where new collection ideas take flight. Residing on either side of the entrance, a semi-open kitchen and dining area plus guest reception banquette/ additional social space grant a domesticated

welcome. Greeting all upon arrival, a new wall blade buffers the hive of activity behind.

Coated with shimmering mosaics, the mural – conceived by YSG Studio – features half-human/half-animal forms floating amongst fantastical fauna. Dedicated storage and archival space (at arm's reach from the pattern-makers), plus a boardroom, are neatly tucked along one edge behind custom timber-framed screens with Tuareg mat inserts featuring assorted geometric motifs. Two dedicated offices sit at opposing ends of the space for founder and Creative Director/Designer Lesleigh Jermanus (closer to the design team) and her retail veteran partner Chris Buchanan (beside the entrance).

In this space which was once an open corner office plan pierced by ample windows, YSG Studio treated the brick walls and timber-beamed ceiling like a primary canvas, coating them in warm cream shades, leaving some

brick surfaces in their exposed original state for textural punctuation. Exceptions include the two private offices. For Buchanan, a warm honeycomb tone was used; for Jermanus, soft pistachio (which is also echoed in the kitchen, amongst surfaces slathered in boysenberry-rippled marble). Enhancing the teams' collegial nature while enabling privacy when required, both glass-panelled office walls were lined with neutral window treatments. For Buchanan, linen café blinds with chequered almond shades upon an oatmeal base hang at standing head height, allowing them to also flow across the glass entrance wall, providing additional privacy when seated. Gentle checked butter yellow linen curtains were used across Jermanus's glass wall, enabling visibility of the team if required when drawn open. Designed for interaction, the space is never static, and adapts to daily needs. Several large custom timber frames support cork pin boards laid with inspiration images, new collection fabrics and sketches that can roam across the floorboards on casters. Cozoni *Knox* drawer units on wheels are tucked under desks should they need to momentarily migrate.

YSG Studio approached tonal drenching like designing new collection palettes, mingling sorbet shades with warm earthen tones. Drawing upon Jermanus's Lebanese heritage and fine arts background, the studio wove tangible tales of faraway lands and ancient cultures, layering punchy patterns and balancing matte and sheen finishes. Bolder colours pin the two ends of the space. The entrance reception's banquette was reupholstered with a vibrant tribal fabric, reminiscent of a Congolese cloth, that marries tangerine chenille with rugged linen. A large Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran punk-like deity holds court upon a bubble gum pink-stained timber plinth that brackets one end. Past the design team over in the far corner, 'Design Hang' – a trippy underwater scene – floats the spirit of adventure. Upon the custom ocean bed-shaded rug, seaweed tip motifs animate the velvet banquette that anchors the hub. Mint and plum tones define the main 'design hub' axis, where desk rows are punctuated by custom storage units crowned by raised partitions designed to house fabric swatches, embellishment samples and illustrative books for inspiration. Soft, feminine shades and rounded shapes define Jermanus's boudoir-like office, accentuated by lilac hues. Joinery units and the founder's desk are custom-made, incorporating *Marmoleum Vivace* surfaces with subtle swirling marble-like patterns upon them. The same material was selected for Buchanan's

Previous spread –
The design draws from lunar planets, mythological kingdoms, aquatic worlds and folklore
Left page – Sorbet shades are mingled with warm earthen tones



Photography: Anson Smart

desk and joinery, incorporating warmer timber shades with a similar pattern – only his designs take on angular, geometric iterations. Strong ethical choices govern the stewardship of the brand and its principled manufacturing processes, so sourcing materials that aligned with this approach (including the Marmoleum) was a key directive during early concept discussions. Several key vintage pieces were re-upholstered, from armchairs to the teapot-like timber drinks cabinet facing the dining table.

Embodying the joy of the brand, references to mystic and divine elements are sprinkled throughout. Golden starburst knobs glitter upon the plum cabinets beside the desk rows, while a blazing sun illuminates the top corner of the mosaic mural. Egyptian Seba stars are also sprinkled about via custom bronze pulls, adding golden glows to the kitchen joinery, while others are scattered underfoot on the rug of 'Design Hang'. Recurring 'All-Seeing Eye' motifs are more prominent, with silver iterations inlaid with pearlescent shell inlays fluttering upon joinery fronts in Jermanus's office. Another, this time hand-painted upon a splashback, casts its gaze over the kitchen. Most fantastical is the custom 'eye' dining table. Set upon a glossy polyurethane ruffled pedestal base, its embossed Ash Birch elliptical surface in pastel tones was hand-painted to highlight natural woodgrain patterns. A raised lazy Susan forms its central pupil. Nearby, a custom hand-painted timber snake slithers up the concealed refrigerator door. A sculptural entity in itself, its body also serves as two handles. Another wriggles across a canvas in Buchanan's office.