

Life & Leisure

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**CHRISTMAS
RICHES**
56 PAGES OF
GIFTS TO
TREASURE

DESIGN TOP PICKS

Yin and yang

Two celebrated Australian interior designers share their wish lists with Stephen Todd.



A-esque Green Grocer tote by Amanda Briskin-Rettig, above; Kaylene Whiskey jumper, right; and Fitzroy play group Cubbies, below.



David Flack, above, loves Jordan Fleming lamps, above left, In Bed linen, top, this Carlo Scarpa mirror and container from Nicholas & Alistair, far left, and Glenn Barkley ceramics, left. PHOTOS: ZAC BAYLY, VICTORIA ZSCHOMMLER

David Flack and Yasmine Ghoniem are the yin and yang of Australian interior design, their aesthetics distinct but interconnected.

The pair met in 2018 when Melbourne-based Flack invited Ghoniem, who is based in Sydney, to stay at his Fitzroy home as they were both finalists in the National Gallery of Victoria's prestigious Rigg Design Prize. They'd never met before, but Flack sensed *sympatico*: the pair became fast friends, discovering a little of themselves in the other.

He revels in punchy colours and unexpected materials, creating room-scapes that are strong on narrative, perfectly resolved.

She delights in crafting bespoke fittings, filling a space with iconoclastic pieces, savvily mixed. You can reread those last two sentences, swapping pronouns – they'll still hold true.

They each set up their own studios after only four years in the industry, and both made waves early on thanks to their aesthetic fearlessness and confident executions. He reckons her Middle Eastern background is evident in her penchant for patinas ("which is one of the many things I love about Yas' work"). She says he is "an arch modernist with an advanced sense of glam".

This year has been big for them both.

Among his 2021 projects, Flack completed the Melbourne home of singer Troye Sivan – which appeared simultaneously on the cover of *Vogue Living* in Australia and in *Architectural Design* in America. He was also named the Interior Design Excellence Award (IDEA) Designer of the Year.

Ghoniem's studio YSG was shortlisted for more than 20 awards this year, received two High Commendations from the Australian Interior Design Awards (AIDA) and won the Design Files' Best Residential Award for a penthouse in Rushcutters Bay, Sydney.

These are their Christmas picks.

DAVID FLACK

Creature comforts

I discovered the work of Sydney-based designer Jordan Fleming at Melbourne Design Week this year. I love how these gangly lamps are like organic creatures, upbeat monster friends. She creates them from layers of sculpting plaster mixed with raw pigments in mostly flat pastel hues. Once a small run of each colour is complete, she stops – so each piece is unique. I have one at home and another in the studio but

could always find room for more. jordanfleming.com.au

Free spirits

Artist, writer, curator and gardener Glenn Barkley is also one of Australia's ceramic legends. His work is mysterious and playful, mixing historical references such as Grecian urns and shards of playful mosaic with gloopy bits that could be boiled lollies. His surfaces often feel as if they're knitted. It's tongue in cheek but also kind of chic, and I remember he once said he has a "fear of empty space" – which I can totally relate to. sullivanstrumpf.com/artists/glenn-barkley/bio

Beautiful bedding

The gift I get every year from my mum and the gift I look forward to receiving: a bed set! The people at In Bed source their fibres from ethical producers around the world, including sustainable flax linen from Belgium and France, alpaca from Peru and certified organic cotton from Turkey. We're also designing In Bed's Melbourne flagship store in Armadale. It will open later this month. inbedstore.com

One of a kind

Kaylene Whiskey is one of Australia's most exciting artists, and one of my obsessions. Her work celebrates strong women – sometimes her friends, sometimes icons like Wonder Woman or Cher – mixed with symbols of Country. I have a small collage/paint piece by her in my living room and would be proud to own one of these fabulous jumpers, created in collaboration with the Sydney knitwear brand WAH-WAH. Based in Indulkana, South Australia, Whiskey is represented by Roslyn Oxley9 in Paddington, Sydney. roslynoxley9.com.au/artist/kaylene-whiskey

Bags this!

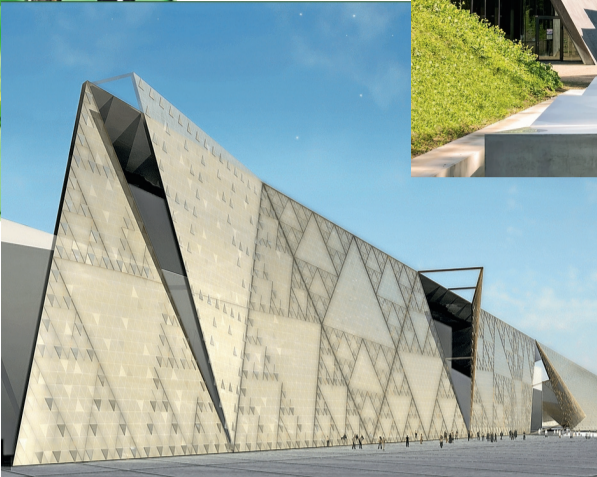
Amanda Briskin-Rettig's designs for her hand-made bag label, A-esque, are classic and elegant, which is totally refreshing in a market saturated with accessories that scream for attention. Finely crafted in Melbourne, they have a metallic tag on the inside, so the quality speaks for itself, rather than being implied with a label. I am shamelessly dropping hints for this Green Grocer tote bag, which is almost a half-metre wide – big enough to lug material samples around on client site visits. Although the suede lining probably means I'd save it for long weekends away. a-esque.com

Mirror, mirror

Nicholas Mesiano and Alistair Knight import the most incredible, rare European vintage furniture and objects for their Melbourne gallery Nicholas & Alistair. I've long been obsessed with the work of the modernist Italian architect Carlo Scarpa. He is perhaps best known for hard-edged, quite brutal buildings but was also a master of fine, delicate personal pieces such as this Murano glass hand-mirror and vessel. Totally collectable. nicholasandalistair.com/objects/vanity-set-by-carlo-scarpa/

Gift of play

In 2016, the year Trump was elected and Brexit voted in, we looked around our neighbourhood of Fitzroy and realised there was some grime there too. So, we began supporting Cubbies, a community institution that provides a safe place for mostly immigrant children to express themselves through play. Any donation will help this program continue. flackstudio.com.au/cubbies-2/



Yasmine Ghoniem, left, fancies Vyrro fragrances, including this High Five Travel Set and Witchy Woo perfume, below left. PHOTO: PRUE RUSCOE

YASMINE GHONIEM

C'est Vyrro!

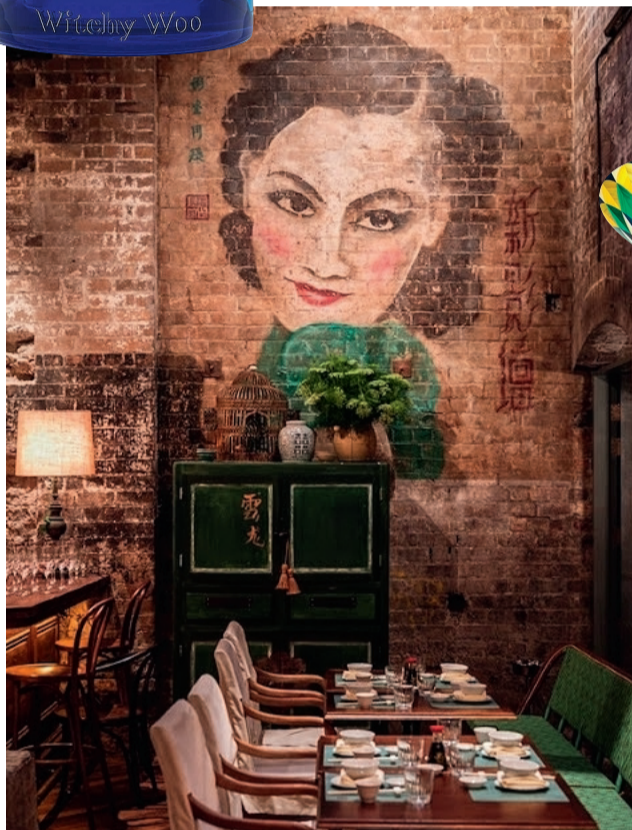
I'd treasure a perfume from the wellness brand Vyrro, launched in May by Lebanese-Australian Yasmin Sewell, former vice-president of Farfetch. Beyond the incredible scents ('Witchy Woo' surely casts hypnotic spells), these are fragrances created to amplify your energy levels and raise your spirits. Every bottle contains a supercharged Herkimer diamond crystal energised by a master healer. A High Five Travel Set sounds perfect for trying them all – a power-pack to spritz away, depending on what mood I want to capture. Genius. vyrro.com

Flight of fantasy

You guessed it! Something more treasured than the winning lottery numbers at the mo – an international airline ticket. I'd get an around-the-world fare, stopping off at three new museums where the architectural frameworks are as inspiring as the exhibitions inside. First up would be The Grand Egyptian Museum on the Giza plateau (opening in late 2022), set behind a veil of translucent stone. I'd meet up with Dad as he lives in Cairo. Next would be Snøhetta's subterranean extension of the Ordrupgaard art museum in Denmark. Only its steel roof is visible. Lastly, in France I'd visit Gehry's twisted reflective tower, the LUMA Arles, and stay at the L'Arlatan hotel to complete the sensory overload. grandegyptianmuseum.org/ordrupgaard.dk/ luma.org/en/arles/ arlatan.com/en

Let's dance

The Dorothy in me would very much like my own heavily crystallised strappy samba heels to rock the dance floor. I take private samba lessons weekly, and was all set to



compete in September when the lockdown shot my plans to smithereens. I just know these babies would lead me on a "no ifs, all struts" yellow brick road to victory. brazilcarnivalshop.com/collections/samba-shoes

Good deeds

Counterbalancing the bling dynasty on my feet, I'd level up with an excess of kindness,

Creative Finish mural, above; crystal-studded samba shoes, far right.



providing both a financial donation and surplus furniture items from home to the Generous & Grateful charity. It provides furnishings for young people leaving foster care, domestic abuse survivors, refugees and homeless people placed in accommodation. generousandgrateful.com.au

Pure magic

It's ironic that they work with straw because everything Australian industrial designer Adam Goodrum and French marquetry artisan Arthur Seigneur create spins into gold. Their kaleidoscopic functional art objects exert a special optical magic. adamandarthur.com

Arty walls

I collaborate with Creative Finish Sydney for almost all my projects. Marmorino finishes (a type of Venetian plaster) saturate walls and ceilings in velvety colours. Murals and trompe-l'œil floor finishes are their specialty – another quirk in select YSG

spaces. I'd give Mum a mural of herself and Dad eating watermelon on their bed together. Although separated now, they're still the best of mates. Back in the day she would make Dad hand-painted postcards the size of thumbnails of their favourite times together – the watermelon scene was hers. creativefinishsydney.com **L&L**



FAIRFAX & ROBERTS
BESPOKE JEWELLERS EST. 1858

EMBRACE THE BOLD

Manhattan Collection

