

By FRANCESCA WALLACE Photographed by PRUE RUSCOE Styled by FELICITY NG

# BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY

YSG redefines *coastal living* with the genre-bending, retro-sampled transformation of a brick cottage that brings the NOSTALGIA of the 1970s and the eccentricity of *European design* to Byron Bay.



*This page* in the dining and bar area of this Byron Bay home, custom dining table in spotted gum and reclaimed hardwood, and window designed by YSG and crafted by Maiden Co; dining chairs sourced from flea markets in Paris by YSG and Studio Alm, reupholstered by The Dusty Road in Lure fabric by Kelly Wearstler for Lee Jofa; 1970s yellow Murano glass ashtray from Lumini Collections. *Details, last pages.*



*This page* in the sunken lounge area, Soriana **armchair** by Afra and Tobia Scarpa for Cassina, ceramic **coffee table** by Roger Capron, and Raak **wall lights** in stainless steel and copper, all from Studio Alm; travertine **chess set** and antique head **sculpture** from Tigmi Trading; Yellow Diamond **mirror** by Sunroom Glass; Ma'at **rug** by YSG x Tappeti; custom Roman **blind** in Élitis fabric and **curtain** in Tennessee Tussah by Catherine Martin by Mokum and produced by Petre's Curtains & Blinds; Ortigia **wallpaper** from Élitis. *Opposite page* in another view of the sunken lounge area, brown banquette **cushions** in Élitis Bellezza fabric, striped banquette **cushions** in Saheo fabric, blue **cushions** in Local Denim fabric, small **cushions** in Élitis fabric and gold **cushion** in Zoffany fabric, all designed by YSG and crafted by The Dusty Road; handwoven Medicine Totem **wall hanging** from Appetite for Decoration; Alexandria **bowl**, and clay **bowl** and **vase** (bottom shelf) by Saskia Folk from Tigmi Trading; Zebra Calcite **crystal** (middle shelf) from Crystals of the World; Mid-Century Modern Italian **paper bin** (used as planter) from Lumini Collections.

There's a sense of letting go that comes with going against the grain. For Yasmine Ghoniem, it was a project in Byron Bay that tested her ingenuity and her determination to 'let go' and break away from coastal stereotypes. "It feels dream-like, like I've been there before and also haven't, if that makes sense," the YSG director says of the family home she recently completed in the beachside enclave, best known for its white walls and rattan furniture and less so for its risk-taking and colour. Balancing both is exactly what Ghoniem has managed here — to straddle the line between the nostalgic and the new to create a cosy sense of déjà vu, the feeling that makes a house a home.

"The clients wanted something that wasn't super white. They were avid lovers of the '70s and had a real soft spot for brown, so that colour is sprinkled throughout with the mix of terracotta," Ghoniem says of the owners, a couple with a young family. "It was about transforming a tired house that looked typical. It felt and looked bland and didn't really have a vibe. The idea was to get us on board to provide a holistic injection of something cool."

Ghoniem reimagined and simplified the layout and made structural interventions to fit the flow. Working with Webber Build, the team created a passage to the children's bedrooms and enclosed an internal upstairs balcony, adding a timber-clad circular window — or as Ghoniem puts it, a "large porthole" — to provide light. But the majority of the changes were made to the design, transforming the "weird Swiss cabin stuck in a rainforest" into a modern Byron gem.

There's a distinct Italo-disco vibe in the communal spaces, and Ghoniem confirms the Italian references are heavy handed, given the decades of inspiration and its linchpin effect on the global aesthetic. "The balancing act of creating drama and sophistication seems to come so naturally [to Italians]. From bold colours to strong silhouettes, there's an undercurrent of harmony in everything."

The furniture, much of it custom, vintage or sourced while travelling in Europe, includes several Italian designs. "I sourced two incredible vintage Italian armchairs with a chocolate and spearmint harlequin wool pattern that were in perfect nick from Oda Paris — the connoisseurs of vintage cool — where we also picked up a vintage Italian chrome wall light that looks like tangled spaghetti. We popped in a great Memphis-inspired angular side table to seal the deal."

Blending the masculine and feminine of the 1970s — there's light and shade in spades, albeit without a single stark white or midnight black traditionally associated with gendered design — Ghoniem threw in more traditional Australian beach house elements like the terracotta floor throughout. Contrasted against warm timber trims and lush marble, each space contains elements of beachy casualness mirrored in equal parts with sophisticated touches.

The chrome balustrade wrap, inspired by skatepark railing, is one of the most unexpected design elements in the kitchen, and one that went on to guide everything spinning from its orbit. "We imagined our client and his mates knocking about in the kitchen space while someone is listening to music on the sunken lounge and having that real causal connection of conversation between the rooms," says Ghoniem. "We wanted people to feel like they could lean on something and be transported back in time to their early 20s; of freedom." That same chrome detail is replicated in the kitchen finishes and the chairs at the custom dining table, which have been reupholstered in Kelly Wearstler fabric, turning the skatepark theme into an updated take on 1980s sheen.

The sunken lounge — of which Ghoniem confirms is back in demand with her clients — is the centrepiece of the space. "[I love] that idea of descending to relax. There's this element of grounding in a home and you get that when you walk down. It doesn't have to be many stairs, even a few and it's a journey to get to that sofa. It doesn't matter what era, how old, where you are from, you want a sunken lounge!"

The recessed living space is original to the house, and Ghoniem's bespoke soft furnishings, embossed wallpaper, vintage tiled Capron coffee table and custom silk-and-wool rug mix and match for different textures. Combined with the denim-clad Cassina chair, it feels fit for a '70s film set. The ocean-blue denim lifts the palette, offsetting the browns, pinks and ochres. "What we tried to do with the interior was translate that feeling or emotion into a space and physical objects. How could you make that casual impression through space and things?" she asks.

In the bathrooms, the tiling — a YSG signature — plays with shapes, from super large to smaller squares that frame the bath, and the clients' connection to Western Australia informed the checkerboard Kimberley stone in the powder room. The two timber stripes on all the doors "represent the pinstripe you'd find on '70s-era pants" and the dining table has two legs fixed at alternating angles, in order to be best appreciated from the lounge. These details, alongside the handcrafted African wall hangings, ensure there's something to talk about at every turn.

"There was this balance of give and take between the two clients. It made the project. If one person was always saying yes, you'd have a different outcome. There wasn't that, there was always a conversation," Ghoniem reflects. Redefining a genre isn't easy work, but if anyone's up to the task, it's Ghoniem. With her multi-layered approach weaving the known and loved with the unexpected, coastal living has never looked so personal. ■ [ysg.studio](#)

This page in the bar area, vintage armchairs and vintage chrome Arteluce wall light from Oda Paris; vintage Italian coffee table from Colecta Rara; Leafy bowl by Kate Rohde; chrome sphere from Vampt Vintage Design; Draped Black Wicker side table (in living area beyond) from Tigmi Trading; placemats and handwoven bowl from Appetite for Decoration; floor in Cotto Manetti terracotta tiles from Artedomus in custom pattern designed by YSG; Mojo artwork by Jeremy Kay.



*These pages* in the kitchen and dining areas, **island** and chrome **joinery handles** designed by YSG and produced by Woodrabbit; vintage **stools** from Lunatiques, reupholstered by The Dusty Road in Sahco Tropic fabric; Zebrano timber veneer **joinery** from Briggs Veneers; shell **bowl** from Appetite for Decoration; Fasano Lazio **plates** from Clo Studios; **bowls** from Softedge Studio; 1960s red Italian ceramic **bowl** from Lumini Collections; Ostrea **vase** and Sculpture in White Glaze **coupe**, both from Tigmi Trading; Toni Zuccheri Murano glass **chandelier**; **floor** in Cotto Manetti terracotta tiles from Artedomus in custom pattern designed by YSG; iron **sculpture** by Theo Niermeijer (on dining table) from Tigmi Trading; Moon **pendant light** (in lounge area) designed by YSG and crafted by Anomalous.





*This page in the main ensuite, bath surround in Vixel mosaic tile from Artedomus and custom tumbled dark travertine and Biancone marble from Aeria Country Floors; tapware in brushed copper from ABI Interiors; vertical heated towel rail in Tuscan Bronze from Astra Walker; jug from Softedge Studio; towel from In Bed. Opposite page in another view of the main ensuite, custom vanity designed by YSG in honed Bellini marble crafted by CDK Stone; tapware in brushed copper from ABI Interiors; FAT drawer handles by D Line and Tom Dixon from Casson Hardware; Chanterelle wall hooks from Ferm Living; ceramic bells by Lisa Lapointe; Tinja check and stripe Jacques pots from Clo Studios; Intueri Light Bullarum wall light from In Good Company; floor in Italian porcelain tile in Sand and Clay from Perini. Details, last pages.*