

Greg Natale brings a hit of bold colour and pattern to a sunken living room in this Sydney home.

MAX IT OUT



An inviting mix of tone and texture at the hands of YSG.



A CELEBRATION OF INDIVIDUALITY AND THE CONFIDENCE TO TAKE RISKS, MAXIMALISM'S BOLD, DIALLED-UP INTERIORS ARE BACK IN A BIG WAY.

But what exactly is maximalism? Not to be mistaken for eclecticism, maximalism's 'more is more' approach mixes design styles and eras to create a fresh and exciting interior. Juliette Arent, design principal at Arent&Pyke, describes maximalism as "spaces that celebrate excess. But it isn't just piling everything into a room; it's an intentional curation that embraces bold confidence and a sense of playfulness."

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Yasmine Ghoniem, founder of YSG, believes it's about conviction. "It's an attitude that welcomes things in rather than editing them out," she says. "It's about taking a personal and fearless approach, leaning to bold decision-making when it comes to merging colour, pattern, texture, shape and form – nothing is subdued or understated. That said, it's not a cluttered style and should never be confused with overdecorating."

Maximalism isn't a new look. In fact, its roots can be traced back to the decorative churches and homes of the wealthy during the Baroque and Rococo periods in Europe. "It also has ties to the Hollywood Regency movement from the 1920s to the '50s in southern California, typified by the homes and estates built in Hollywood's Golden Era," explains Arent. Ghoniem also points

Arent&Pyke creates drama with colour and standout pieces.



There comes a time when every design trend reaches saturation point. The stripped-back neutrals synonymous with minimalism may be ubiquitous now, but lately the pendulum has swung back to embrace a more maximalist approach. Characterised by a deep love of individualism and layering, maximalist interiors infuse colour, pattern and materiality in a playful yet nuanced way. From Flack Studio's energetic design of Ace Hotel Sydney to the colour-soaked spaces created by leading local designers YSG, Arent&Pyke, Tamsin Johnson and Greg Natale, there's a renewed sense of personality taking shape in our interiors – and it's only growing in popularity.



From the painted ceiling to the wallpaper, Greg Natale offers a masterclass in stylish layering.

to the Memphis design era of the '80s as another influence: "The energising, bold primary colours and geometric and squiggly silhouettes are a maximalist expression."

For the uninitiated, maximalism can seem overwhelming, but the key is to start slowly, says interior designer Tamsin Johnson. "Maximalism is about reaching a high intensity of information in a space," she explains. "Good maximalism also has 'rests' – areas that are spared the same intensity to balance spaces elegantly." Johnson likes to aim for freshness and vitality. "Keep the surfaces simple and natural to begin with," she suggests. "Take time and let a space evolve – the best interiors come from an individual's own spirit and ideas."

Ghoniem seconds this gentle approach, saying a bold rug can add dimension, but it's much harder to strip walls if you change your mind. "The same goes for furniture," she adds. "Start with an armchair that's

upholstered in a wild print or punchy colour. A sofa may be too much to begin with."

Interior designer Greg Natale is a proponent of the layered approach. "The key is to select elements that relate to one another," he explains. "It's not about putting as much pattern as you can into one room; it's measured and careful, and it builds warm, inspiring spaces."

While maximalism might seem like it's best suited to storied European homes, there's a way to contextualise the aesthetic in a local setting. "A popular belief with coastal residences in Australia is that walls are best dressed in neutral shades to make the view the hero," says Ghoniem. "In one Sydney harbourside project, we countered convention, saturating the living space in sheaths of indigo. Given the Australian sun's bright glare, it provides sheltered respite, also enabling the spaces to take an inward-looking approach in the cooler seasons."



A contemporary-yet-cosy living space by Greg Natale.



Johnson favours “the sunnier and fresher side of maximalism”, taking cues from the Mediterranean. “But of course, the beauty of interiors is the ability to transport a space elsewhere, and there are a lot of Continental, North and Central American, East and West Asian interior ideas and contexts that can be pulled into different urban and country homes in Australia, too.”

The message: don't be afraid to experiment with unusual combinations. “It's a deeply rooted, personal and reflective approach to decorating,” says Arent. “There's a misconception that you can't mix design genres and should stick to one theme and style in a home, which is ridiculous.” She points to the “growing appeal for vintage and retro pieces” as a novel way to inject uniqueness into your home. From low entry points like Etsy to 1stDibs for more premium pieces, Arent believes pre-loved furnishings tell a powerful story. “There's so much scope to upcycle vintage pieces by repainting or reupholstering them in a gorgeous bold fabric. It can be really cost-effective, too.”

Above all, Johnson likes to focus on meaningful art, objects and furniture. “If you collect beautiful things, they tend to generate a more maximal character and can hold their own in the space,” she says.

Lastly, don't worry about doing it all in one hit. “A truly authentic home takes time to settle – often years,” says Arent. “Feel confident about rooms constantly evolving as it'll relax your approach to achieving a balanced result.” ■



Dip your toe in by starting with a small space, like this wardrobe or bathroom (above left), both by Arent&Pyke.



DINOSAUR
DESIGNS
'Beetle' Bowl
(medium), \$210.

LA DOUBLEJ
'Wildbird' Bubble
Vase, \$1100.

MAISON
BALZAC 'Les
Tulipes' Candles,
\$29 for two.

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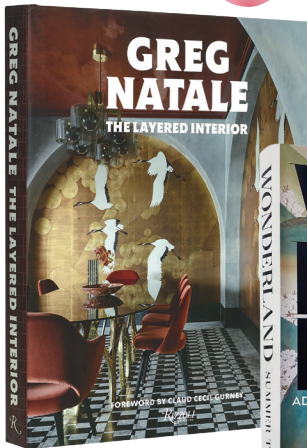


BAOBAB
COLLECTION
Diffuser, \$830.

JONATHAN ADLER
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Champagne Bowl,
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The Layered Interior
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*It's all in the detail for this
Sydney home, designed by TSG.*



*Photography: Pina Rusconi; Anson Smart.
*RRP refers to the supplier's recommended
retail price for Australian book retailers.*