# LET'S GET LOUD

Maximalist design, hybrid supercars that deliver the goods and coffee at home's glow-up.

**A certain stripe** Buchanan Studio's distinctive Studio Chair, upholstered in Moss Studio Stripe, is unafraid to make a statement.

ALEX BRAMMALL

# FLOWERS IN THE ATTIC

## ... And the bedroom and the bathroom and anywhere else you'd like, as maximalism makes a comeback to again dominate fashion, hotels and homes.

By ANNIE BROWN

Of all the flowers to bloom on Jonathan Anderson's most recent haute couture collection for Dior, it was those in a selection of clutches covered in antique Indian chintz fabric that most intrigued. Yes indeed, chintz, that most divisive of fabrics – the printed and painted calico originating in India in the 15th century, taken up with gusto in England in the 17th century and adorning many an aristo's throw cushions, not to mention granny's couch – is back. Really though, it fits with a move – a mood, if you will – towards maximalism. Clashing textures, prints and interesting colour palettes can be found everywhere from the Remy Renzullo renovation of the historical Castle Howard in North Yorkshire, filming location for 1981's seminal television adaptation of Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* and the 2008 film of the same name and Merivale's The Whale in Narooma to fashion, where the likes of Matthieu Blazy at Chanel and Louise Trotter at Bottega Veneta are staging a joyful intervention against bland.

Nasim Köerting, design director at Merivale, oversaw the sexy '70s aesthetic of The Whale and her magpie approach can also be spied at Sydney bar The Press. She agrees there is a feeling for maximalism, in part because it can counter a rather grim news cycle.

"The world feels like it's in turmoil, and I think our clothing and interiors have become a place to create joy," she says. "People are realising they want colour back in their lives. They're turning to interiors as a moment of escapism. It's especially the trend we're seeing when designing hotels such as The Whale, Merivale's first resort-style hotel in Narooma, and our restaurants. People want nostalgia, a nod to a time that felt happier."

Our increasingly digitised world is also driving a renewed appreciation for the handmade, Köerting says. "We love naive art and imperfect ceramics because they help us connect with being human."

It's an approach that UK-based interior decorator Flora Soames – known for her charmingly nostalgic Regency-stripe wallpapers and chintzy florals – adopts, too. While she acknowledges that there is a place for all aesthetics, and that we do not need to solely commit to one or other, a home full of meaningful, tactile pieces can feel special, and highly individual. "There is something about the more maximalist interior that looks to historical context, what one may have known, or feel is familiar. There is comfort in it, and storytelling - and often the more memorable," she says.

As for incorporating plays on prints and texture into your home, Soames suggests striving for balance.

"Scale of pattern with pattern plays a part in toning things down - i.e. the interplay between the more delicate and the more dominant. And playing with shades of one colour as well as contrasting is key to that happy blend," she says.

"The secret is to listen to one's own threshold in terms of more is more versus more is too much! A single cushion, lampshade or that last bit of upholstery can be the tipping point, so start with the main backdrops and hero objects and build up from there."





**Everything everywhere all at once** From left, florals at Chanel haute couture autumn/winter 2026-2027; texture at Bottega Veneta autumn/winter 2026-2027: movement, colour and light at Dior autumn/winter 2026-2027. Above right, the Ocean Penthouse at The Whale coastal resort by Merivale in Narooma, NSW.

Sydney-based interior designer Tamsin Johnson, who recently oversaw the lush fitout of her husband's new P. Johnson store in Paddington, advises leaning into intensity when upping the ante.

"I would tend to argue I am not seeking maximalism and definitely not eclecticism either. I favour intensity as an idea more. Intensity but with a harmonious and legible outcome," she says.

"Each part is voiced in the right volume, some parts need dialling up to capture their full effect or point, while another parts need resting and syncopation. Each part needs purpose rather than infinite addition which is just creating noise."

Jace Molan, head of content partnerships at Pinterest (Australia and New Zealand), says the new maximalism isn't just about "more is more" either.

"It's becoming a way for people to express their personality and have fun with their spaces. There's no single maximalist look. People are mixing eras, colours, patterns and unexpected pieces to create homes that feel personal, playful and uniquely their own," he says. On Pinterest this means, well, kind of everything, and sometimes all, incongruously, at

SEAN FENNESSY, GETTY IMAGES, ANSON SMART, SIMON UPTON



This means Ghoniem is no longer simply having conversations with clients about custom joinery and furniture, but also sourcing and curating vintage and unique pieces. “People are now wanting unique furnishings in their home that spark enquiry and reflect their heritage and personal taste. They make a home feel instantly settled, too,” she says.

Still, not everybody is ready to go all-in. Or at least not straightaway. Ghoniem advises taking it slowly.

“A truly authentic home takes time to settle – often years. So feel confident about rooms constantly evolving as it’ll relax your approach to achieving an immediate result. Ultimately, you don’t want to feel overstimulated, so start gently and build up with layers over time,” Ghoniem says.

“I’d introduce more ornate touches in small doses, like a sculpted or ornate light pendant, unique hardware adorning wardrobes or cupboards, and using a textural or printed fabric for window treatments. Also think about incorporating pattern through natural materials like expressive woodgrains – burl for example – for joinery and furniture, plus vibrant stone with expressive markings. Carefully balance scale and tonal intensities to create focal points that don’t exhaust the eye. If you’re daunted about colour-drenching walls, perhaps start off in a smaller space you don’t frequent as often, like a powder room or a hallway.”

As for chintz, well, it’s probably going to have the last laugh. In 2027, London’s Victoria and Albert museum will stage Chintz, an exhibition that charts the influence of the fabric. Such an examination, says curator Avalon Fotheringham, is quite revealing.

“Very few fabrics are as polarising as chintz. Today we tend to think of it as a matter of personal taste, but over its long history, chintz has sparked globe-spanning debates over political and economic policies, craft and industrialisation, class and gender, art and design, and much more,” Fotheringham says.

“These debates still inform how we see chintz today, whether you think of it as beautiful or fussy, cheap or classy, traditional or fresh. Opinions on chintz have always been divided, which is part of what makes it so fascinating.”

That chintz is part of today’s conversation about maximalism makes sense. “We think people will be surprised to discover that chintz has never really gone away. Rather, each generation rediscovers it and makes it their own. The chintzes of the 2020s are as much a product of today’s tastes as the chintzes of the 1920s, 1820s, and 1720s were products of their own times,” Fotheringham says. “The history and evolution of chintz is the history and evolution of art and design, and we hope people will come away with a newfound respect for the fabric as a canvas for creativity.” Or at least, a few jazzy throw cushions or a striped Studio Chair by British interiors experts, Buchanan Studio. ■



once. Key trends the social media platform has identified include “Neo Deco”, which features retro aesthetics, chevrons, chessboard floors, chrome and brass, and “FunHaus”: bold stripes and playful elements. Trending searches, Molan says, include rattan accent chairs (up 50 per cent), teal-coloured rooms (up 155 per cent) and ceiling wallpaper (up 40 per cent).

Still, Köerting advises against following trends too much. The secret to maximalism is buying what you love, rather than anything too aesthetically didactic.

“My golden rule is if you love it, truly love it, it will work. A home full of the objects and pieces you love will be a respite from the day,” she says. “My own home is actually minimalist in its architecture, and that’s what gives me the calm. It’s the objects within it that are maximalist; the art, the fabrics, the pieces I’ve gathered. They bring the maximalist Persian in me so much joy.”

Interior designer Yasmine Ghoniem is the director of Sydney-based multidisciplinary studio YSG, known for its full-wattage aesthetic. She says this bolder approach to design is resonating because it allows for something more personal. “Designers are also becoming more committed to driving individualised design outcomes in pursuit of capturing the client’s personality and heritage, resulting in elevating daily experiences in a deeply considered way,” she says.



**Excess all areas** Clockwise from centre left, Yasmine Ghoniem of YSG Studio brings a full-throttle approach to interiors, including in this house in Jamberoo, NSW; YSG Studio’s bold work for a private home in Melbourne's Fitzroy; Flora Soames’s Daphne print used heavily in a bathroom by the British interior designer and author; Merivale’s The Press bar by design director Nasim Köerting is unapologetically maximalist; Tamsin Johnson’s luxe vision for the changing areas at the P.Johnson boutique in Sydney's Paddington.