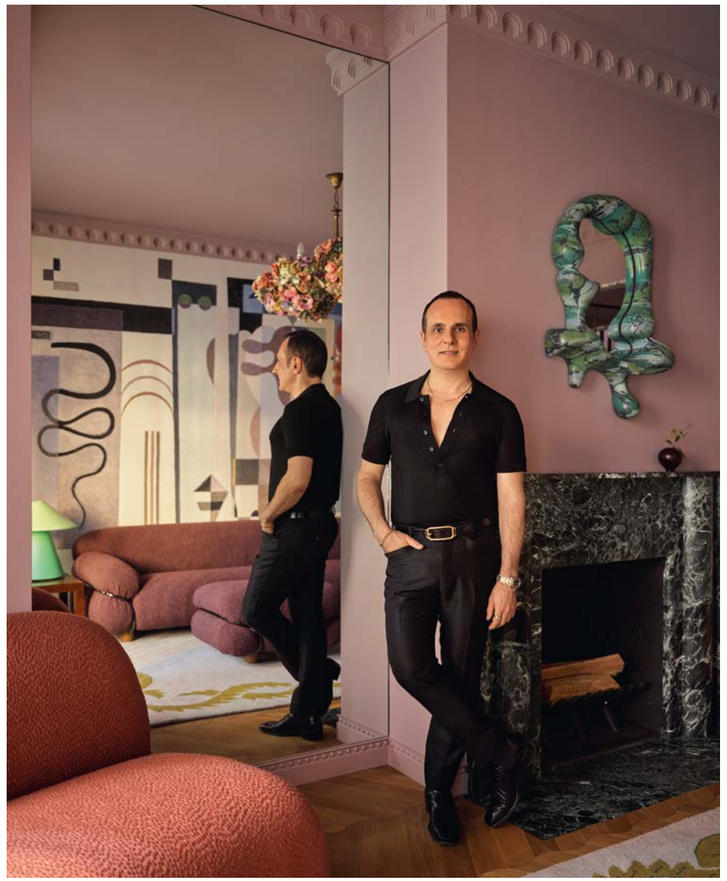
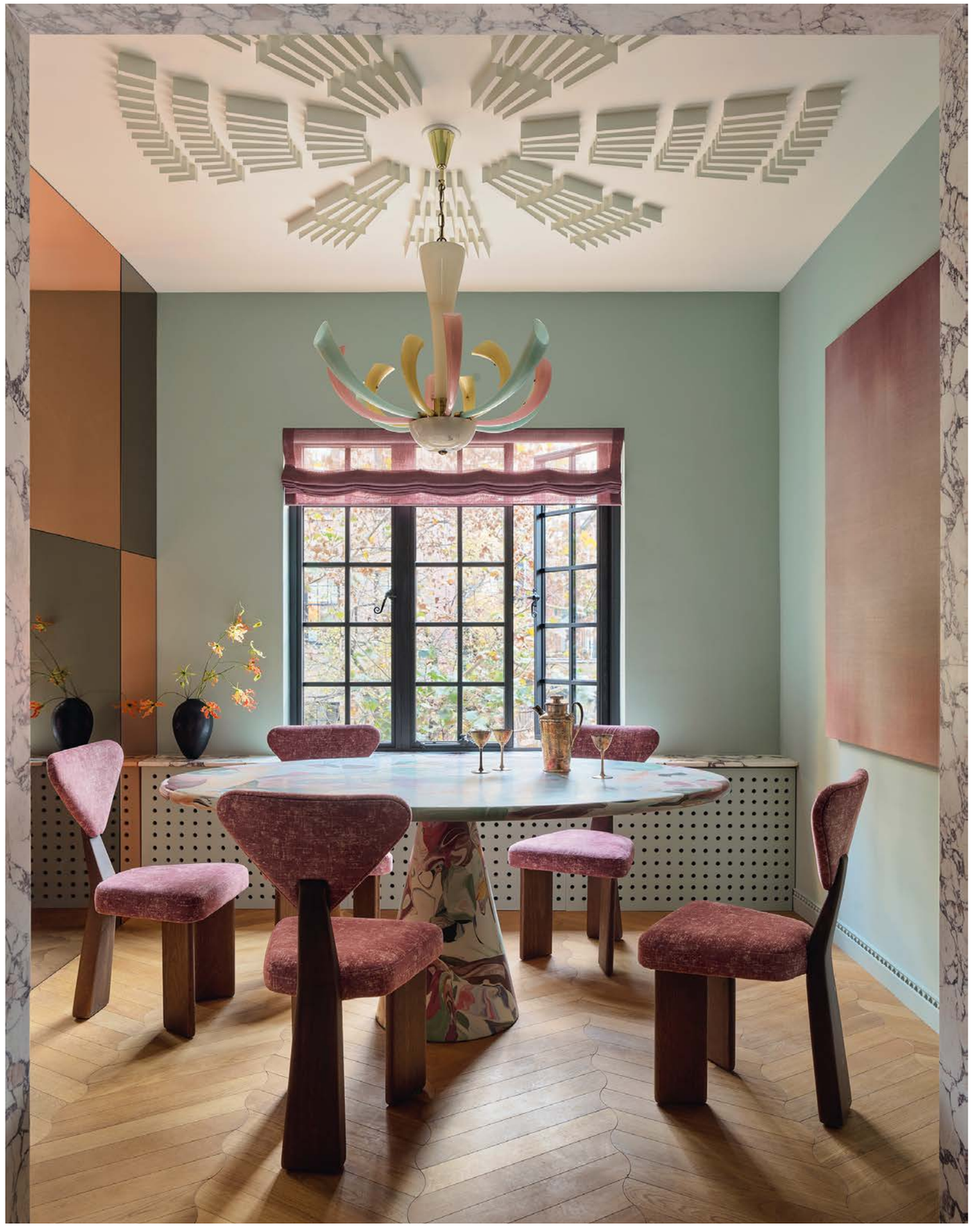
ITALIAN LOVE LETTER



Barely **3.8 METRES WIDE**, *four storeys high and not a single centimetre left to chance. On Manhattan's Upper East Side,* **GREG NATALE** *proves that daring requires no extra square metres. Behind a classic brick façade, the Australian designer went all in on* **COLOUR, MARBLE AND CHARACTER**, *delivering a townhouse that takes on New York on its own turf – and wins.*



Anyone familiar with Greg Natale's work knows that the Australian designer never settles for the obvious. Since founding the studio that bears his name in Sydney in 2001, he has grown into one of the most distinctive voices on the international interiors scene. His spaces are layered, refined down to the smallest seam and yet playful enough to surprise time and again. Leading titles such as Architectural Digest, Vogue Living, Elle Decoration and Vanity Fair have eagerly opened their pages to him. Now it is Imagicasa's turn to put his work in the spotlight, with a project that embodies everything that makes Natale so irresistible. Recognition followed at a steady pace. Belle named him Interior Designer of the Year in both 2011 and 2014, Australian House & Garden crowned one of his designs Room of the Year in 2021, AD Mexico counted him among the world's most influential designers, and Harper's Bazaar Interiors Middle East hailed him as a true Design Visionary.

Yet for Natale it is never about trophies, but about people. Every project starts from the tastes, habits and dreams of his clients. His own passion for material, colour, pattern and geometry serves as a compass, never a cage: he moves effortlessly between classic and contemporary, between the glamour of Hollywood Regency and the streamlined elegance of modernism. He has distilled this philosophy into three books, The Tailored Interior, The Patterned Interior and The Layered Interior, which together read like a manifesto.

"I THINK A REALLY GOOD DESIGNER TELLS A STORY. AS YOU WALK THROUGH A SPACE, THERE ARE ALWAYS ELEMENTS OF SURPRISE"

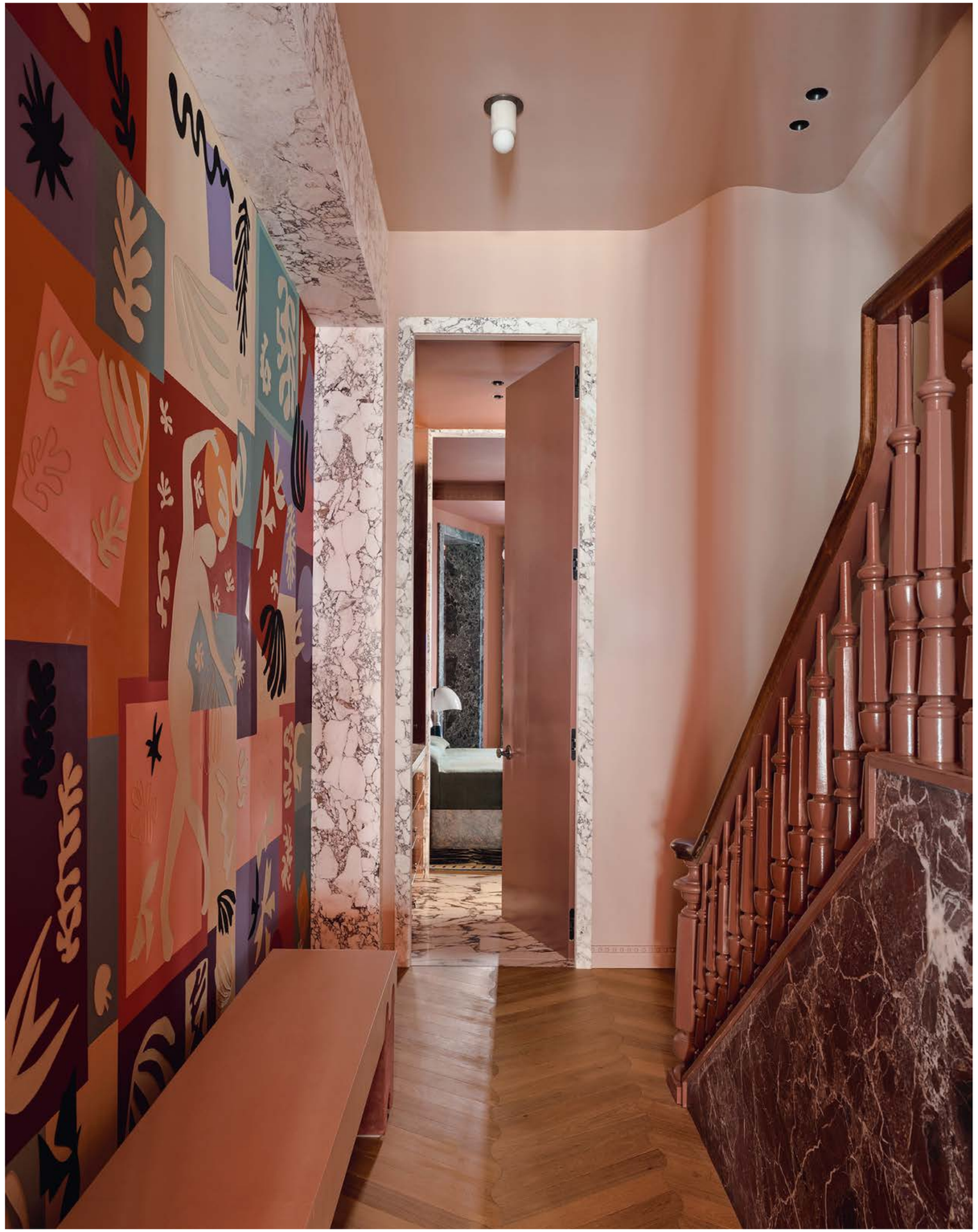
A TOWNHOUSE WITH TWO FACES

New York House shows just how far that imagination reaches. The nineteenth-century townhouse once combined a shop with living quarters. Natale stripped the building back to its bones yet preserved the broad outlines of its layout. The result is a pied-à-terre that matches the city outside its windows in colour, depth and sheer unpredictability.

"EVEN THOUGH I'M A BIT OF A MAXIMALIST, MY FOUNDATION LIES IN MINIMALISM AND PLAIN LINES"

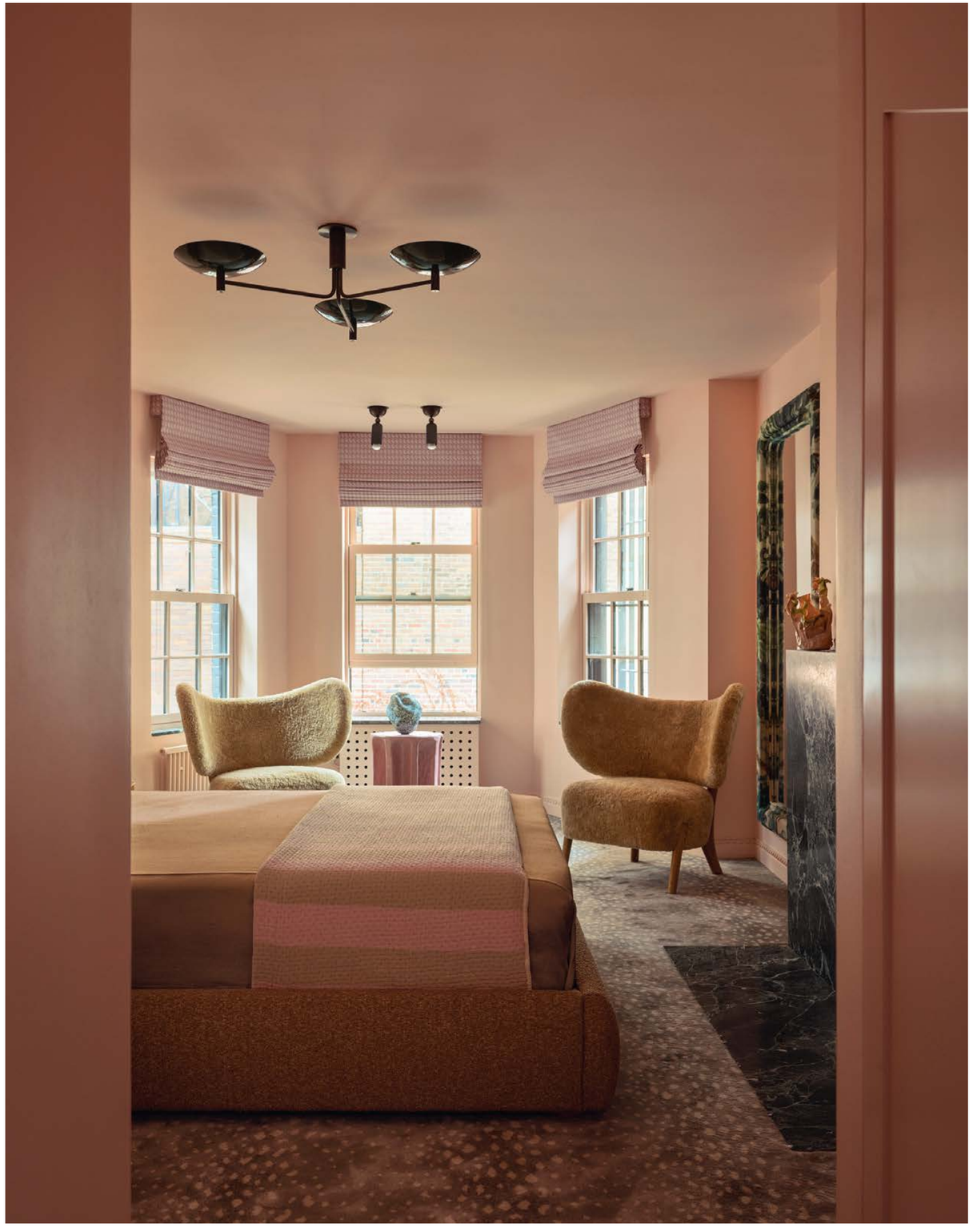
His universe now extends far beyond the drawing board. His studio handles architecture, interior design and decoration, from coastal villas to vast country estates, from Oklahoma to New York. He also designs bedding, objets d'art and accessories, and has created collections with the likes of Bisazza and Designer Rugs. Since 2019, his world can be entered quite literally, in a flagship store housed in an iconic 1940s Art Deco building in Sydney's Potts Point.

The owners are loyal clients: an Australian family who divide their lives between Australia, New York and Italy, where they live in Florence and keep a holiday villa in Forte dei Marmi. Their brief was born, fittingly, at the dinner table. During a stay in Paris, amid the exuberant maximalist restaurants of the City of Light, they called Natale with one clear picture in mind: an interior in pink and green, steeped in European glamour. The designer sets the tone right from the street.



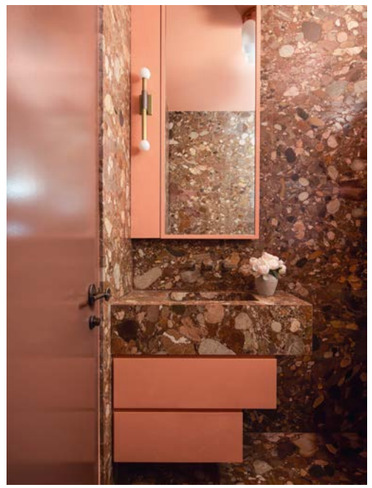
He restored the original double entrance, two doors flanked by fluted limestone pilasters, giving the red-brick façade back the allure so characteristic of classic New York. One door leads to the residence, the other to the ground floor, which has been transformed into a light-filled studio for the owners' art foundation. Here, anyone can learn the painting techniques of the Renaissance free of charge. In this house, art is not decoration; it is the beating heart. Step inside and the leading role of marble becomes immediately clear. The owners live a stone's throw from Carrara and harbour a genuine passion for natural stone. Calacatta Viola, Rosso Levanto, Verde Alpi and Breccia Capraia: each variety was cut to measure in Italy, after which Italian stonemasons flew to Manhattan to install it all with surgical precision over several months. Marble frames almost every doorway, clads fireplaces and worktops, and even turns the shower into a work of art, with an inlaid pattern that nods to Italian Rationalism. The house reads as an ode to Italian craftsmanship.

"ALL OF THE MARBLE WAS CUT IN ITALY, THEN THE STONEMASONS FLEW OVER AND SPENT MONTHS INSTALLING IT"



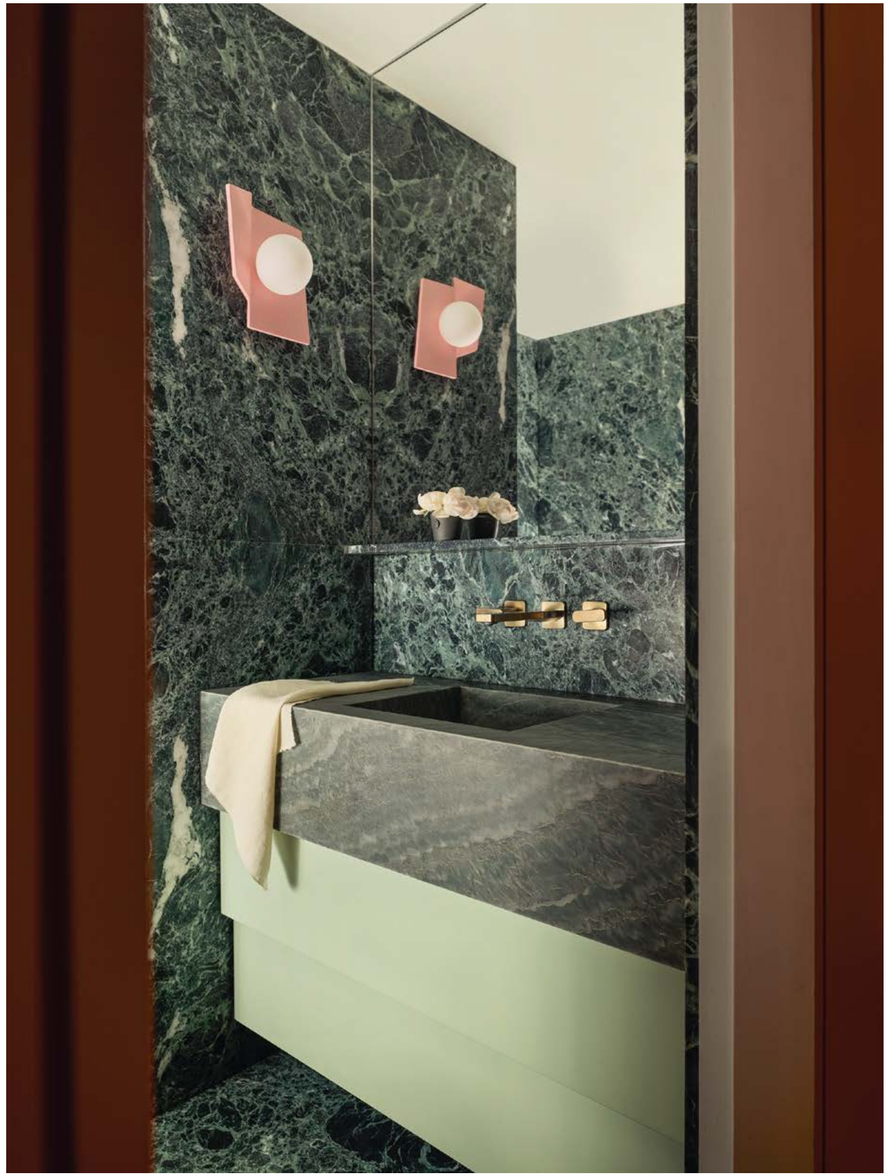
PARISIAN COLOUR, ITALIAN SOUL
On the middle floor, nestled between two bedroom levels, lie the living spaces. The living room captures the atmosphere of a beloved Parisian brasserie: intimate, theatrical, irresistible. Because New York offers little daylight, Natale embraced the sense of enclosure rather than fighting it. Mirrored walls multiply the light, while a wall-spanning mural after Kandinsky's Deux points verts from 1935 lends the room a gallery-like depth.

The furnishings are a carefully composed mix of vintage finds and 20th-century design classics, nearly all of them European. Tacchini's Sesann sofa, a cloud of softness held in chrome, faces a Verde Alpi fireplace crowned by the surreally shaped Iris mirror. High above it all floats a handmade pendant of paper-flower bouquets, a fragile, poetic counterpoint to the robust marble. On the landing, wrapped in soft pink, a purple Odin sofa by Konstantin Grcic invites you to linger, while the glossy red staircase beckons upwards. Along the hallway unfolds an embroidered homage to Matisse.



In the kitchen, opened up to the rest of the floor, green takes centre stage. Walls and ceiling are bathed in a deep green, the cabinetry gleams in a fresh herbal shade and a Calacatta Viola worktop adds a touch of violet. In the dining area, a colourful 1980s Murano chandelier sparkles above Dirk van der Kooij's Meltingpot table,

"JUST MAKE IT FEEL LIKE AN INCREDIBLE SHOP. SO IT WAS ACTUALLY RETAIL THAT INSPIRED THE DESIGN"



Through three marble portals, the eye glides towards the absolute highlight: the dressing room. What was once an awkward extension has become a raised, boutique-like space with a lacquered cabinet at its centre and sculptural Verde Alpi panels that jut from the walls like monoliths. The five adult children were not forgotten either. For their holiday visits, each bedroom was given its own colour, so that no two doors open onto the same story.

Leaving the house after the tour, you pass the studio on the ground floor once more. There, students bend over their canvases, just as their predecessors did in Florence centuries ago. It is the quiet key to New York House: a home where art is lived, from the pavement right up to the top floor. (Text: Manou Raeves)

"AS A DESIGNER, I'M LOOKING AT WHAT IS HAPPENING IN MILAN AND PARIS MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE AT THE MOMENT"

surrounded by sculptural Giraffe chairs. Bronze- and smoke-toned mirrors cast a rosy glow, and the only white ceiling in the house shows off star-shaped mouldings.

One floor up awaits the main bedroom, an indulgent retreat in warm putty tones, dressed in Iksel's hand-painted White Blossom wallpaper. Vincent Darré's playfully asymmetrical Neofutur headboard carries the green story forward.

Photography by Anson Smart, styling by Mariana Marcki Mateos