

# HOUSE OF JOY



gestalten

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color-lover, and stripe enthusiast. "As kids, our world is curated to be full of color and playfulness, from bath time to bedtime to our classrooms. I think color triggers joy in my brain because it reminds me of all the playful and carefree times I had as a kid." She's certainly not alone in that regard. Many of the interiors in this book are laced with an element of childhood nostalgia—especially for kids who grew up in the ultra colorful '80s and '90s.

Valetta House, featured on page 58, is a home in London that blurs the boundaries between child- and adult-friendly into one cohesive narrative. It's full of little stories—a staircase inspired by snakes and ladders, four yellow-framed, arched windows to represent each of the clients' daughters. The architects, Office S&M, are fierce proponents of color, viewing it as a building material, not an afterthought. Co-founder Hugh McEwen describes their approach as "unapologetically joyful."

"Once you see color as an essential part of the design of a space, you start to realize how powerful it can be," says Catrina Stewart, who founded the practice with McEwen in 2013. "You can extend space, you can make space larger, you can make space smaller, you can even change the weather." That's especially true for their Mo-tel House, a London refurbishment that uses pastels to amplify natural light. The result? A lower-ground-floor apartment that doesn't feel like it's lower ground.

*Today we're increasingly seeing an intertwining of different aesthetics that feel fresh, colorful, and full of play. There are many names for it: high camp, maximalism, Memphis revival.*

When we look at color, there are often links between what we see and what we feel. Studies have hypothesized a connection between color and perception: bright, warm colors like yellow, orange, pink, and red tend to be considered "happy colors," while pastels also have the power to lift the spirits. Yellow and orange tones incite appetite, while some prison cells are painted pink in the hope that color will reduce aggression. Tones of gray are viewed as mature, responsible choices. But as common as a neutral gray is in the built environment, it isn't necessarily known for its tendency to spark joy.

A good example can be found on Thessaly Road in London, which was a drab, concrete underpass until British-Nigerian artist Yinka Ilori was asked to intervene in 2019. As part of an initiative to improve the public realm, he installed panels in 16 different colors that, according to color theory, have a positive impact on happiness and wellbeing.

Ilori is part of a movement that the artist and designer Adam Nathaniel Furman coined New London Fabulous. Furman, whose home accessories and public installations come in dazzling palettes, noticed the streets of his home city were changing, as artists and designers increasingly injected color into a notoriously gray metropolis.

# A Distinctly and Vividly Walala Resort

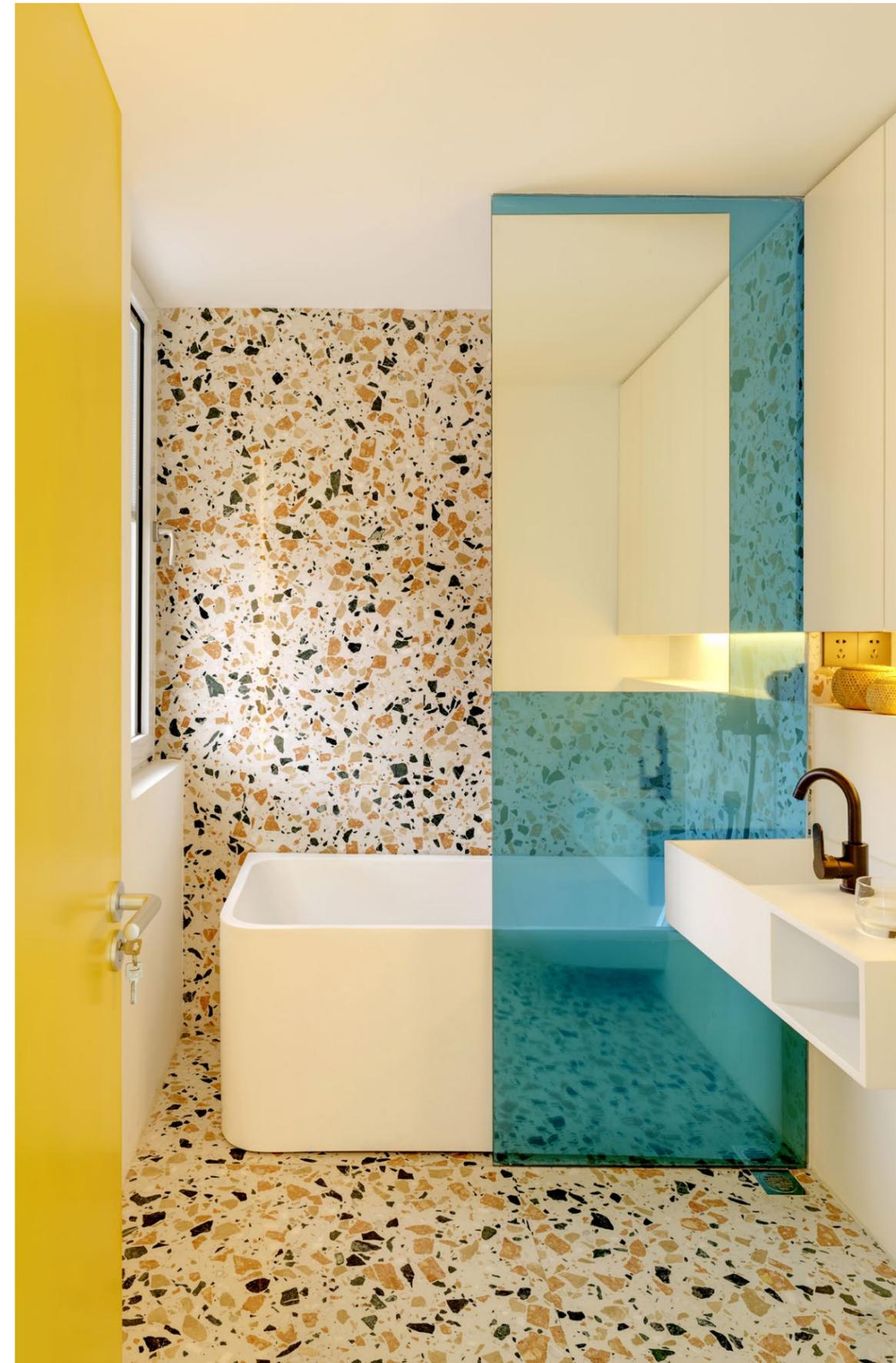
Salt of Palmar

Camille Walala

Belle Mare, Mauritius

There are few designers who have created a body of work that is so *them* it's unmistakable. London-based Camille Walala is among them. Be it a bouncy castle outside a London office building, a cushion, or this boutique hotel in Mauritius, her work is unified by its use of punchy colors, its graphic quality, and its vibrant patterns. That's exactly what enamored the client at the Salt of Palmar boutique hotel. Originally, Walala's involvement with the hotel group was limited to a mural at its sister hotel, but when the CEO saw the finished work, he saw the potential for more. And so, Walala received her first hotel project, with a brief to reflect the distinct identity of the island, where color plays a key role in the local culture. The hotel's palette draws inspiration from the country's architecture and natural surroundings, and incorporates the work of local artists. The optimism of Walala's work lends itself unsurprisingly well to the holiday context, where worries are washed away by color, pattern, and sunshine.







# Surprises Abound in a Fun-Filled Airbnb

Pieces Home

Pieces by An  
Aesthetic Pursuit

Kennebunk, ME, USA

For home-design brand Pieces, by Brooklyn-based creative agency An Aesthetic Pursuit, color is nothing to be afraid of. That stance is made abundantly clear in their showroom-meets-guesthouse in Maine. Their mission: to help people understand that with the right balance, there's no such thing as too much color. In the living room, neutral wall and floor colors don't compete with the custom, 10-color rug that flows through the space like a Technicolor cartoon river. Tucked away in verdant Maine, this space was a natural progression for the brand. It was the first time the three founders could showcase their own products, as well as a curated selection of other, like-minded design brands all together in a single, livable space. It reimagines the idea of a showroom into a shoppable Airbnb, offering their guests the chance to get up close and personal with the products: to feel the carpets beneath their feet or sink into the pastel-pink sofa—or at the very least, spend a long weekend in a cozy and colorful guesthouse.





# A Midcentury Refurb in Sunny California

Marrow Midcentury

Bells + Whistles

Rancho Mirage, CA, USA



There is no one single theme in this Californian dream home, but rather, the merging of several. Consider the living room, where, according to the designers, “surreal silhouettes and abstracting colors balance playful tendencies with a dreamlike sensibility.” Or the second bedroom, “a Dalí-esque space-age dream.” Filling a home with a multitude of imaginative themes is not easy to pull off, but even less so when it’s not a blank canvas. The Marrow Midcentury home was designed by Donald Wexler as part of Thunderbird North, an enclave of homes designed by modernist architects William F. Cody, Donald Wexler, and Richard Harrison. The designers admit that working with an architecturally significant home can have a paralyzing effect. But the brief was clear: juxtapose the clean, sleek lines of Wexler’s architecture against bold colors and organic shapes. The tidiest encapsulation of this, perhaps, is in the back garden: an angular, hexagonal pool filled with inviting murals by artist Alex Proba.



This home takes Murphy's Law and flips it on its head: anything that can be joyful, will be joyful. That's especially true for the winding staircase, which was painted with bright patterns by artist Adrian Kay Wong. In the kitchen, an uplifting artwork by Brett Murray sets a positive mantra, while playful words also illuminate the tropical powder room.

