GREG NATALE

ME & MY CHAIR

text Greg Natale
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chair Italian Baroque chair
photography Brett Boardman

M Y FAVOURITE CHAIR IS A PINK VELVET AND walnut Baroque chair from the family home. The chair is part of a three-piece setting that my parents imported from Italy in 1983, along with a whole lot of other Italian furniture and Murano chandeliers. When the setting came into the family house I hated it. I thought it was the height of bad taste and was vulgar. Remember this is 1983 and at the pinnacle of Memphis, where black and white sharp angular lines ruled. To think that I was only nine years old.

In my school holidays I would redecorate the family house, one year tearing down all the bamboo-printed wall paper from 1979 (it's now the mid '80s). Anyway, at this point I cheekily advertised to sell the Baroque setting in the *Trading Post* and even found a buyer, although my mother wouldn't sell it. She loves reminding me now of what might not have been.

Fast forward 20 years. It's now 2003 and time to decorate my own pad. I knew from the beginning I wanted my apartment to be inventive. For me, inventive doesn't mean using honest materials juxtaposed in an industrial or minimal space but rather it means taking ideas from experiences that are specific to me. I thought if I where to explore imagery from my childhood and embrace the kitschy Baroque Italian furniture from the family house this would make the apartment look original. I thought using the chair would make my design totally unique. When the chair was placed in the room with charcoal walls, slick basalt flooring and a pink Murano chandelier, it looked fresh in its new context. We

were also post-'90s minimalism where designers were decorating again, so the chair was relevant.

I also like playing with kitsch in our work. I think it's humorous and interesting to give something that was considered bad taste a new context. It's like the *Ugly Duckling* story. My friends and family thought I was playing a joke and would chuckle when entering my apartment and see the chair because they knew how much I used to dislike it. The chair now sits in its pride of place and after all these years I really love it because of the many memories associated with it. You can imagine all the stories it could tell after being in my apartment for the past seven years.

Greg Natale established Greg Natale Design in Sydney in 1995 and specialises in the areas of commercial, retail, residential and hospitality design. His core design philosophy is the integration of interior design and decoration however in recent years his business has expanded into architecture.