WISH

IN THE DETAIL

THE QUIET SUCCESS OF LAZZARINI PICKERING, A NEW GENERATION OF DANISH DESIGNERS, FERRARI AT 70, MICHAEL ZAVROS ✚ THE BEST NEW AUSTRALIAN ARCHITECTURE

THE MAXIMALIST

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WHEN HOLLYWOOD REGENCY CAME INTO VOGUE, IT WAS TIME FOR INTERIOR DESIGNER GREG NATALE TO SHINE.

WORDS **MILANDA ROUT**

A desk made of glass and elephant tusks was the start of it for interior designer Greg Natale. He and his four sisters would sit down to watch *Dynasty* on television – like most of the world in the 1980s – and see Joan Collins' conniving character Alexis sit behind this insane desk.

"The show had all these amazing theatrical sets," Natale tells WISH. "It was really that desk that made me want to be an interior designer. From then on, I started buying home magazines, I started buying

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Home Beautiful and *Belle*, and I was still really young. I wasn't even a teenager."

In fact, Natale was just 10 and this was far from your standard reading material for a 10-year-old boy growing up in an Italian family in the western suburbs of Sydney. "I was a lucky kid," he says, laughing. "I always say I grew up at the age of 10. At the age of 10, I got a sense of self. From that age I knew what I wanted to do, where I wanted to go in the world, I was really lucky."

Natale has been running his own interior design firm since 2001 and has become known for his luxurious aesthetic, layering patterns, fabric and colours to create sleek, sophisticated spaces for both residential and commercial projects. The award-winning designer, who studied architecture as well, has also produced rugs, tiles and homewares in collaboration with other brands since 2009. He is in the process of writing his second book and will soon release a furniture collection with French brand Grange.

"This is really exciting because I am being noted internationally now," says the 43-year-old. He is being modest: Natale was noticed very early on around the world by design publications such as *Wallpaper* when he completed his first project after his university training.

That project was the inner-city one-bedroom apartment of his sister Sarina Gonano. "She gave me a great brief," Natale tells WISH of the career-changing assignment. "This was the late 90s and it was all about the white box. She said she didn't want this, she said she wanted something more luxurious, she wanted colour, layers. I answered her brief."

He did that by hitting the books first; he studied designers that used pattern and colour in the past and he then came across the work of Florence Broadhurst. He used her work not only as wallpaper (what she was known for in the 1960s and 70s) but to create fabrics and artwork that was used in the apartment from the bedspreads to the couch cushions. It was literally wall-to-wall Broadhurst. "I was striving for a different Australian interior; one that was very tailored and unashamedly decorative," Natale says of the project. "It really set the DNA for my business today."

Natale went on to work for a number of interior design practices before setting up his own firm at the ripe old age of 27. "When I think back on it, I think, wow, as a 27-year-old [that was pretty brave]," he says of going out on his own. "But I think in our 20s, you just have this burning, blind ambition. By the time you get to your 30s and 40s, it changes, your circumstances change, all that sort of stuff. So I think the 20s was a good age to do it. I don't know whether I could do it today."

The first few years were tough but Natale had enough work to pay his bills. His phone began ringing off the hook about five years in when the Hollywood Regency style regained popularity – ☞

☛ creating interiors inspired by the glamour homes of Hollywood stars in the 1920s-50s, the style was known for its bold use of colour and contrast. It was Natale's aesthetic to a tee.

"I was just doing what I was doing, being inspired by the 70s and layering patterns and colour and classic and clean lines," he says. "But it was very similar to the Hollywood Regency style. That exploded and I became the Hollywood Regency man in Australia, which was just fantastic."

Natale used this approach in a house he did in Woollahra. He painted it back and white, mixed mid-century furniture and modern pieces and used a lot of pattern. It became one of his signature projects. "There were a lot of people out there that didn't necessarily want modern but they wanted something fresh," he says. "They wanted something black and white but not something sterile, and this house just struck a chord. There is always a house that strikes a chord but you can never pick it at the time."

These days Natale and his firm work internationally as well as in Australia. He also spends a lot of time on creating homewares and furnishings through collaborations around the world. "I see the product business growing," he says, when asked about the future. "I would also love to do a plane or a boat interior; that would be fun. It would be amazing to do. Very glamorous." Very *Dynasty*. **W**
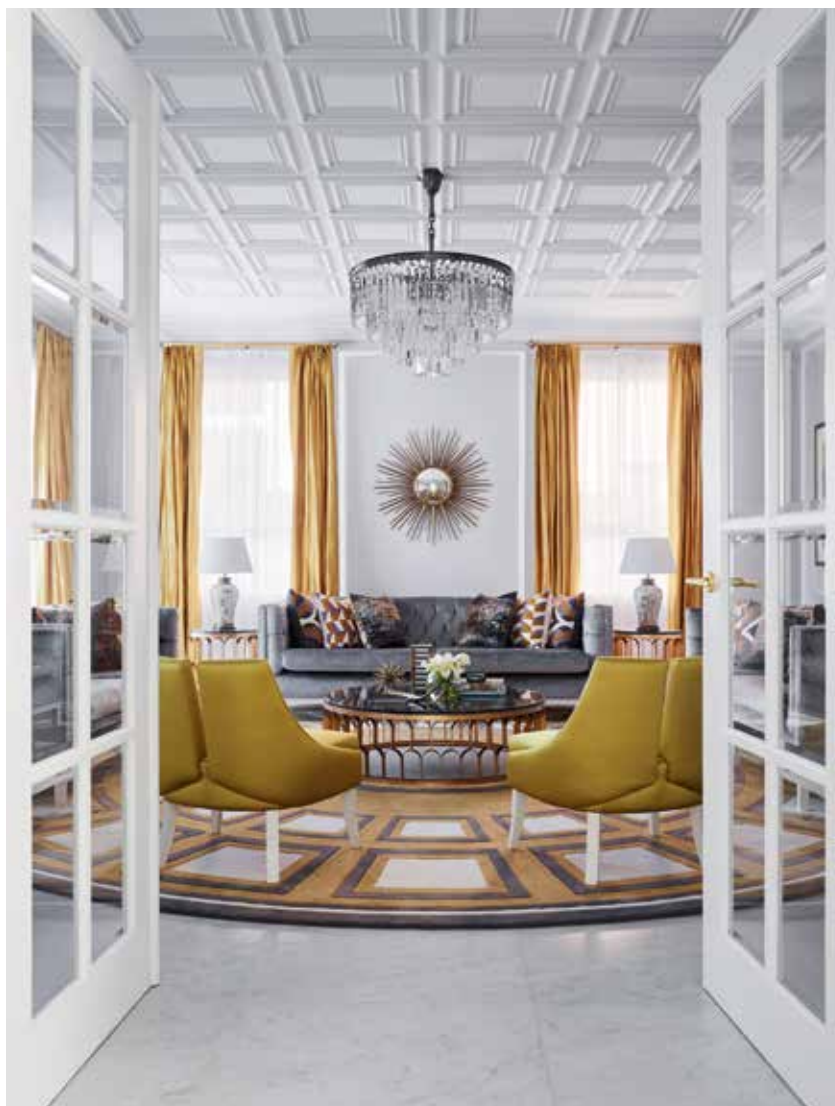
Interiors by Natale in Sydney's Alfords Point, left, and Strathfield, above, and in Geelong, below

ZIMMERTOWN

Australian fashion powerhouse Zimmermann continues its expansion in the US, opening its fourth store in New York and sixth in the country. The latest boutique is in the Meatpacking District, on the corner of Hudson and 13th streets, just a couple of blocks away from the famed High Line and the Whitney Museum of American Art. "We have our store in Mercer Street in Soho and have been looking for a second downtown location for a while," creative director Nicky Zimmermann tells WISH. "It's somewhere you always drive past but also a bit out of the hustle and bustle of all the restaurants and bars." The brand worked with Sydney architect Don McQualter, to design the "fresh and optimistic feeling" for the boutique, which is flooded with light from the floor-to-ceiling windows. "Our brief to Don is always pretty loose as we have been working together for such a long time so we don't need to say much," says Zimmermann. "He [and his team] always find a way to embrace the things that are great and local about the space in the first place but then make it uniquely Zimmermann."