

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a bright yellow blouse with a large floral pattern and black pants, stands in a tropical setting. To her left, a toucan with a large, colorful beak is perched on a palm tree trunk. To her right, a duck with a patterned back and white head is visible. The background is filled with lush greenery and palm trees under a bright sky.

# *DESIGNING EMOTION*

WITH A HER BACKGROUND IN ART HISTORY,  
**KATE CHALLIS** HAS TRANSFORMED HER ENTIRE HOUSE  
INTO A WORK OF ART. **MICHAEL KRUGER** WRITES.  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **SHARYN CAIRNS**.





**IT'S NOT OFTEN** one becomes immersed within a piece of installation art upon entering a kitchen in inner-city Melbourne. And yet, upon stepping into the home of interior designer **Kate Challis**, one is immediately taken aback by a scene replete with birds, Eucalyptus trees and open water.

Kate, whose own practice has been inspired more by her "background in art history rather than contemporary design", has built her kitchen around fellow artist **Valerie Sparks'** hyperreal photograph series, *Le Vol*. The work, which wraps each and every wall of the kitchen, was further used to inform all the finishes in the room: a hanging crystal quartz light designed by **Christopher Boots** that is seemingly carved from Valerie's rock-face design; the veins of a Calcutta marble kitchen top appearing to transition into *Le Vol's* sprawling branches. The artwork itself is not only stunning but, by adding a particular brightness and depth to a room that is only 3.9 metres wide, it concurrently and seamlessly allows the kitchen to operate as an open, inviting space.

"You're already in the artwork" Kate observes, noting that the art functions "as a part of the room itself".

In the same way that putting on a song can completely change the way we feel, Kate maintains that "spaces should evoke emotion". In line with that ethos, when moving from the kitchen to the living room, the palette and mood instantly shift, with Kate moving away from the lustre of Valerie's work in favour of more contemplative tones. Here, she has again been inspired by art, using **Margaret Preston's** painting *Western Australian Gum Blossom* as a guiding device. The gunnut hue of the walls takes its cues from the colour of the painting's leaves; the pink couches are an ode to the blossoms in bloom.

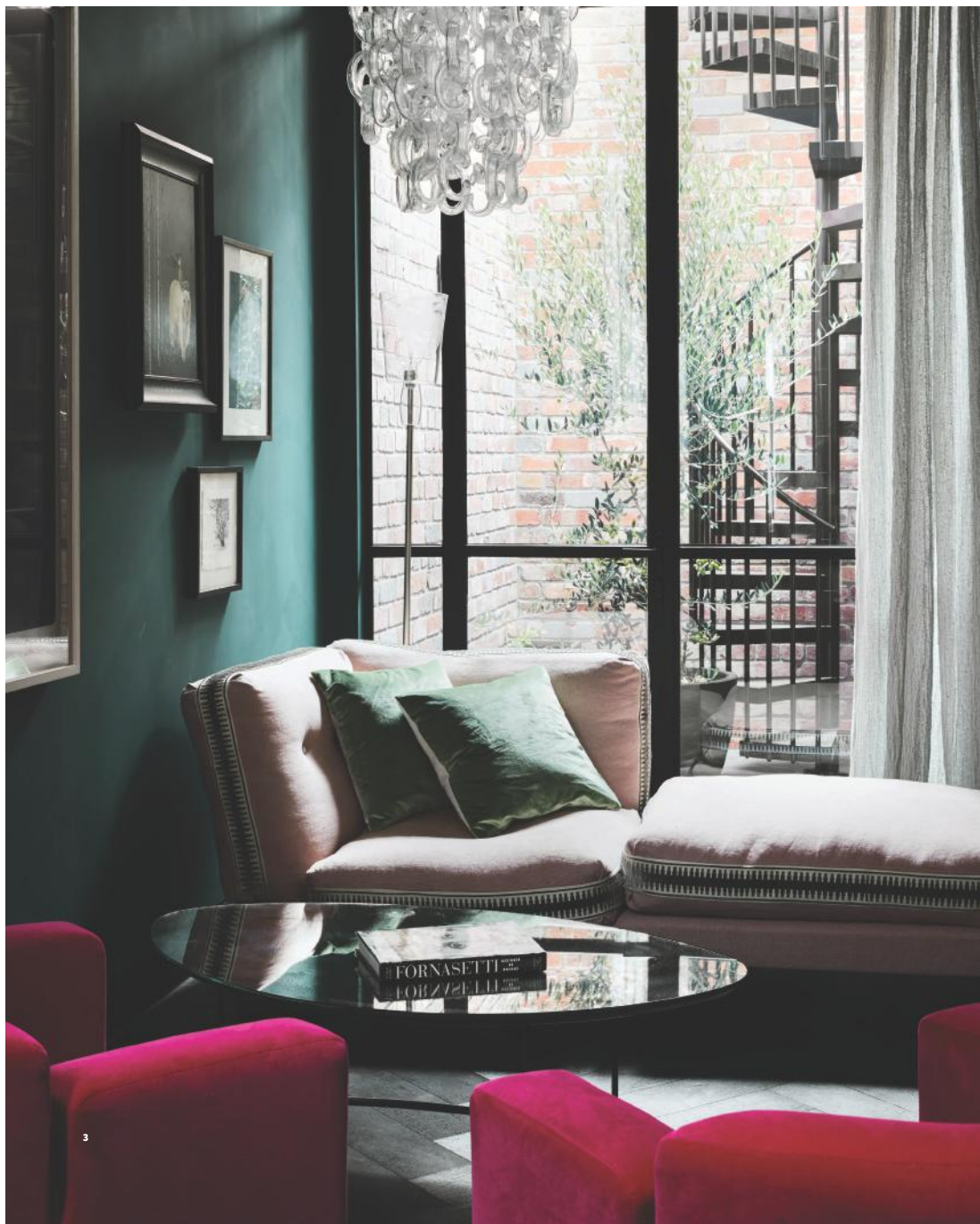
"Moving through the house is almost like living in a landscape," Kate reflects. "You can be out on the beach and it's bright and open, and then you walk through the trees and you're in an area that's a little darker and more secluded."

Indeed, each room in the house manages to have its own particular feel whilst sitting in harmonious relation to the others — almost as if each space is its own scene in a film. Having run a yoga business before moving into design, Kate has developed not only a sharp eye for aesthetic beauty, but a clear understanding of the emotional impact that a space can have on our bodies and minds. "We spend a lot of days inside. Being surrounded by a space that facilitates and impacts your life positively is so important."

Likewise, Kate appreciates the power that comes of incorporating history into an environment. **Jacqui Stockdale's** cross-medium photograph — a feminist subversion of **Ned Kelly** iconography — hangs in reference to the property's previous incarnation as a feminist bookshop. With larger meaning hidden in every room, her house is both an extravagant staging of what is possible in interior design — an artwork unto itself — and a layered showcase of Kate's own life. "Even if you're not home," she concludes. "You want people to be able walk through and get a sense of who you are."

**1** Kate Challis transformed her entire house into a work of art.

**2** Valerie Sparks' *Le Vol I & II* were customised for the space.  
COURTESY: KATE CHALLIS



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**3** Artworks decorate the walls of Kate's house.

**4** Works by Pacquita Maher, Valerie Sparks and Armand Guillaumin are hanging in the living room.

**5** Jacqui Stockdale's *Historia* references the house's previous life as a feminist bookshop.

**6** Wallpaper turns the entire house into an artwork.  
COURTESY: KATE CHALLIS



7 Christian Thompson's *Australian Graffiti* brings life to the space.  
8 Works by Oona Grimes, Gary Willis, Joseph Tierney and Melwitz Folino hang together.  
COURTESY: KATE CHALLIS

