

INSIDE STORY:
decorating king
GREG NATALE

HOME BEAUTIFUL EDITOR WENDY MOORE CHATS WITH SYDNEY-BASED INTERIOR DESIGNER GREG NATALE ON THE EVE OF THE LAUNCH OF HIS NEW FURNITURE RANGE

PHOTOGRAPHY CHRIS WARNES

Wendy: This new studio space is incredible. I think what's great about it is that it's a truly Greg space. It just really feels like you.

Greg: I really wanted this space to be about me. Because there was no compromise, no client, then it could be truly about me.

What inspired you to get into design? I was one of those weird kids - and I didn't realise I was weird at the time - but I woke up one day at the age of 10 and said, "I want to be an interior designer!" The journey really started through film and television. I'd watch shows like *Dynasty* and be inspired. It wasn't the sets that inspired me or my style: it was the theatre and drama.

That's such a young age! Paint me a picture of what your childhood was like. I'm the youngest of five - I have four sisters - and I grew up in Bankstown [in western Sydney]. I'm the youngest son of Italian immigrants. My earliest memory is my parents building their dream home in the late 1970s and furnishing it with kitsch Baroque furniture. I hated it! I'd just started buying *Home Beautiful*, which was the first magazine I ever bought. Everything in there was black and white and graphic and Memphis-inspired, and my parents were furnishing their home in kitsch Baroque! **And you just wanted to go Memphis [the post-modern Italian design school]?** Yes! I actually tried to sell my parents' furniture once. I put an ad in *The Trading Post*. My mother started getting phone calls and they were like, "Greg, what are you doing?"

Forcing them to go Memphis! So are they still in that house now? Yes, and we actually renovated it 10 years ago. Believe it or not, my mum wanted it to go light, and now she's got Eames furniture!

And what do all your sisters do? My eldest sister is a fashion designer, then there's a real-estate agent, physiotherapist and computer programmer. My eldest sister is 14 years older than me, and was a big inspiration when I was younger. I grew up with fashion magazines all around me, and she was really the first person to put a pencil in my hand.

Wendy and Greg in his Sydney studio, leaning on the Hudson sideboard with black molding, which celebrates his signature style.



THE HUDSON COLLECTION
With a nod to the "flourish, glamour and refinement" of post-Second World War New York, Greg applies his tailored touch to his latest collection (left, above and below). One of HB's favourite pieces is the occasional table in White with brass trim (right).



"When I was growing up, my mum didn't really understand what interior design was. She was like, 'Why don't you become an art teacher?'" - Greg Natale

And you're still close with them all? Yes. We all live in Sydney and we're all really close. I'm lucky.

Of all the homes that you've done - and you've done some amazing homes in some amazing locations - which is the one you would want to live in? That's like asking you who is your favourite twin [Wendy has twin five-year-old daughters]! It's a really hard question because I really do love them all and feel like they're all my children. I did a really amazing house for one of my sisters, and that house is special because it was for family and we were the architects. Architecturally, the whole house is very resolved. I'd love to have her house, but I'd love to have a whole lot of them!

You are a prolific designer and you've done a huge breadth of work, not just in homes but in furniture, too. Is there anything left to conquer? We are actually working on our first hotel, which is really exciting. We're refurbishing the Sebel in the Hunter Valley, which is just being rolled out as we speak. And I'd love to do a jet.

A jet! Yes, a jet! And I've always wanted to do bedlins, which we're working on at the moment. I've never done my own decorative accents and accessories line so I'm going to be doing that as well.

You have such a tailored, Ivy League style. It's formal but there's also a really relaxed sense, and I think that's the Australian style influence. It totally is the Australian style. I definitely look at American designers but, because of our Australian lifestyle, it's probably made me take a couple of layers back, make it more relaxed. American designers really, really layer and their interiors are very full.

Is there any building, anywhere in the world, that you would really like to get your hands on? A grand Parisian apartment.

What about in Sydney? Anything Harry Seidler. His buildings just don't date, they're so classic. I'm really lucky that I live in a Harry Seidler apartment, but to get my hands on a Harry Seidler house - that would be really special. **Move from the apartment to the house? Maybe one day. You have to aim high, don't you?**

For stockists of Greg Natale products visit gregnatale.com.

Visit facebook.com/homebeautiful to see the full Inside Story conversation between Wendy and Greg.



ARTWORKS (OPPOSITE TOP & BOTTOM) SCOTT PETRIE