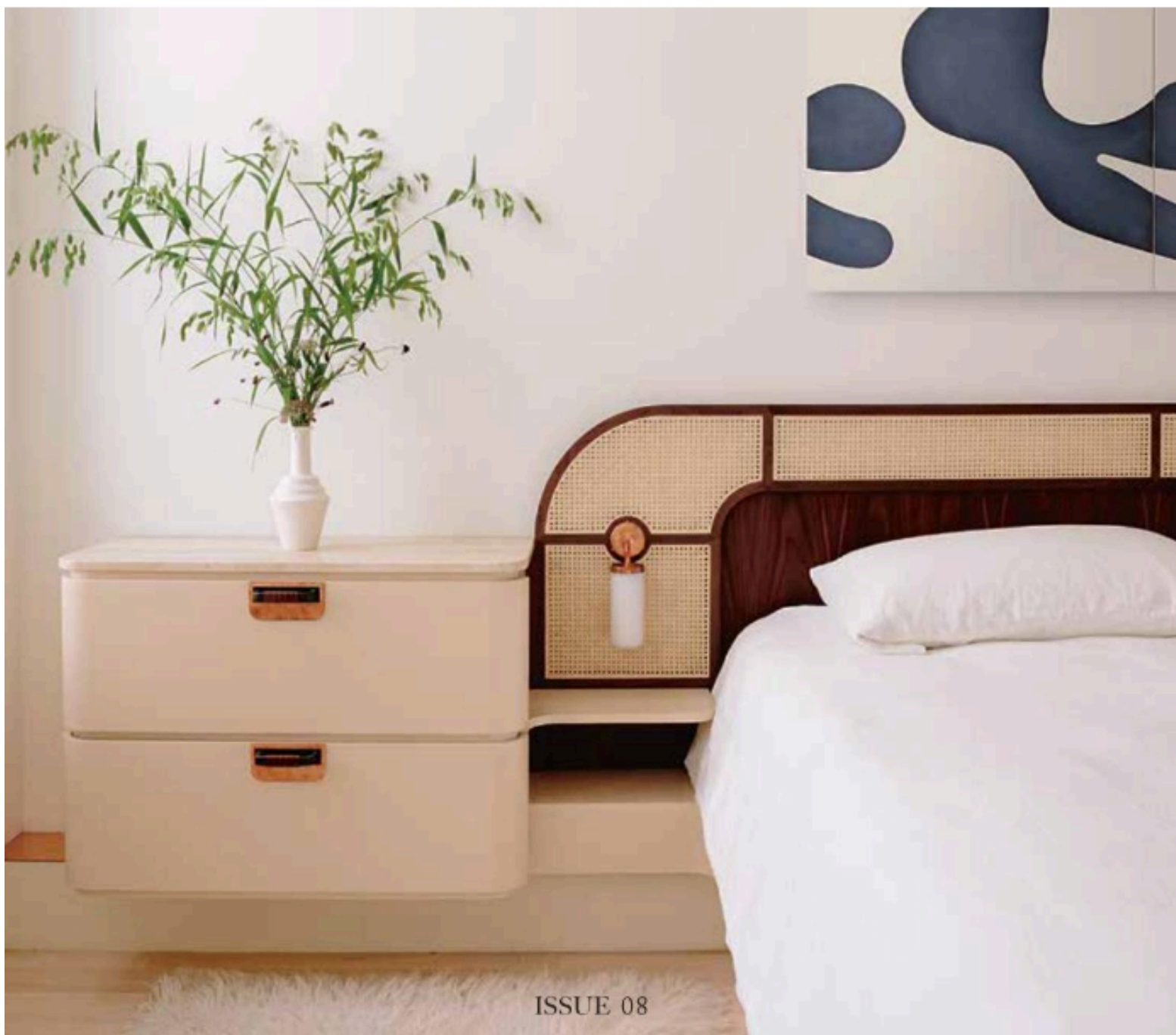


# design anthology

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## Fluid forms

A seductive New York apartment full of shapely curves

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Images / Brian Ferry*





There seems to be a new style emerging in interior design that counterbalances the minimalist and the decorative. Following the overblown maximalism of recent years, a calmer look is creeping into interiors. Not that it's cold or bland, since it favours sensual curves and arches, warm, natural materials and rich finishes, albeit in an understated way.

Those curves have many connotations. They recall art deco – fountains gushing arching water were a major Jazz Age motif. They are also redolent of the fun-loving, curvaceous pop design of the 1960s and 1970s, which was itself inspired by the frivolity of the deco era. Today's curves are reminiscent, too, of the softer, organic modernism espoused in the 1930s by Finnish architect Alvar Aalto: the creator of ergonomic bent plywood furniture observed that modernist tubular-steel furniture was “unsatisfactory from a human point of view”.

This apartment in a 1920s building in New York's NoHo neighbourhood, occupied by a couple and their two children, epitomises this style, with straight lines softened by curves wherever possible. For its designer, Oliver Haslegrave, who founded his Brooklyn-based practice Home Studios in 2009, the work of Aalto, in particular his project Maison Louis Carré, co-designed with his second wife Elissa and completed in 1959, was a key inspiration.

The villa, in Bazoches-sur-Guyonne, about 40km from Paris, was created for art dealer Louis Carré and his wife Olga. One of its most

striking features is a free-form vaulted ceiling made of Finnish pine. “We included images of Maison Louis Carré and Aalto's curvilinear Screen 100 in the initial moodboard we presented to our clients,” says Haslegrave. The apartment – formerly an unloved home that hadn't been renovated since the 1980s – is Home Studios' second residential project. The practice first made its mark with designs for a number of restaurants, and the homeowners approached Haslegrave having been fans of two East Village haunts they had frequented, Goat Town and Elsa, both of which have a distinct deco influence.

Haslegrave says that storytelling is an essential part of his studio's creative process. In fact, he is a former book editor but interior design eventually took his fancy more than literature. “Books are my first love, and while I enjoyed editing, there was a tactile, physical element I was missing,” he says. “My dad was an architect and designed our home. I was always around construction sites when I was growing up, so I constantly felt nostalgic for architecture.”

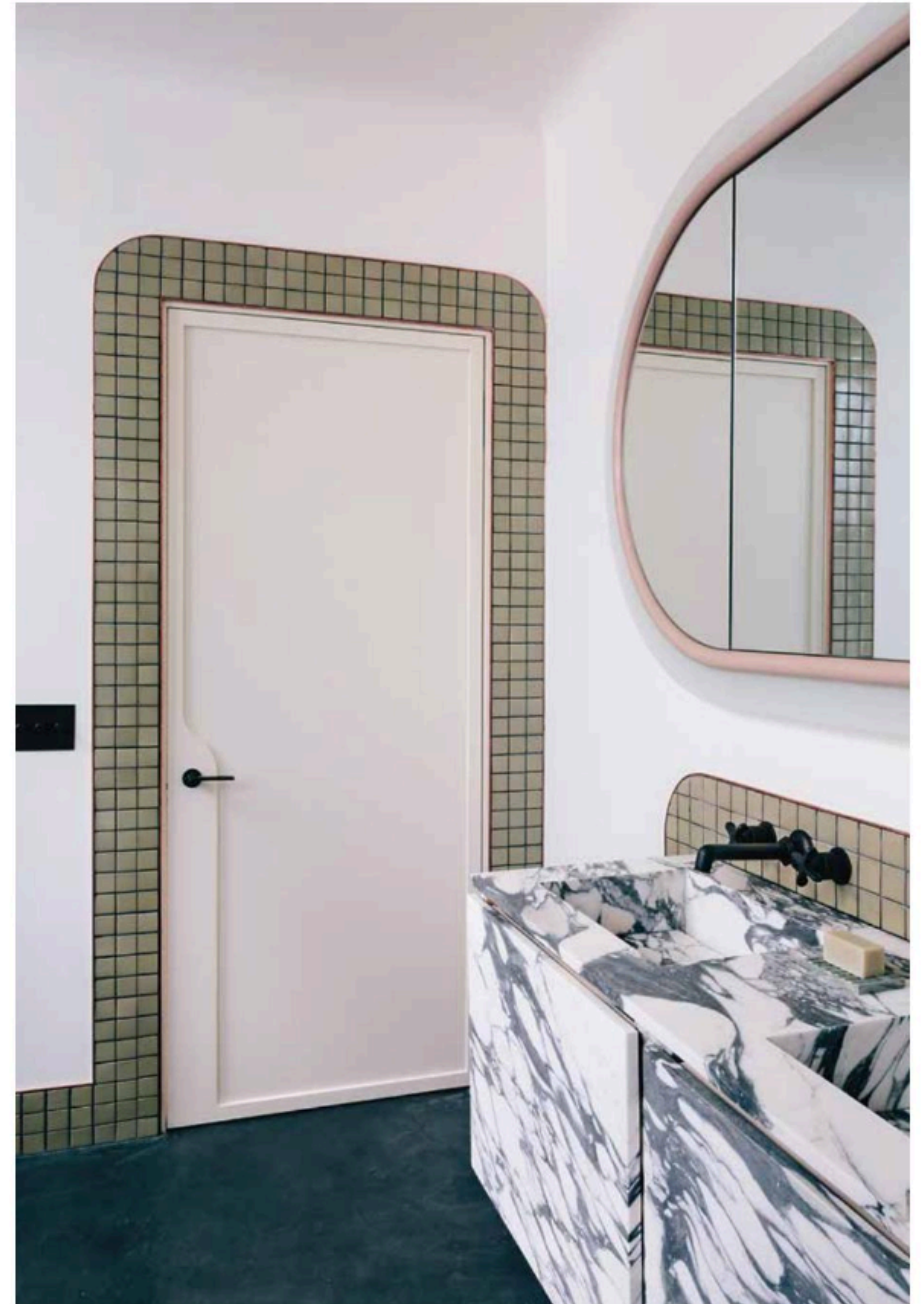
Among designers, particularly those in the hospitality sector, “storytelling” is a popular buzzword: it's seen as important to create environments that make considered, multi-layered references to the cities they're located in and celebrate their context, rather than making purely aesthetic statements. However, for Haslegrave, storytelling means something a little different: “The process begins with the client's story. We then interpret, distil and

Previous page and facing page  
The walnut and rattan master bed  
was custom-designed by Home  
Studios for the space; a painting by  
artist Landon Metz sits above it

“Key ingredients in the process are diversity of expression,  
playful curiosity, editing to the essential and a devotion to detail”



Above and facing page  
The blocky marble vanity unit  
is one of the few places in the  
apartment where designer Oliver  
Haslegrave deviates from his  
love of curves; it's edged in simple  
tiles, trimmed with copper



recreate these needs through interior design. We talk to our clients about their inspirations, the places they like going to... for us, key ingredients in the process are diversity of expression, playful curiosity, editing to the essential and a devotion to detail. In this case, our clients required functionality with a large kitchen – it has a 16-foot-long island – and a dining table of a particular size. They wanted natural materials and curved walls.”

The heritage exterior of the apartment has protected status: the windows on either side therefore partly determined the internal layout, which the clients stipulated should have three bedrooms and two bathrooms. Sliding doors help to make the most of the space, and the airy atmosphere created by so much daylight is enhanced by the pale walls painted Farrow & Ball’s Pointing. Yet rich accents prevent the space from looking bland. In the kitchen is a copper cooker hood, while the cabinets have been painted in another Farrow & Ball shade, the lichen-green Pigeon. In the hallway, architectural details such as door frames have been decoratively trimmed with fine copper lines to subtly ritzy effect.

Despite the apartment featuring idiosyncratic, curved internal windows with frosted panes that provide privacy, it is the discreet bathrooms that are the most theatrical elements of the apartment. The walls in one are partly covered with an expanse of copper-coloured mosaic tiles with extravagantly rounded, very 1970s pop corners, complemented by copper taps and

shower fittings. Outsized white tiles redolent of those in municipal swimming pools form a homogeneous surface that clads the bath, vanity unit and floor. These curve in such a way as to eradicate all right angles on corners and even provide a seating area above a built-in storage unit for towels. The other bathroom boasts a charcoal grey concrete panel framed by avocado tiles providing a backdrop that throws into sharp relief its white curvilinear bath.

Bespoke furniture designed by Home Studios renders the space more personal still: a huge storage-unit-cum-console in the living room riffs off the wooden elements at Maison Louis Carré, while mid-century pieces – a French rug and Danish armchairs – accentuate the cosy vibe here. A striking custom-made pendant light supplied by Brooklyn-based design studio Fort Standard hangs above the dining table and the dining chairs are the work of mid-century Danish designer Niels Otto Møller.

But back to those curves. The clients’ desire for curvaceous contours chimed fortuitously with Haslegrave’s love of Aalto, while another of his perennial favourites is Italian designer Mario Bellini, best known for his 1970s modular Camaleonda sofa with its chunky bulbous upholstery. So why is Haslegrave ineluctably drawn to curves? “To me, rectilinear spaces are a challenge,” he says. “Curves are welcoming. It takes more effort and care to create them. I find they have a greater emotional impact. A Renaissance-era dome is very emotional to me – and creates a bridge to the natural world.”



Facing page  
A lounge chair by LA-based Atelier de Troupe meets a vintage French lamp in a corner of the bedroom

Next page  
The copper cooker hood picks up on the same material used to trim architectural details elsewhere



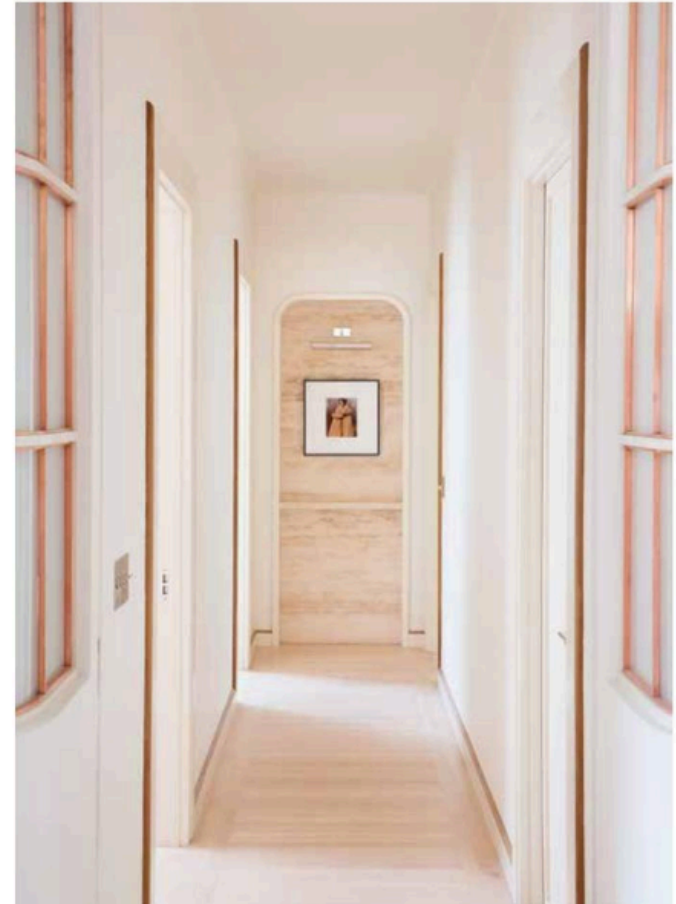


**“Curves are welcoming. It takes more effort and care to create them. I find they have a greater emotional impact”**



Facing page  
Natural materials, a neutral palette and a wash of daylight lend the apartment a soothing ambiance

Above  
A vast island dominates the kitchen; the homeowners wanted a large, practical family space



Above  
A travertine-clad niche at the end of the hallway provides a focal point for art

Next page  
Custom-made storage in the living room combines the warmth of timber with a more utilitarian feel

Facing page  
Bespoke joinery is an homage to Alvar Aalto's Maison Louis Carré in France



