

HOUSES

A light-filled mews house that balances bohemian spaces with a cool and calm palette

A change in owners midway through a full-scale renovation gave Lucia Caballero of Studio Caballero a dramatic opportunity to re-orient a bright mews house in South Kensington

By David Nicholls

2 February 2022





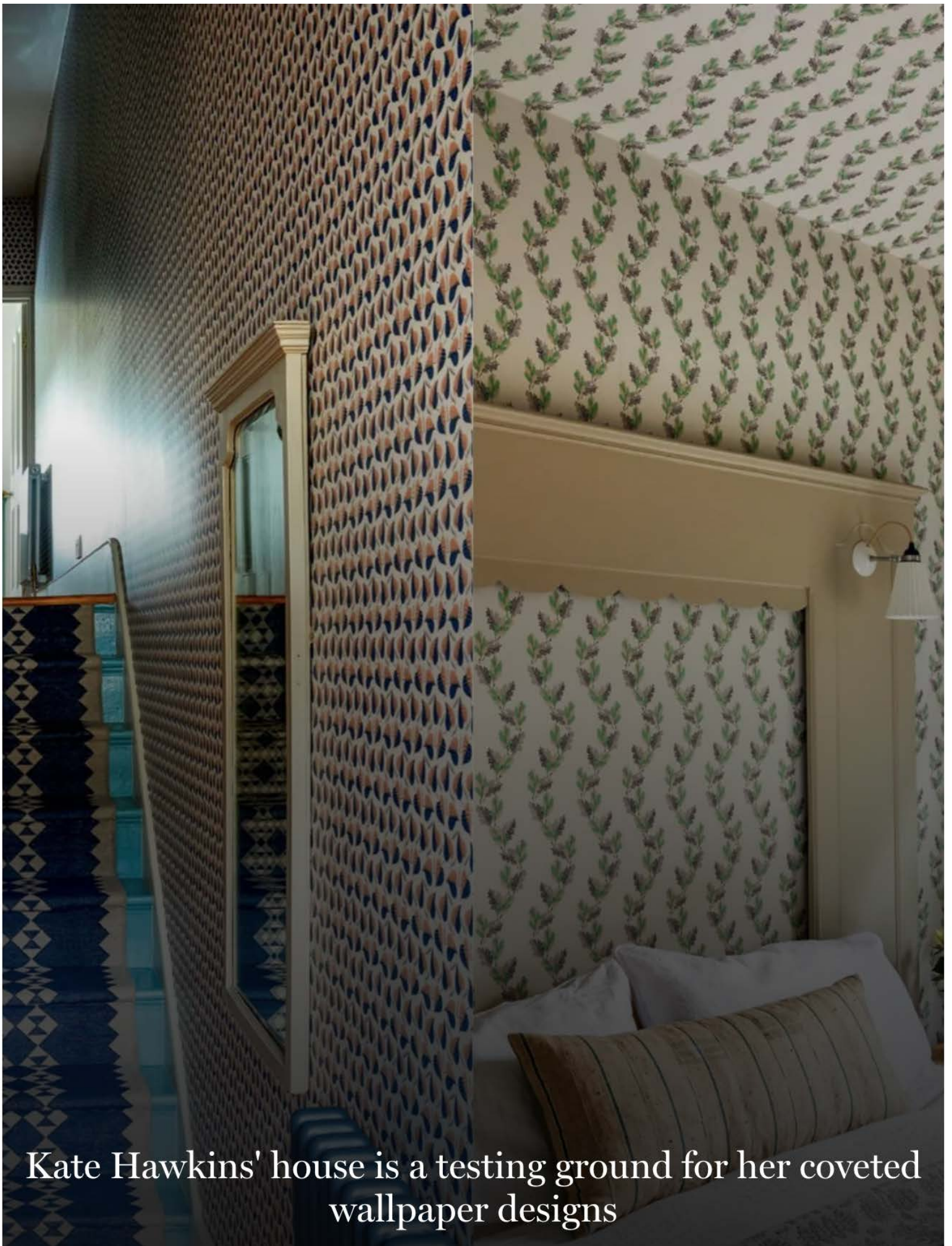
Paul Massey

Midway through the full-scale renovation of this mews house in South Kensington, Lucia Caballero discovered that her client had decided to sell. They wanted a bigger place. It was gutting news, but a silver lining soon appeared: the new owners asked if she wanted to carry on working on the project. ‘But it was like starting from scratch,’ Lucia says. ‘Their brief was completely different.’

The original clients had also instructed Nigel Perryer of Shard Architecture, so when Lucia and her team came on board there was already a plan in place: the basement had already been dug out, but there was no roof and pretty much the only thing that existed was the façade. ‘Then we basically did all of the interior architecture and changed the layouts,’ she says. The spatial design is unusual – almost wedge-shaped – on the ground floor and basement. ‘I wanted to incorporate the angles of the house into the design rather than squaring the rooms off,’ Lucia explains. ‘You gain three or four feet by doing this and it makes for interesting spaces.’

Oftentimes these ‘dead’ spaces are used to hide services and myriad gubbins for automated systems. Or they are tucked up into a dropped ceiling. Lucia says she always insists on achieving the maximum height possible, so that wouldn’t be a convenient hiding space either. Instead, she designed clever bespoke joinery which could double as storage as well as places to conceal said gubbins.

The clients, who Lucia said were full of energy, completely trusting and a dream to work with, wanted a something ‘bohemian and boudoir, with gemstone colourways’ in the ground floor sitting room – somewhere to have pre-theatre drinks with friends. A wild mixture of fabrics by Nobilis, GP&J Baker, Abbott & Boyd, [Pierre Frey](#) and trims by Samuel & Sons, and a rug by Tim Page Carpets certainly does the trick here, as does the use of a geometric wood veneer on the ceiling. The sofas and armchairs are bespoke pieces by Ensemblier London, and Lucia designed the sculptural bronze coffee tables.



Kate Hawkins' house is a testing ground for her coveted wallpaper designs

This space looks out onto an enormous light well, at the bottom of which is a subterranean courtyard garden which is accessed from the basement living area. Down here is the kitchen and dining area as well as another large sitting room – all of which have remarkably high ceilings for a basement. It is lighter and brighter in mood here compared to the space upstairs, and shows off the versatility of Lucia's work. The dining table is washed oak and the panelling is in sycamore with a hint of sheen to help bounce light around; an antiqued mirrored wall and an enormous red lacquered cabinet have the same effect. It's hard to believe you are metres below ground.

The first floor is a luxurious suite including the main bedroom, dressing room and bathroom. The palette here is cool and calm: whites and off-whites with the odd opulent flourish. One of the clients is very interested in all things wellness (crystals, yoga, healing) and had a very specific requests, right down to the size of the round bathtub which was made in 'Verde Antigua' marble. There's also an infrared sauna. It's an extraordinary space, really.

And indeed the entire house is incredibly well thought-out and hugely detailed. And the quality of the work lives up to the designs. The maker of the balustrade, for example, is a one-man band based in Wales whose previous projects include making the gates at Buckingham Palace.

The clients are obviously delighted too. So much so that they've asked Lucia and her team if she'd like to get involved in a potential new home in Umbria. The deal isn't signed yet, but with any luck it'll get off the ground this year.

Lucia has no shortage of projects at the moment. There's a big house in Kenya, and there are a couple on Jersey where she has just completed a clifftop house for herself. We caught up recently on Zoom where I was craning my neck to see over her shoulder at the space. It looks supremely cool – and very different from this project in South Kensington. She promised to send a few snaps my way when she finishes off a few bits and bobs. I'll keep you posted...

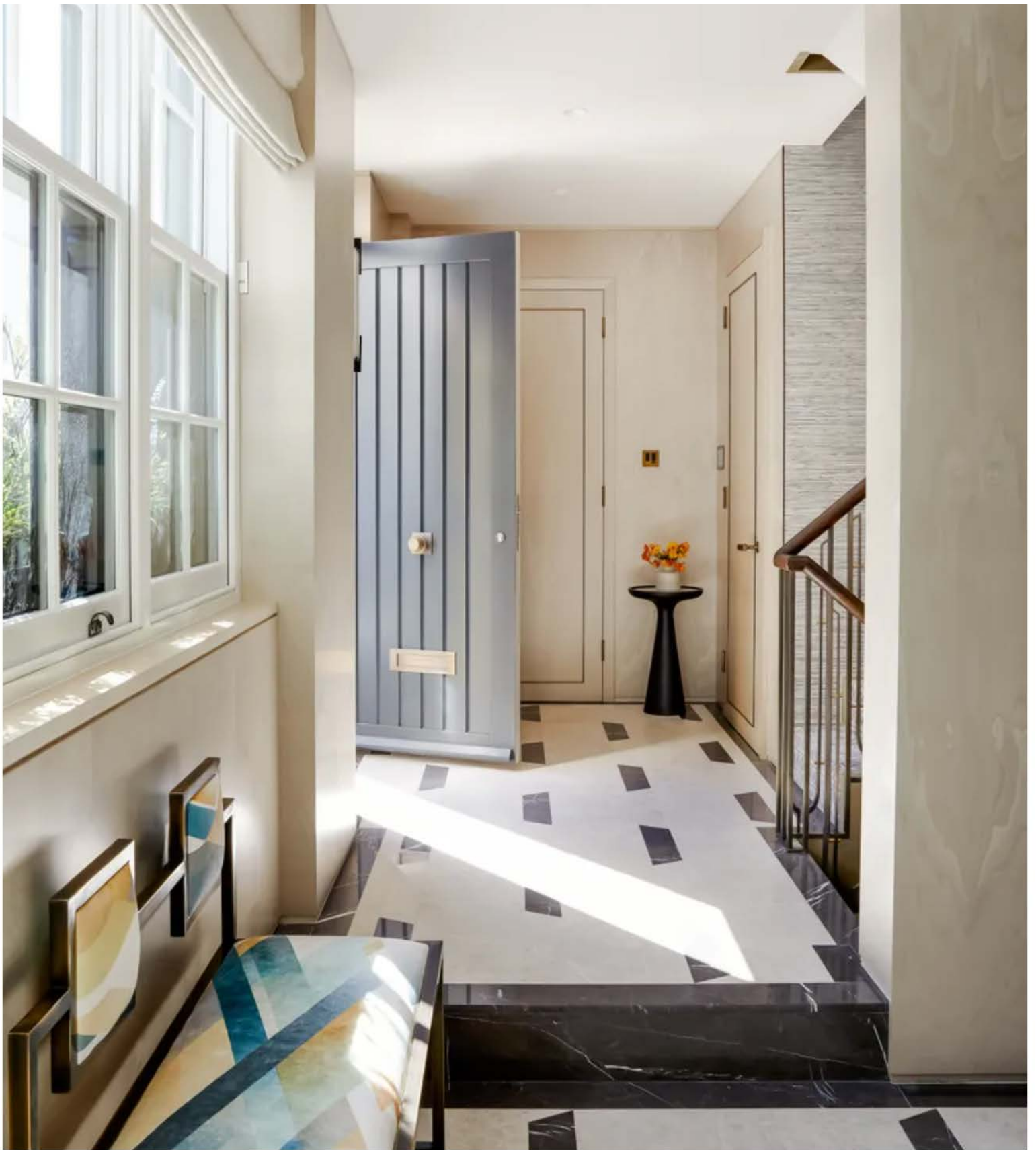


Paul Massey

1/12



The outside of the house is painted in 'Hague Blue' by Farrow & Ball.



Paul Massey

2/12



The stone floors are a bespoke design by Studio Caballero, in a combination of polished Brown Marquina marble and honed butterscotch light marble.



Paul Massey

3/12



The side chairs are made by Ensemblier London, in 'Velours Fakir' by Nobilis with silk fringes by Samuel & Sons.



Paul Massey

The ceiling is covered in 'Ajiro Fanfare' wood veneer by Maya Romanoff. The wallpaper is 'Nature Précieuse Eclat' by Elitis. The curved sofa is a bespoke design by Caballero, made by Ensemblier London, covered in Velours Medley by Nobilis. The cushions are a combination of already-made cushions from GP&J Baker and Elitis, and bespoke cushions in Pierre Frey and Zoffany fabrics with Samuel & Sons fringes.

The coffee tables are also bespoke designs by Caballero with bronze patina sides and green oxidised lacquer tops, manufactured by Anka Bespoke. The rug is 'Namche' supplied by Tim Page Carpets.



Paul Massey

The sofa is a bespoke design by Studio Caballero manufactured by Sofa & Chair Company in 'Reflet' fabric by Casamance. The rug is a viscose and silk Naram rug from Tim Page Carpets, while the coffee tables are a bespoke design by Studio Caballero in shattered, aged bronze finish and made by Anka Bespoke.



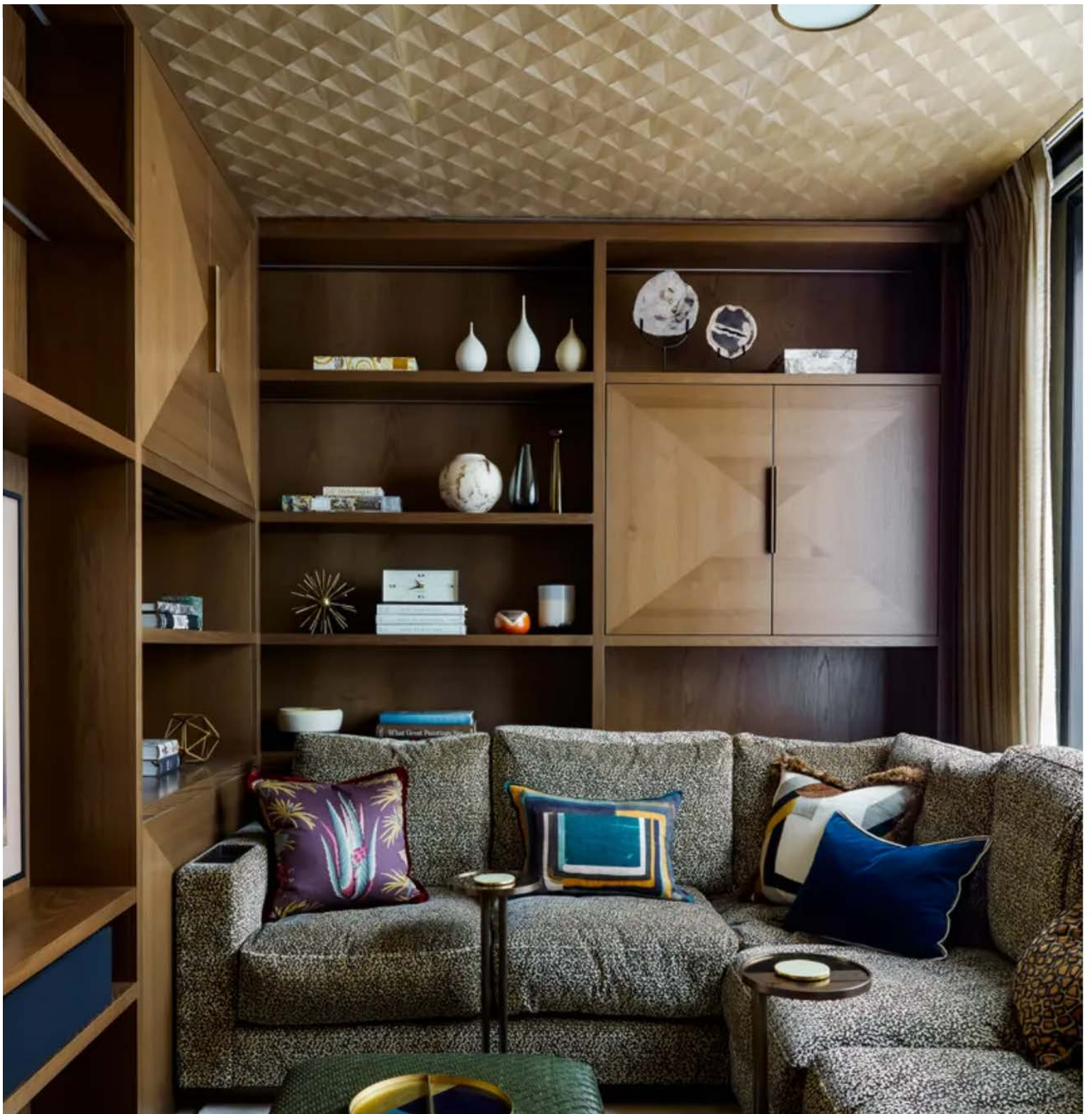
Paul Massey

Both the sofa and bench are bespoke designs by Studio Caballero; the sofa is upholstered in sage 'Thatch' by Weitzner, and the bench is in Sauge 'Op'h Laine Cachemire' by Dedar.



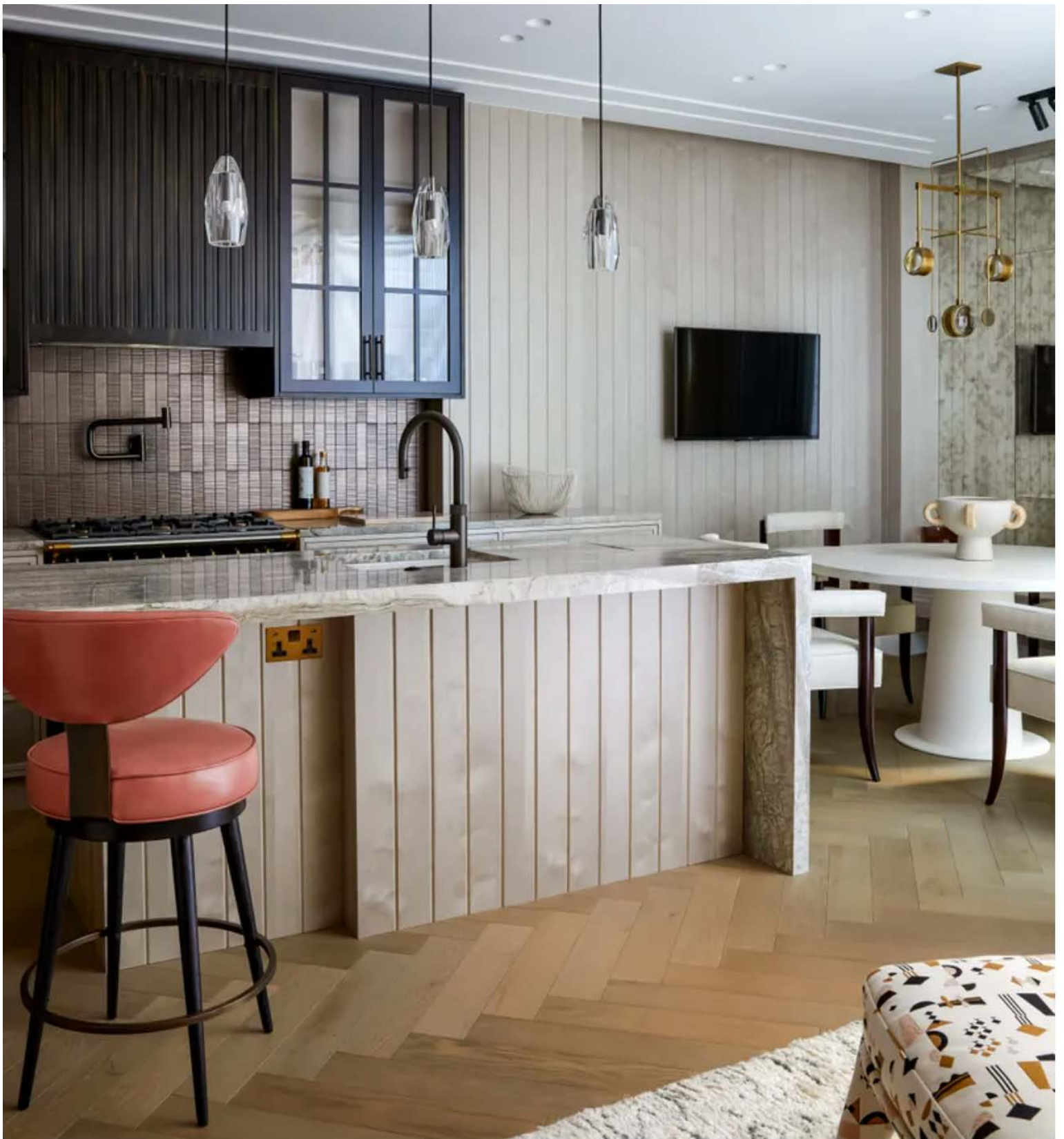
Paul Massey

The dining table is a bespoke design manufactured by Stefan Knopp; the chairs are Paolo chairs finished in dark gloss maple by Studio Van Den Akker. The ceiling light is a Lyra pendant chandelier by Holly Hunt.



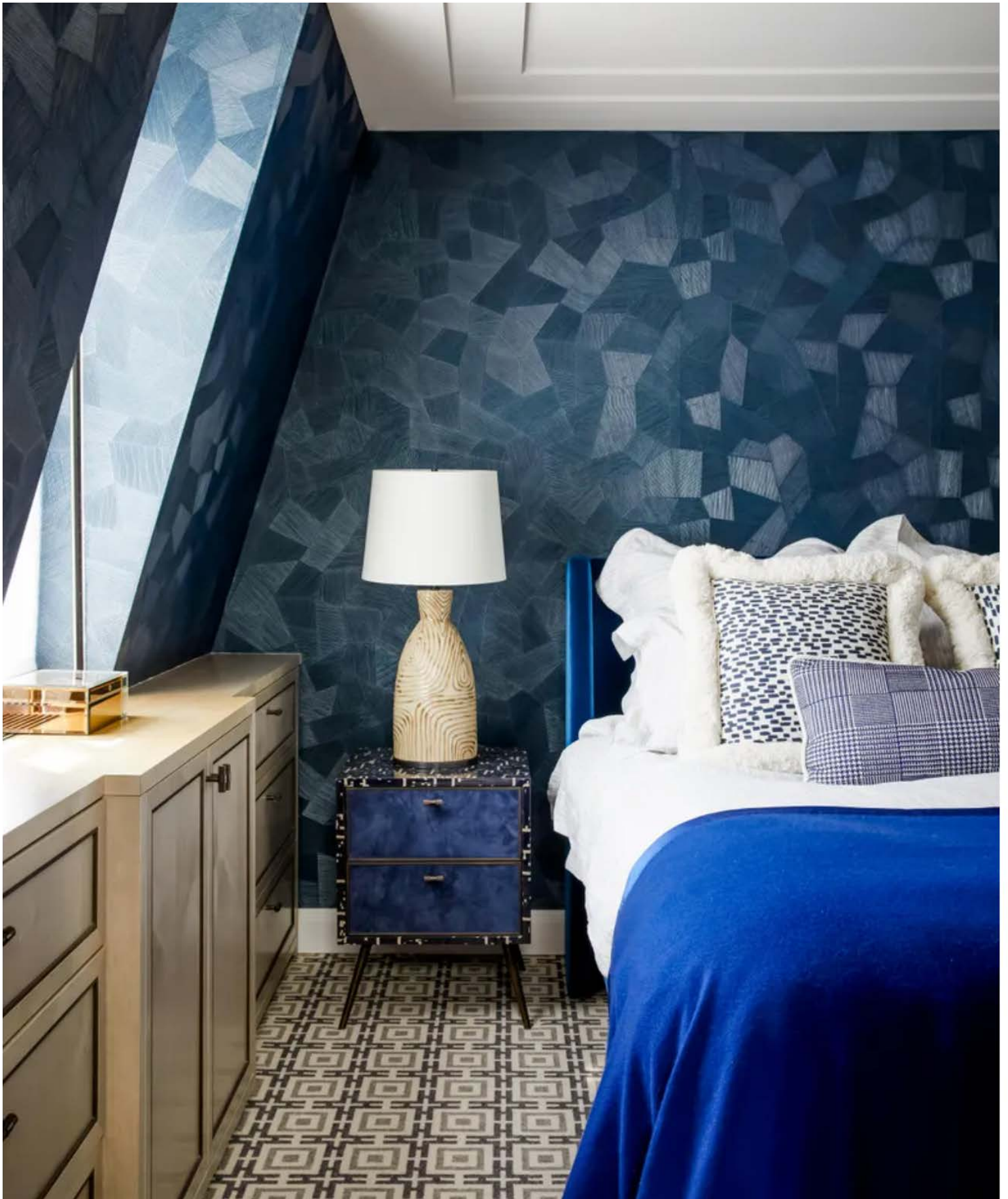
The joinery is in ash with a 25-per-cent-sheen, open-grain satin finish by Mundy Veneer and manufactured by Zen Builders.

The sofa is a bespoke design by Caballero, made by Ensemblier London in 'Velours Pixels' by Nobilis. The cushions are a combination of already-made cushions from Pierre Frey and Elitis, supplied by Abbott and Boyd, with bespoke cushions in fabrics by Zoffany with a Samuel & Sons fringe.



Paul Massey

The kitchen cabinets are painted in a bespoke bronze finish, while the wall panelling is in sycamore with a 25 per cent sheen, open grain and satin finish. The ceiling light over the dining table is a Lyra pendant chandelier by Holly Hunt, and over the island is a Châtelet pendant by Jonathan Browning Studios. The bar stools are bespoke designs by Studio Caballero in rose 'Absolute Leather' by Moore & Giles.



The wallpaper is 'Monsoon' in 'Facet' by Arte International. The carpet is 'Logo' in 'Desert Night' by Stark Carpets.



Paul Massey

The ceiling is painted in 'Slate I' by Paint & Paper Library; the wallpaper is 'Island Weaves' in 'Whitecap' by Maya Romanoff.



The bath tub and floor are in 'Verde Antigua' marble. The sauna and steam shower are by Klafs, and the sanitary ware is by Kallista.