



TRUE COLOURS

In this extract from her latest book, stylist Natalie Walton explains how to decorate authentically

WORDS & STYLING NATALIE WALTON PHOTOGRAPHY CHRIS WARNES





It's time to rethink our relationship with style. After all, it's not something we sprinkle in our homes. And it's not something that we can buy at a shop. Instead, your personal style is already within you. It's the essence of who you are, and your story in visual form. And the process of styling is how you can express what's most important to you in your spaces. But first, you need a clear idea of your style.

1 CONNECT TO YOUR STORY

So often when we are creating homes, it's tempting to look out 'there'. It's interesting to see what everyone else is doing. However, the most beautiful and stylish homes are the ones where the homeowner connects in a genuine way to what they truly love and what's meaningful to them. Otherwise, a home just becomes a collection of stuff that we can lose interest in.

Take the time to consider your story – the homes you've lived in (and loved), the cities/countries that have informed who you are, the holidays that stay with you to this day. All of those elements are the threads of your style. Your story is a combination of the people, places and events that have had an impact on your life, and helped shape who you are.

2 FOCUS ON FEELINGS

We all respond differently to what we see. What an object, detail or building means to you will not have the same significance for anyone else. The key to understanding your personal style is to tune into your instincts. What resonates immediately? What gives you that feeling of excitement? Don't second-guess it – that's when fear steps in, and we worry about what others will think.

Connecting with your feelings also helps you to appreciate someone else's style while acknowledging that it's not yours. It's like how you can appreciate an outfit on someone else but know that it wouldn't suit you, or that you would feel awkward wearing it. Our homes are pretty much the same. We need to dress them so that they feel like us.

3 BE CLEAR ABOUT YOUR VALUES

Value is a word that gets thrown around a lot. But what does it really mean? It's basically what's most important to you. When it comes to creating a home, and embracing your style, it's what you choose to prioritise in your spaces. The creative process always involves making decisions, and what you choose to include in your home comes down to what you value.

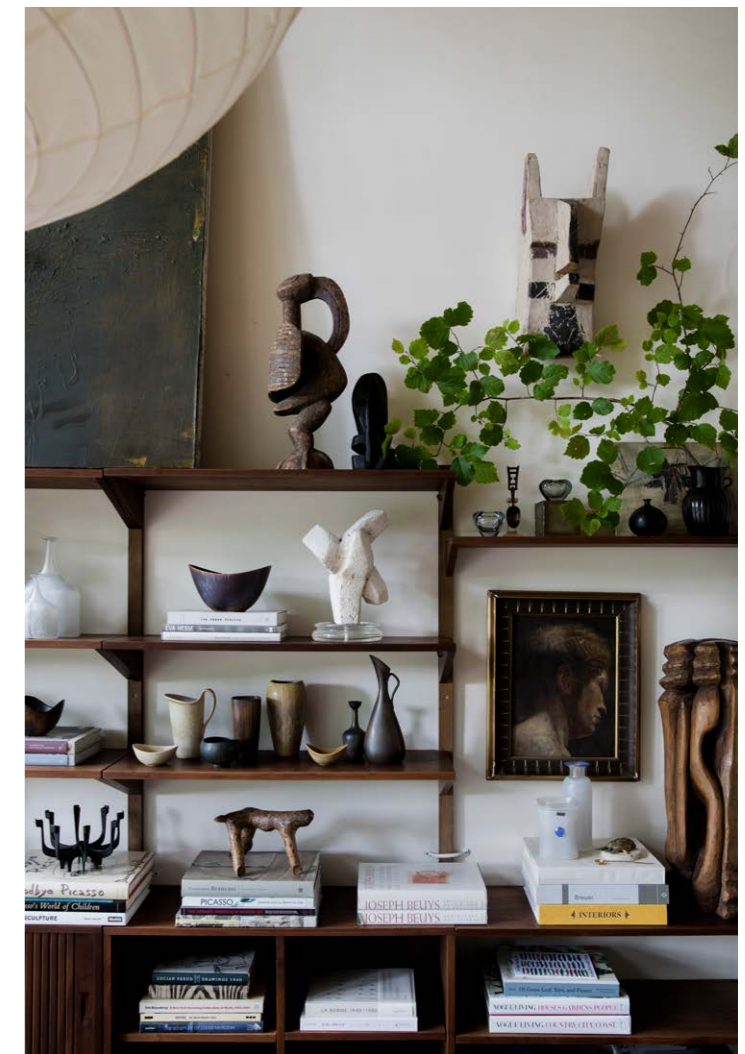
Take the time to understand what's most important to you. Do you prefer a rustic table that shows the knots and grain, or one that is more handcrafted and smooth? There is no right or wrong answer. It comes down to what you prefer. Prioritise those elements in your home.

4 DEVELOP A SIGNATURE STYLE

Where most people come unstuck when it comes to style is its fluid nature. It ebbs and flows with the different chapters of your life. You can enjoy and appreciate objects of different provenances, and develop new tastes informed by your travels and general life experience. However, your signature style filters the decisions you make about what enters your home, and how you bring all of the elements together.

To get a better understanding of your signature style, look back and notice the threads of your style that have never changed. Maybe it relates to your colour palette or your love of vintage. Note what has been constant and stood the test of time.

Consider the threads that are consistent in the work of architects, fashion designers and other visual artists. While each project is different, what they create is identifiable in an instant. That is their style. Make sure that what is unique for you – your style – is expressed in your home.





5 LEARN HOW TO EDIT

Editing is a process that helps you refine your style. Most people think about styling as adding objects to a space, but the greater skill is learning what to take away. Editing is a process of deciding what you should keep and what you should remove.

The first step is to create awareness. So often we live by default and stop noticing our surrounds – really noticing. Ensure everything is there for a reason. And engage with the process. The more you question what you have, the more clarity you will get on what's important to you, giving you a better understanding of your own personal style. **10**



This is an edited extract from *Style: The Art Of Creating A Beautiful Home* by Natalie Walton, published by Hardie Grant (\$60, available online and in stores nationally).

