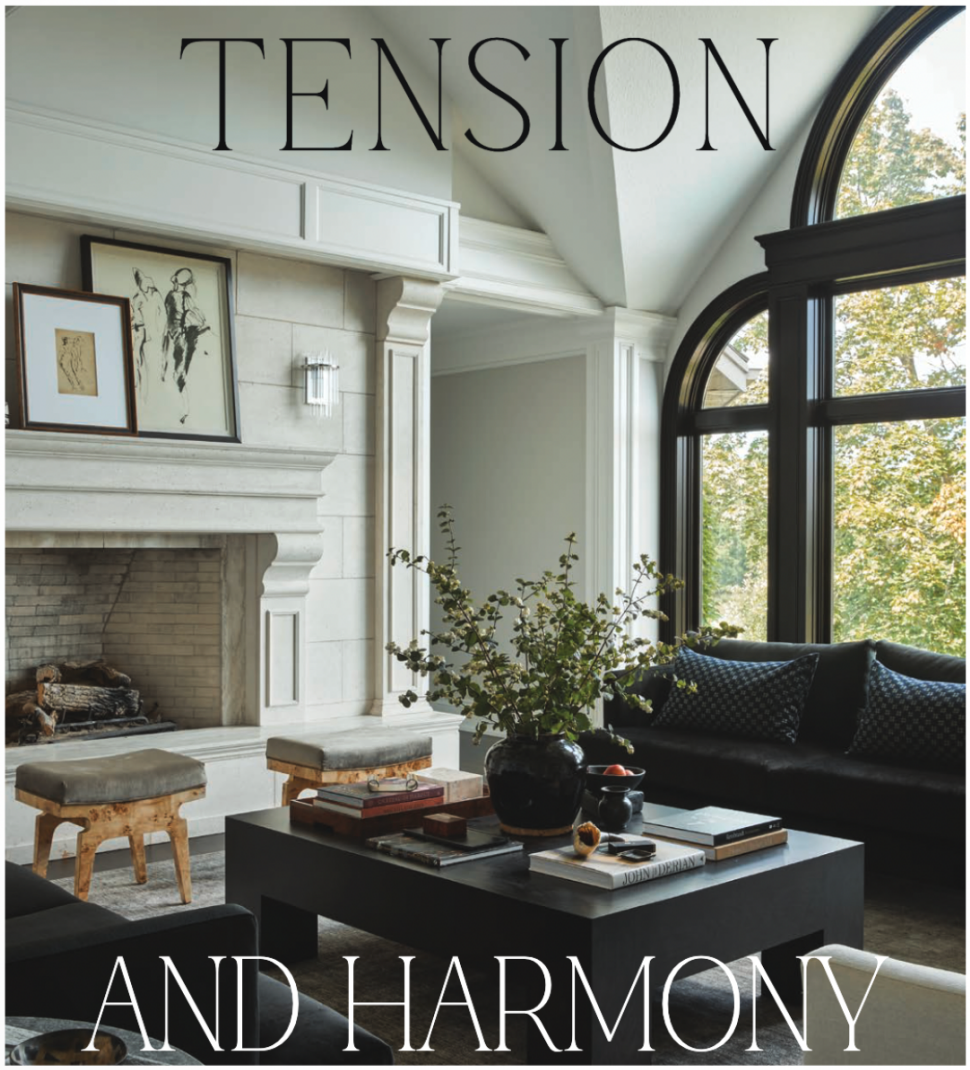
TENSION AND HARMONY



PHOTOGRAPHY BY **LAUREN MILLER**

Marie Claire Maison Arabia dialogues with Ines Kelly Mazzotta, the co-founder of Kelly Hopter Interiors, about her latest project, Waterloo—a residence **in Canada** that showcases her nuanced approach to contrast, colour, and layered composition in interior design.



Located on a riverbank and surrounded by lush vegetation, the Waterloo Project is more than a renovation. It is a reflection on how interiors can respond to their environment while conveying the feelings of those residing in them. For Mazzotta, contrast is one of the most powerful tools at her disposal. ***"I really enjoy the tension that juxtaposing tones, forms and textures create – I believe it gives rooms great depth and makes them more interesting and unexpected"***, she explains. ***"But when proper care is not taken, high contrast can also lead to spaces that feel stark and uninviting. It's really important to bridge the gap between contrasting elements and those that introduce gradation and nuance"***.

That sensitivity to nuance emerges clearly in the colour palette, where design and psychology meet. The project's rich tones reflect both the preferences of the homeowners and the colours of the natural surroundings. ***"I made sure that I built out a palette that would harmoniously blend with the natural surroundings of the home that can be seen through all the windows – the home is situated on a river bank with a lush landscape"***.

Mazzotta views colour and contrast not in isolation, but as part of a larger layered strategy—what she describes as a "primal" instinct for complexity. ***"Layering in general is key in creating interiors that feel nuanced, interesting and warm. I believe we are psychologically predisposed on a very primal level to appreciate interiors that are layered because that's what we encounter in nature"***, she explains. ***"Look at any landscape and you realise it's composed of a vast variety of tones and textures, it has nuance and depth"***. For these layers to come together with clarity, execution becomes essential. The designer attributes much of the project's strength to her network of skilled artisans and contractors who understand her vision and adapt to the unavoidable challenges of building. ***"We are very fortunate to work with wonderful trades who take the time to understand our vision and execute it to the highest standard"***, she notes. ***"This includes gracefully and nimbly navigating unexpected challenges and roadblocks, which are inevitable in any renovation project"***.

Design, for Mazzotta, is a process of both planning and receptivity. ***"I define some 90% of the design at the outset, with that final 10% fine-tuned once the foundation is set. I have learned over the years that something magical happens when you see your designs come to life, and get to have that sensory experience of the materials, textures and colours coming together. You can then make any necessary adjustments. It is also then that I come up with a plan on how to accessorise and style the space"***.

Among these final gestures is the integration of art—not as decoration, but as structure. ▶





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"Art is never a decorative afterthought in my projects, but rather one of the fundamental building blocks of a space", she explains. ***"In the Waterloo kitchen, for example, I knew that we needed a piece that would help us bridge the gap between contrasting tones of the cabinetry and flooring – a landscape with a nuanced palette was a perfect answer to that"***. Still, the artwork must resonate with the people who live with it. ***"Selecting art is very much a collaboration with the clients as we need to make sure that they have an equally positive emotional response to it"***.

The entire project unfolds as a dialogue between the aesthetic and the everyday. For a young family, beauty alone is not enough—materials must be functional, forgiving, and long-lasting. ***"In my books, function always comes before form. Of course, I always strive to create beautiful spaces – but never at the expense of functionality"***, she says. ***"Enter easy to maintain performance fabrics and countertops with enough veining to hide everyday messes. Enter softer corners and subtly patterned rugs that hide signs of daily life"***.

In Waterloo, we see a refinement of Mazzotta's evolving design language. It's a space that reflects her core philosophy, while continuing to explore new expressions. ***"I think Waterloo definitely embodies the principles that define our aesthetic. That said, I believe that every project we create is in some ways an evolution of this aesthetic – I certainly always strive to give every home we design its own distinct personality and employ my design language in ways that are fresh and new"***. ■