

INSPIRATIONAL  
INTERIORS

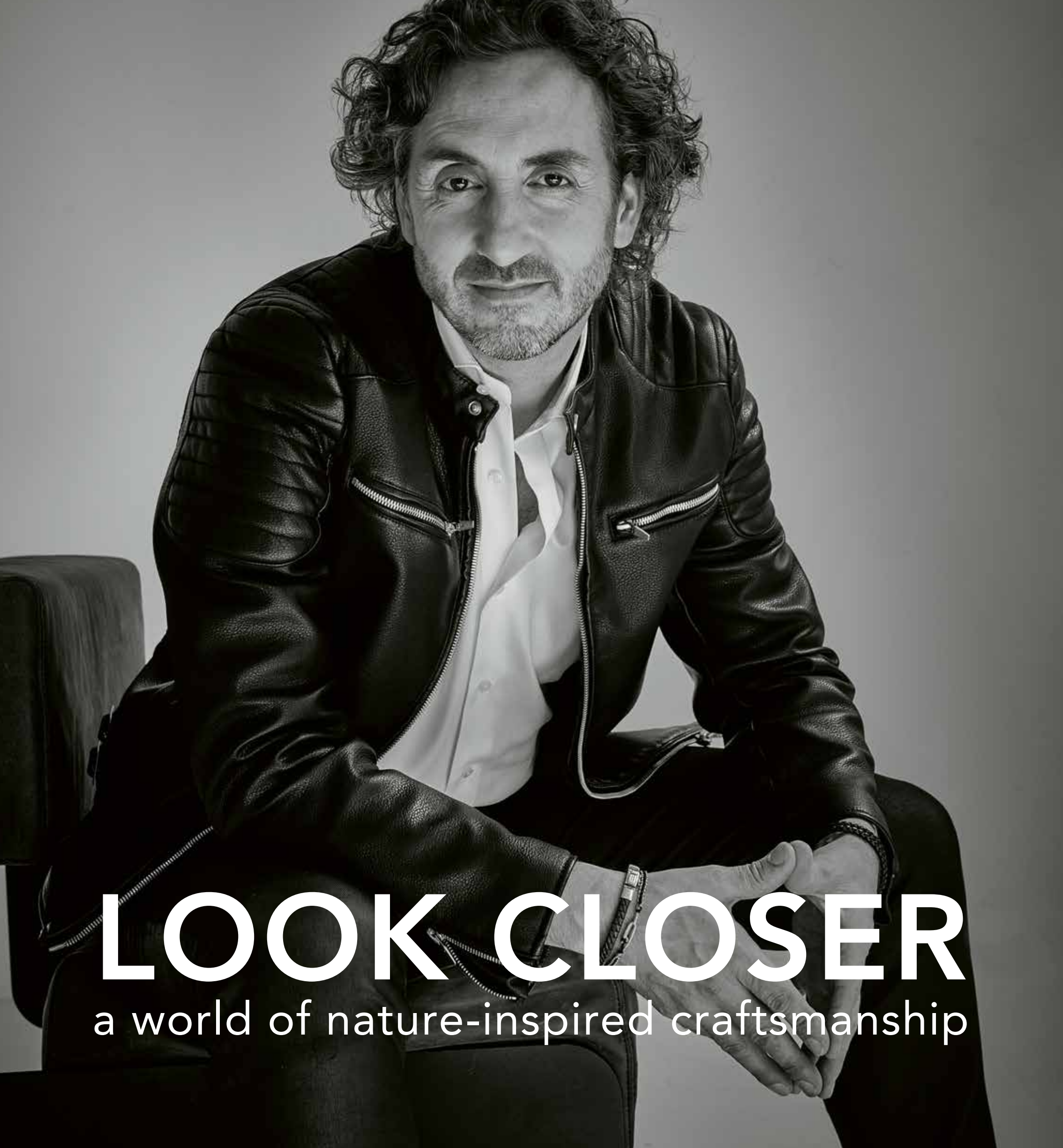
*Osiris* **HERTMAN**

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<b>3</b>	Contents page
<b>5</b>	Foreword
<b>7</b>	Amsterdam Penthouse
<b>29</b>	Zen Villa
<b>81</b>	Church House
<b>99</b>	Panoramic Penthouse
<b>117</b>	Country Residence
<b>135</b>	Loft Office
<b>153</b>	Land Rover Showroom
<b>167</b>	Inspiration Residence
<b>187</b>	Floating Salon
<b>207</b>	Canal Apartement
<b>215</b>	Material Experience
<b>224</b>	Collaborations and credits



# LOOK CLOSER

a world of nature-inspired craftsmanship

# Osiris HERTSMAN

Text by Siji Jabbar

The maxim 'Less is more' has been with us since the mid-20th century. But the philosophy it encapsulates has often been misunderstood, to the extent that these days it typically conjures up images of sparsely furnished, white-walled apartments with ultra-modern furniture resting on pale wood floors. It's an interpretation that merely scratches the surface of the philosophy, which is why many such interiors – even at the top end of the market – look not only generic, but also somewhat impersonal. Whereas when people describe interiors designed by the interior architect Osiris Hertman, they tend to use adjectives like 'warm', 'intimate', 'luxurious' and 'inviting'. And yet 'less is more' is a fairly accurate encapsulation of this designer's approach, too. So what does he do differently?

The philosophy described by those three words is both about avoiding superfluous decoration so that what is displayed creates more of an impact, and about stripping design down to its bare essentials so that a thing's function is discernable in its form. Both of these are true of all the interiors presented in this book. Of course each of the interiors began life as a unique challenge defined by a unique space and a brief based on the client's individual wishes and way of life. Nonetheless, some themes and outcomes specific to Hertman's signature unite them all. First of all, they all display a degree of coherence that testifies to his ability to grasp the interlocking possibilities of an entire space at once and realize these possibilities in a logical manner. But a less obvious clue as to why 'less' amounts to so much more in these interiors may be found by looking closer.

Hertman is an old school designer with the heart of a craftsman. This is evident in the equal attention he gives to choosing and treating materials, to design considerations and to the extraordinary level of workmanship that goes into everything he produces. The impact created by each item within his interiors depends on a mutually reinforcing relationship between these multiple aspects. To ensure that this fine balance occurs every time, he designs everything himself – furniture, accessories, rugs, even the bed linen – everything flows from his pen, or as much of everything as possible, and everything is handmade. We know that to examine a natural material in its raw state is to be lost in a world of wonder defined by texture, colour and patterns. Nature needs no embellishment to have this effect on us. Thus one of the tasks Hertman sets himself in his use of materials is to retain as much of these authentic properties as possible. A tabletop of live edge wood will therefore be allowed to display its every undulation and tonal variation through the eight layers of clear resin in which it is sealed. The leather used in cladding a wall will reveal its organic imperfections. And a boulder might be hollowed out

to create a sink, but its sides will be left rough-hewn. In so doing, each item reveals a world of such natural richness that only a few pieces are necessary for an interior to feel full and endlessly absorbing, while leaving plenty of space for its occupants to experience a sense of freedom. Retaining these properties achieves other ends, too. Firstly, it allows Hertman to maintain a simplicity of form in his designs, since half the task is to allow the design to reveal as much of these properties as possible. In addition, his frequent use of high-grain leather and untreated wood contributes to the warm ambience that suffices his interiors. Finally, the organic properties contribute to the overall sense of living with nature, which fosters a sense of peace.

This emphasis on letting nature inform his decisions is further evident in the blurring of boundaries between indoors and outdoors – the two spaces are always in correspondence, such that the outdoor context functions as a part of the overall design. Hertman's earthy colour palette also plays a role in this blurring of natural and man-made worlds.

Then there's the central role of craftsmanship, which comes as no surprise, given that Hertman's interest in woodcarving and stone-grinding began long before he was old enough to know there was a design academy in Eindhoven, which he would later attend. Hence his many travels across the globe in search of local woodcarvers and craftsmen who share his dedication to craftsmanship. The techniques used by some of his fellow devotees have been passed down through generations. Such is the case with the small, family-owned business in Indonesia that hand-sculpts his intricate lamps using techniques originally developed for making jewellery. Meanwhile the materials from which the products are crafted – bronze, copper, amber stone – allow them to radiate an aura that contributes to the warmth and richness of the rooms they serve.

And of course there's the fine orchestration that goes into putting everything together to achieve a state of perfect balance and a unique and complete identity for each interior so that nothing further is required by the client – no additional accessories, furniture or bed linen.

The riches are hidden in plain sight, and everything works together unobtrusively. As the interiors in this book demonstrate, the results radiate a sense of peace, an outcome achieved time and time again with 'less'. As Hertman maintains: 'An interior needs to exude serenity and generate a feeling of well-being. It is only then that the beauty of detail, the structure, the colours, the ingredients that constitute the whole become apparent. A good interior is in fact like nature itself: it provides you with a sense of peace.'



# AMSTERDAM PENTHOUSE

Six floors above Amsterdam's 400-year old canals and busy boutique shopping streets sits this oasis of calm with sweeping views of the city. The stylish and airy penthouse was a warren of closed-off offices when the young IT entrepreneur that owns it commissioned the designer for its transformation, a process that began with the removal of the old curtain walls, leaving an expansive interior defined by a brick island with a wide apron of living space. The spatial arrangement was then wrapped in floor-to-ceiling windows and sliding doors, thus offering the city as a visual feast on all sides, blurring the division between indoors and outdoors, and illuminating the cool and uncluttered interior.

The daunting task of creating an interior capable of holding its own against the surrounding views has been achieved by using light-coloured stone floors and walls that allow every feature, piece of furniture and accessory to stand out not just for their form, but for their inherent qualities.

There is nothing ostentatious about the dining area wall, for instance, yet it catches the eye for the rich detail in its cladding, which comprises untreated wood reclaimed from old Java island fishing boats and presents a mosaic of browns and blues of varying shades. This wall's weathered maritime roughness offers a deliberate contrast to the rigid symmetry of the door frame, and enhances the organic ambience evinced by the live edge wood table (also from Indonesia), whose grain variations and undulating outline convey its close connection to nature. Both wall and table are tonally complemented by the suspended copper lamp, a hand-made ode to old-school incandescent lighting, deceptively simple in form but exhibiting a world of intricate detail and clever concealment upon inspection.

The natural stone wall opposite the chill out alcove is even more understated yet equally rich in character. A pale mosaic of hand-cut and polished quartz bricks, it is backlit to facilitate indoor sunrises and sunsets at the flick of a switch.

Other items similarly rooted in nature or derived from repurposing include a shelving unit of reclaimed wood and copper-plated steel, petrified wood side tables and a 500kg bathroom sink sculpted from a river boulder in Indonesia.

Doors slide silently into adjoining walls and are kept to a minimum to facilitate spatial fluidity. The client's interests – entertaining friends, watching movies, relaxing in the bath, listening to music with nightclub-level sonic properties – are reflected in the indoor and outdoor jacuzzi (the latter with overhead heating for chilly evenings), the projector and screen that disappear into the ceiling when not in use, the cocktail bar, and the professional-grade speaker system by Void Acoustics.

A visually striking display of style and simplicity.

The transition from the living room to the terrace is seamless thanks to the unbroken arrangement of light-beige Jura natural stone tiles, which allows the floor to simply continue on the terrace.

The cocktail bar and the kitchen island form a single long unit, thereby linking the utility of the living area and the kitchen.





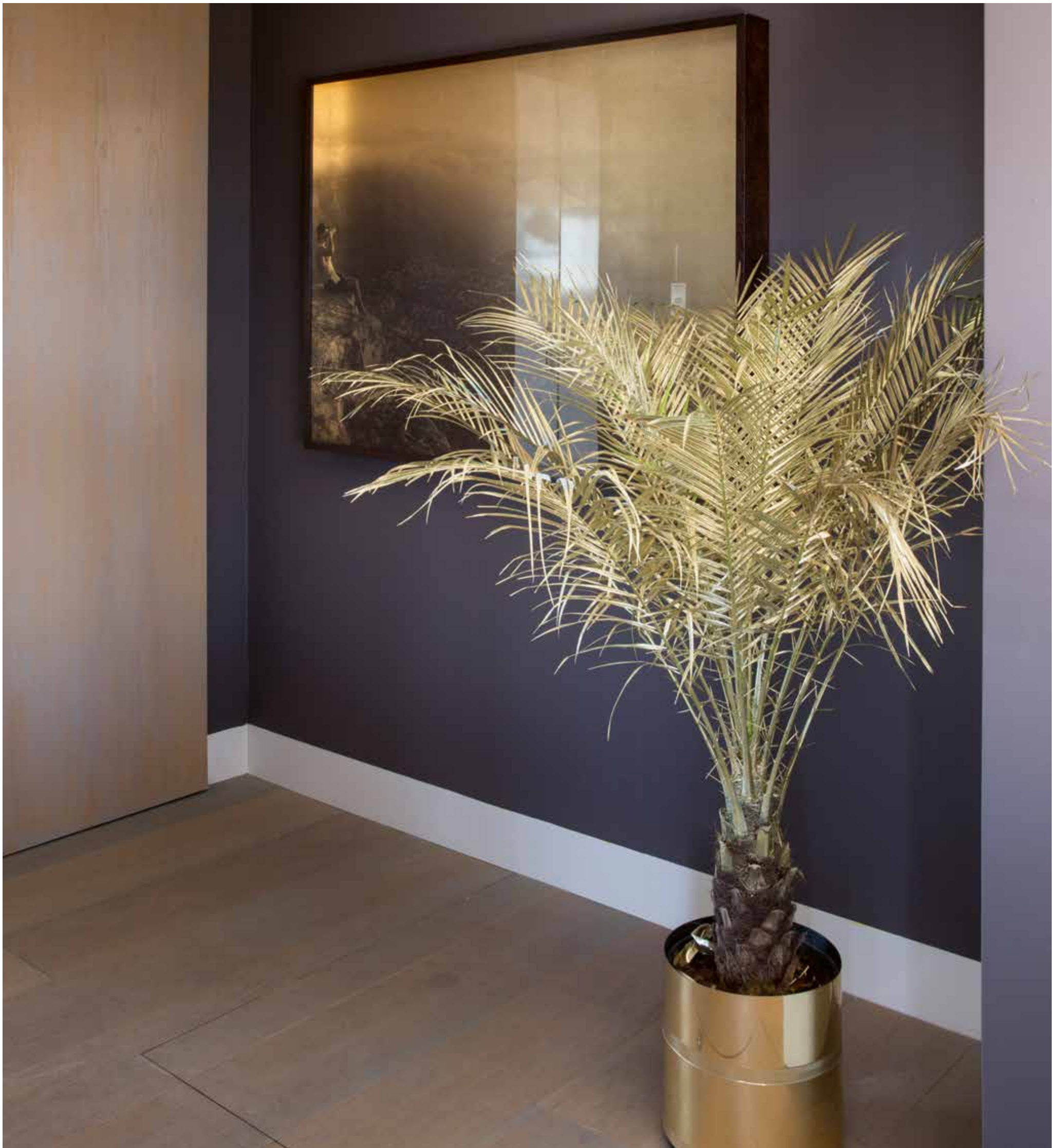








The dining area wall is clad in untreated wood reclaimed from old Java island fishing boats, its weathered surface a mosaic of browns and blues of varying shades. Above the dining table hangs a copper lamp designed as an ode to old-school incandescent lighting and handmade in Indonesia.





The wall behind the large cycad plant is of hand-cut and polished quartz bricks, and is backlit with 200 LED lights.



