

HOME

LAYERS OF A CULTURE, ANCIENT AND CONTEMPORARY  
CHAINS OF RECOLLECTIONS,  
SYMBOLISM AND ALLEGORY.  
IN HER TBLISI HOME AND STUDIO,  
NATA JANBERIDZE  
RE-SHAPES GEORGIAN ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN.

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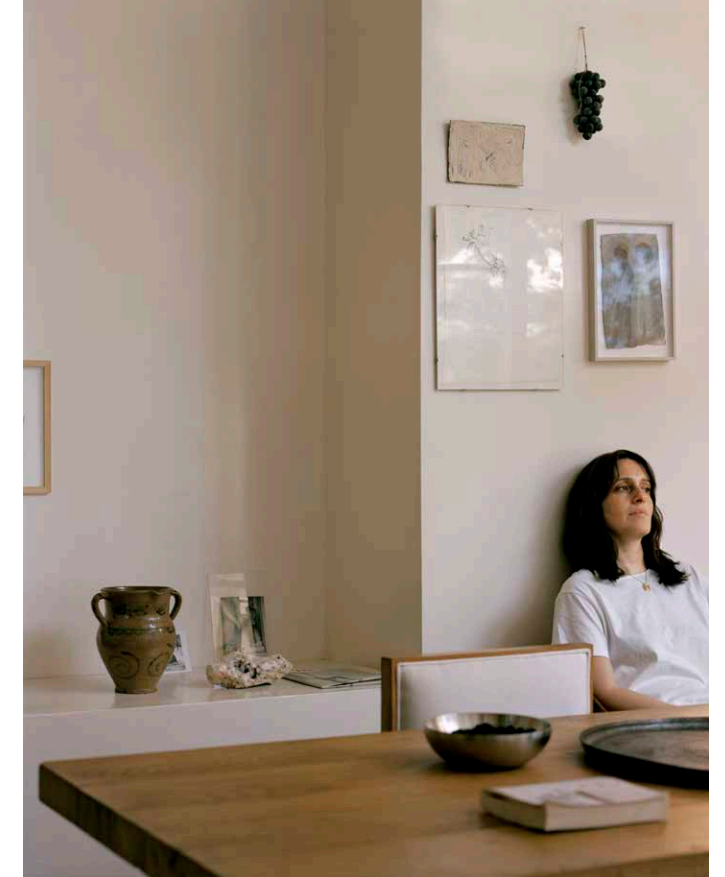
In the classic Tblisian courtyard home, the formality of the herring-bone parquer is eased by the 1940s soft leather sofa and the folding deck chair from Cado.



Expansive windows and gauzy curtains filter light in the dining room with a custom-made oak table and early midcentury chairs from Paul Bert Serpette market in Paris. On the plinth is Ceramiche Vessel 3 by Rooms Studio for Bitossi and above it a plate by Georgian ceramicist Alde Kakabadze.



An assemblage of Georgian pieces from different periods, on the table an ancient tray, and an antique stone vessel on the shelf, paired with an artwork by George Tourkovasilis.



ENTERING Nata Janberidze's apartment immediately creates a chain of recollections. Tbilisi, enchanting city not primarily because of its landscape, architecture or people, but the combination of all: the beauty in flux, difficult to translate into images, since it also includes situations and smells: jasmine, rose, mulberry, dank, stray cats and dogs, wooden entrances of art nouveau architecture, Soviet-era elevators, chalk, a neighbour's fresh washing overlooking a courtyard or someone cooking across the balcony.

Walking through a wooden library corridor, these phenomena enter my immediate memory and imagination. I can't help but think that it is through interiors one can start to understand the multi-layered, simple yet complex Tbilisi culture hidden behind the closed doors. In this interior, created by the co-founder of Rooms Studio, custom-made wooden shelves house her personal collection of books on art and architecture, poetry, postcards, artworks by friends and by Janberidze. House plants cover the edges of objects and reach for the glass skylight above. A glass partition leads towards the living room, which is combined with an open kitchen set in a Tbilisian glass-house. Open windows overlook the trees growing inside a Tbilisian courtyard, which Georgians like to call "Italian". Invited to join an oak dining table, resting on an early mid-century chair from Paul Bert Serpette market in Paris, I am served late breakfast: strawberries, black coffee, cheese and quiche, soon to be stolen and eaten by Janberidze's dog Cosmo.

It's already a decade since she moved in with her three daughters, Tina, Nina and Keto. The twins have just finished their primary school and are getting ready to study abroad, while the oldest lives in London. A lot has changed in their years living in the early 20th-

century apartment. Janberidze manipulated the floorplan by replacing the wall between the library and the living room with a glass partition she worked on in collaboration with the local designer Rati Eradze. She added a glass skylight to the dim corridor and let in a vast amount of sunlight previously lacking in the apartment. She changed the disposition of bedrooms and most importantly, filled it with objects close to her heart. This all happened gradually, step by step following the needs of the young family.

I am reminded of *The Step*, a late Soviet film by a Georgian cinema film director Aleksandre (Sasha) Rekhviashvili, a film set fully in an interior. Regardless how absurd the plot seems at times, when we as viewers witness a donkey in a shower and someone harvesting mushrooms in the kitchen, not without a coded language of critique, the film shows a Georgian family and a certain style of decorating the family houses. Overgrown indoor vegetation is dominant in every scene, combined with beautiful Caucasian rugs, silver and ceramic dining sets and a nuanced atmosphere.

There is something as romantic as Rekhviashvili's vision in Janberidze's personal interior. Atmospheric, sentimental and nostalgic towards the times before a massive gentrification left its mark on Georgia's fragile capital. "These courtyards are vanishing," we say simultaneously when looking from the window of the master bedroom of the house, certainly belonging to the master herself. As in the custom-made library, here too, she has created a wooden entrance to the private bathroom. The bathroom door serves also as a wardrobe with wooden and glass details. Recently she repainted her bedroom white, getting rid of previously dominant wallpaper with a pattern of what could have been a medieval style cloud.



As in her Rooms Studio design practice, her interest towards symbolism and allegory is being gradually replaced by more authentic and earthly designs, while not fully abandoning the former. However, some of her favourite collected objects, furniture, textile, books and art are delicately gathered in the rooms, historic furniture brought from various markets and showrooms of France, Belgium, the UK and elsewhere. Materials such as wood, leather, cotton, metal create the space. Historic layers vary from early 1950s to the 1990s and contemporary design.

A former cabinet from a science laboratory has been repurposed and shows a cutlery and ceramic collection. Object collections bring together antique Georgian ceramic vessels, a Dagestani bronze tray and 1980s steel electric lights. A massive Akari light by Noguchi cannot be missed, alongside a smaller Akari table lamp. Sculptural elements enter the otherwise quite minimalist space paired with various works: a Mariana Chkonia early felt piece and a wax stool by Rooms Studio x Shotiko Aptsiauri, a silver Street Bench by Rooms Studio and a 1970s ceramic nude by an unknown Georgian artist. The juxtaposition of clear, airy and light design with sculptural pieces creates the special charisma of the interior.

Not calling herself a collector per se, Janberidze’s solidarity towards the young and emerging art scene of Tbilisi has let her become one without knowing. Her collection consists mostly of works by friends, many of whom are women, some deceased and some living artists, some local and some internationally recognised – Ketuta Alexi-Meskhishvili, Tamuna Sirbiladze, Vera Pagava, Salome Dumbadze, George Tourkovasilis – acquired through dealers in Georgia and friends from Athens.

Janberidze and Keti Toloraia founded Rooms Studio in 2007. Friends and colleagues since their student times, they have been occupied with re-thinking Georgian architecture and design practices and establishing a unique voice through what became the first female-run design studio in Georgia. Trend-setters in many ways, Janberidze and Toloraia have put the country on the map of the international interior and product design world. While blurring the lines between art, design and architecture, they show in contemporary art institutions and commercial galleries, in leading design showrooms and fairs.

The interior of the Rooms Studio itself, situated in the city centre is outstanding as a showroom, demonstrating each collection through meticulously selected objects. The showroom presents what the studio is best at, a well-balanced and sharp dialogue between old and new, ancient and contemporary. Here you are being served the strongest coffee in town and if not for the marvellous view of the city, one forgets whether it is Georgia or any global design and high fashion hometown like Paris or Milan. Never making a mistake when it comes to the choice of architecture, they located the studio on the first floor of an iconic 19th century mansion, formerly built for and belonging to a lover of a well-known Tbilisian merchant. The house has high ceilings, bright and airy rooms, and a long wooden balcony covered in vine and twining wisteria growing from the garden below. Their methodology is intuitive and fluid, working on a collection-to-collection basis, often with recurring elements and drawing inspiration from poetry, mythology, art and architecture. It is not to be put into one category. Like the architecture of their homeland, historical layers are being added to one another, without abandoning and closing the previous chapters.

IT’S A SPACE WHERE I FEEL FREE TO CREATE,  
TRY NEW THINGS, AND BE MYSELF. AFTER TEN YEARS OF LIVING HERE,  
MY APARTMENT FEELS MORE LIKE HOME THAN EVER.  
IT HAS CHANGED OVER TIME, ALWAYS ADJUSTING TO WHAT WE NEED.  
BECAUSE OF MY WORK, IT’S ALWAYS EVOLVING.

NATA JANBERIDZE

Janberidze manipulated the floorplan by replacing the wall between the library and the living room with a glass partition she worked on in collaboration with the local designer Rati Eradze. The custom-made shelves house her collection of books and ephemera and the daybed is a modern French edition.





Rooms Studio's Silver Street Bench and Silver Lingerin Light, both in alumin-  
ium, alongside a sofa by Caravane and a Noguchi Akari shade. The artwork is by  
Vera Pagava (1907-1988), a Georgian artist who was based in Paris.



An LC armchair by Le Corbusier, Pierre Jeanneret and Charlotte Perriand in front  
of shelves that hold Ceramiche Vessel 1 by Rooms Studio for Bitossi with a Silver  
Lingerin Light. On the wall a gypsum piece by Salome Chigilashvili and a 1970s  
Georgian ceramic nude.



A Jean Prouvé facade element Grille in embossed aluminium from the late 1950s and a 1980s steel chair by Karl Friedrich Förster stand in contrast to the wooden shelves and the greenery.



An ancient Georgian tray on the custom-made oak dining table with Costes chairs by Philippe Starck for Driade. The light above is Madame Pendant by E.J.R Barnes. The kitchen cabinets designed by Janberidze are black painted wood with plywood panels and a black marble countertop.





An antique curtain pelmet etches a flourish over the windows in the bedroom with its custom-made bed and bedcover, a 1930s shelved mirror and a birdseye maple antique table. A work by Georgian artist Vera Pagava hangs above the bed, a piece by Salome Dumbadze above the radiator, David Meskhi is below the light and Jeannete Montgomery Barron next to bed.

In the bedroom Stria wall sconces by Ernest Gismondi for Artemide next to an artwork by Ketuta Alexi-Meskhishvili. A Carlo Scarpa glass vase sits next to a 1990s table lamp from Studio Mantel.





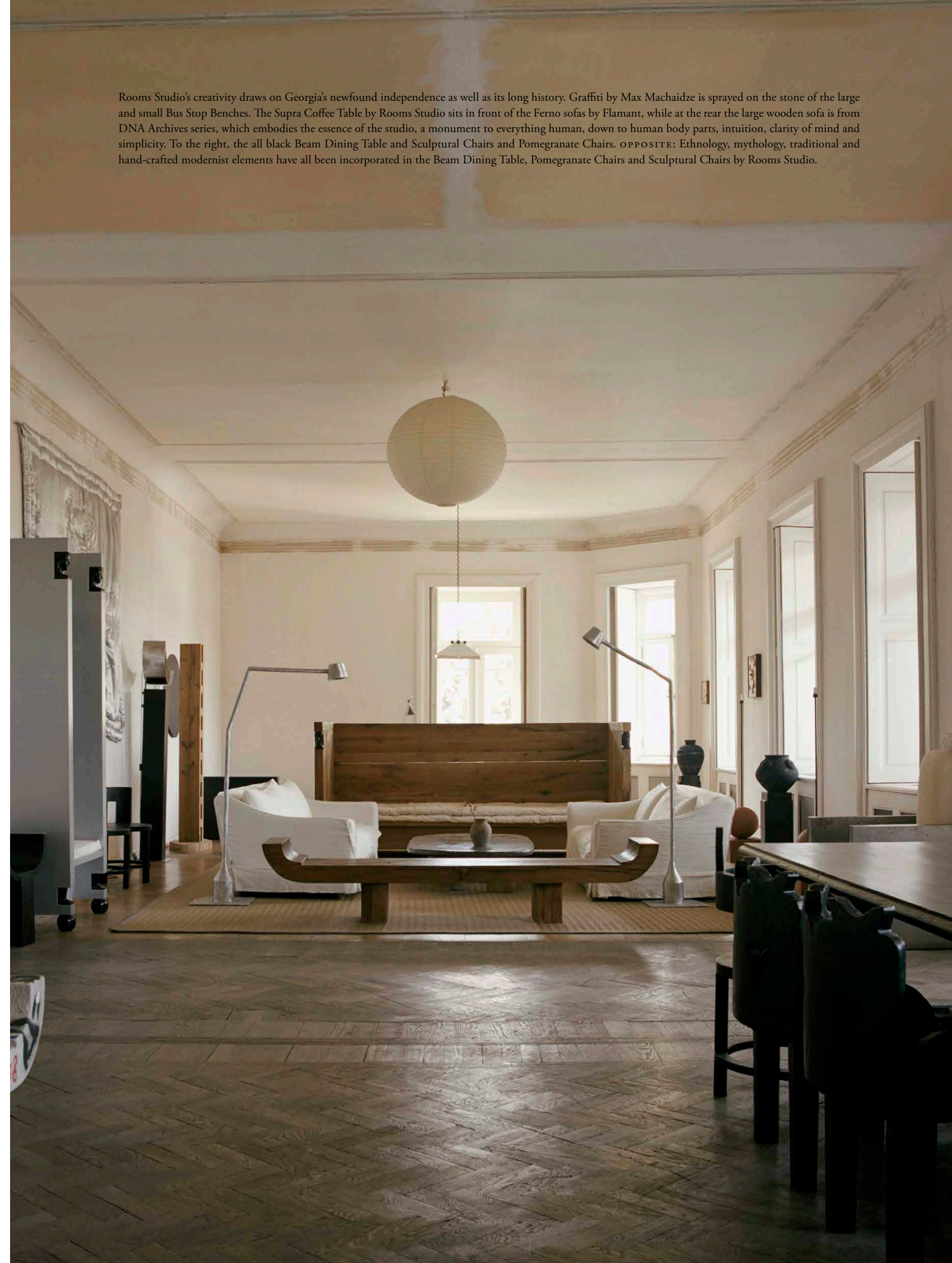


ROOMS STUDIO DRAWS ON GEORGIA'S CULTURAL PAST,  
FROM ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL TIMES TO THE SOVIET ERA,  
RECLAIMING AND RE-CREATING  
A DESIGN IDENTITY OF A SOCIETY IN FLUX.

Living and working in Tbilisi has become challenging due to the current political situation. For more than a year now thousands of people, including myself have been protesting in the streets, standing up for Georgia's democratic future. We do not accept the way this government treats its own people, nor the direction it is taking the country. What we are witnessing is not just political tension, it is a struggle for justice, freedom and the soul of Georgia. Given the political climate, one can imagine how difficult it is to live and work under such constant pressure and instability. And yet, despite everything, we remain restless in our love for our country. We continue to create. The impact of the protests has naturally found its way into our work, including our solo exhibition, *Sub-Currents at Work*, held at Studio Frey Barth in Milan. The resistance and hope running through the streets of Tbilisi flow just beneath the surface of the installation and pieces we presented.

NATA JANBERIDZE

Rooms Studio's creativity draws on Georgia's newfound independence as well as its long history. Graffiti by Max Machaidze is sprayed on the stone of the large and small Bus Stop Benches. The Supra Coffee Table by Rooms Studio sits in front of the Ferno sofas by Flamant, while at the rear the large wooden sofa is from DNA Archives series, which embodies the essence of the studio, a monument to everything human, down to human body parts, intuition, clarity of mind and simplicity. To the right, the all black Beam Dining Table and Sculptural Chairs and Pomegranate Chairs. OPPOSITE: Ethnology, mythology, traditional and hand-crafted modernist elements have all been incorporated in the Beam Dining Table, Pomegranate Chairs and Sculptural Chairs by Rooms Studio.







Silver Lingerig Lights by Rooms Studio pick up the sheen of the quilted Dowry Blanket 2 wall hanging also by the studio. The Ferno Sofa by Flamant is flanked by the towering Meditation Armchair and the King Size Sofa in reclaimed oak.

Carvings on the Historic Bench by Rooms Studio.



A detached detail from the King Size Sofa.



Each bed in the Rooms Studio collection was created for specific interiors and the designers believe that the bedroom is an intimate sanctuary, bridging everyday life and inner worlds. A vintage chandelier hangs over Bed #4 / Horned Daybed against the wall and the Daybed in the centre. Zippo sculpture by Eric Solé adds to their “dreamy surreal space”.