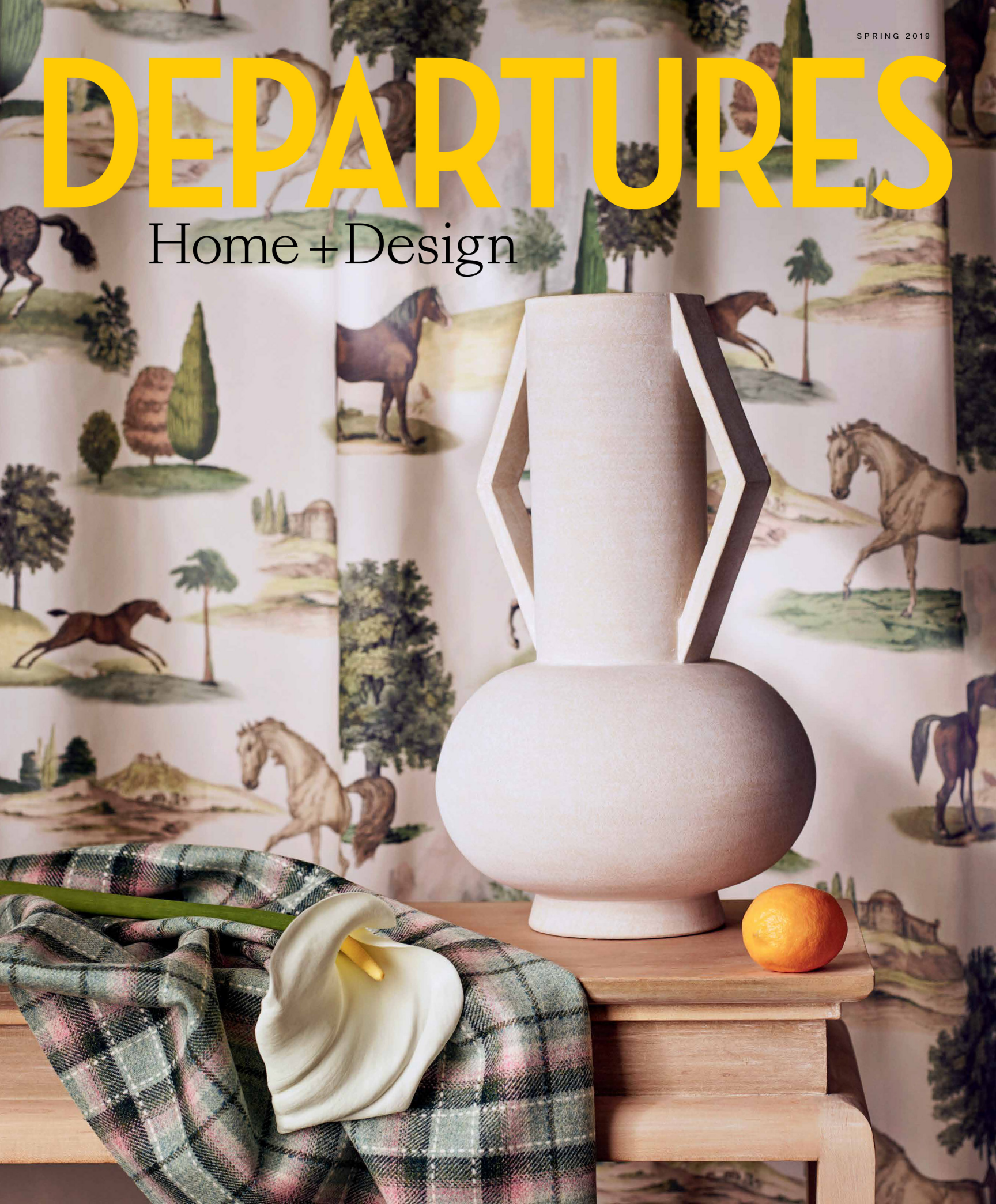


DEPARTURES

Home + Design





Two Bright Lights

Humbert & Poyet's sensuous, textured approach to design is making a splash on both sides of the Atlantic. *by Amy Serafin*

THE BEEFBAR IN the Eighth Arrondissement of Paris has floral motifs in the carpet, green alpine marble on the walls, and a monumental wrought iron door. It's a true study in elegant excess. Its designers, Emil Humbert and Christophe Poyet, are barely known outside the Continent, but given the pair's growing slate of projects this year, that's about to change.

Humbert, 38, grew up in Paris, the son of an advertising executive and a ballet dancer, and has had a lifelong passion for 17th- and 18th-century architecture. Poyet, 36, comes from Monaco, where he watched his photographer grandfather work in the darkroom. "He taught me how to look at things," he says, "to create frameworks and compositions."

In 2007, when the duo first met, Humbert had recently graduated from architecture school, while Poyet had just finished his studies in interior architecture. A mutual friend who was a decorator introduced them, thinking they would click. She was right. Humbert says, "We had the same influences and aesthetic from the

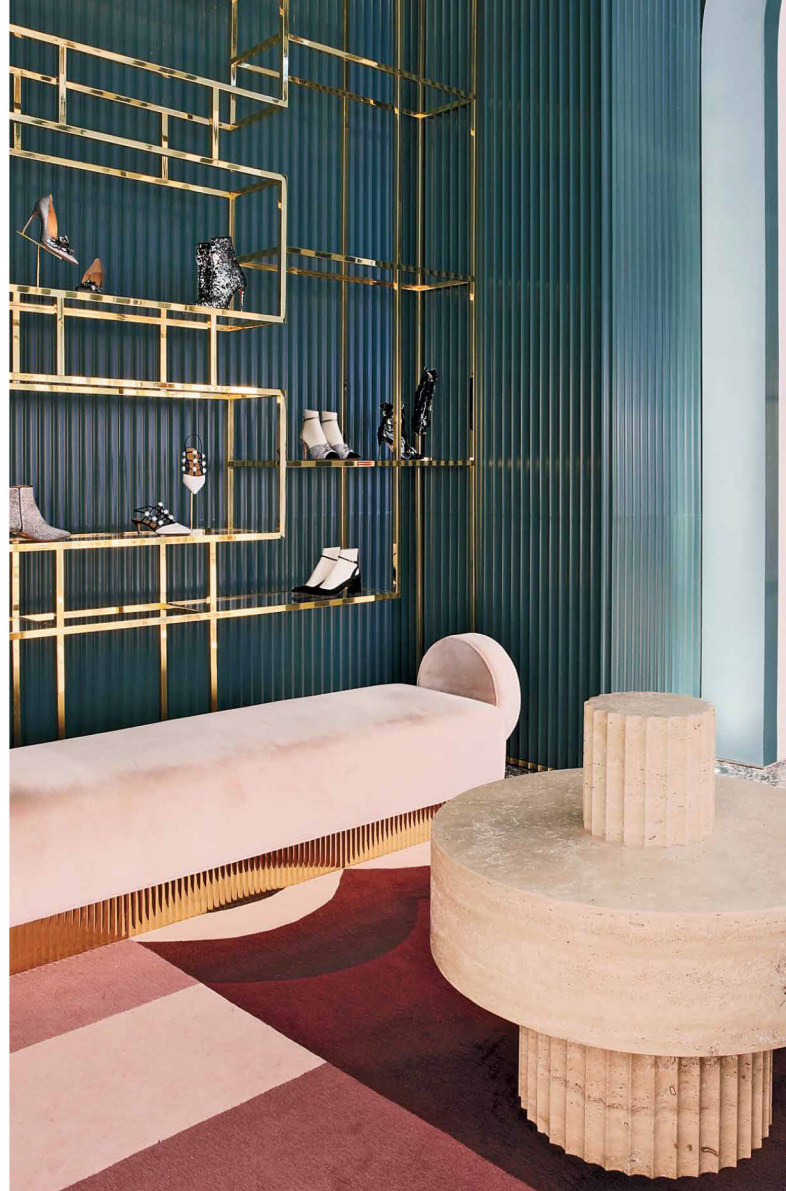
The Ava floor lamp by design studio Humbert & Poyet is part of a line of lighting and furniture for the Invisible Collection (theinvisiblecollection.com).



beginning: modernism, midcentury Italian architects and designers, Art Deco.” To this list, Poyet adds 1950s and ’70s design icons and Hollywood glamour, saying that the pair “try to give a new definition to luxury” by mixing aspects of all of the above. They founded their agency in 2008 and decided to base it in the close-knit social world of Monaco. “We were young and little known, but we were offering a style that nobody else there was,” says Humbert.

Those first clients, who came with large spaces and generous budgets, allowed Humbert & Poyet’s style to flourish. A villa they recently finished on a Cannes hilltop mixes floral prints with variations of blue and features a 50-foot-high geometric staircase that reflects their admiration for the Italian architect Gio Ponti. A sense of high glam is a common thread in their creations, which favor marble, bronze, and a sophisticated color palette. “Our work has a certain modernity to it, but it’s not minimalist at all,” says Humbert. “There’s a boldness. People come to us for that.”

Today they have a team of 20 in Monaco and Paris and up to 40 commercial and residential projects under way. Past and present projects include the Hoxton hotel in Paris, the Weill fashion boutique in Monaco, and homes from Doha to the Luberon. They also



Clockwise from top left: Christophe Poyet (left) and Emil Humbert in the Paris location of Beefbar; Humbert & Poyet’s showroom for Aquazzura in New York City; their design of the Hoxton hotel in Paris.

recently completed their first U.S. project, an Aquazzura boutique in SoHo that includes cathedral arches, a play of mirrors, and rich color combinations of blue, green, and powder pink that reference Dorothy Draper. There are plans to open a Beefbar in Manhattan.

The Beefbar collaboration started in 2005, when Humbert, who was working on his own at the time, was tapped to design the original restaurant, in Monaco. It was meant to be a one-off, but it then went worldwide, with locations in Hong Kong, Budapest, Mexico City, and elsewhere. Humbert & Poyet has designed each restaurant to have its own site-specific personality. In Paris, they used an existing Art Nouveau interior as a jumping-off point for their sumptuous designs. For Tulum, Mexico, which opens this spring at the Hotel Esencia, they worked with local artisans to make rattan furniture, as well as ceramic tiles and lamps.

This year, the Invisible Collection, a London showroom of elegant furniture by such top-shelf talents as Pierre Yovanovitch and Vincent Darré, is selling Humbert & Poyet's first line of pieces, which includes armchairs, mirrors, marble tables, and lamps. "We've designed so many objects for various projects that we already have a huge catalog," Humbert says. The pair is also launching its first fabric designs, including a textured chenille with an Art Deco-inspired wave motif for Pierre Frey.

Back in Monaco, they are working on their biggest project yet, 26 Carré Or, a 19-floor luxury apartment building in a prime location near the Place du Casino. They designed all the interiors, from the lobby to the four-story penthouse, contributed to the façade with its curved Corian balconies, and even gave the underground parking lot brass-mesh walls and lighting like a showroom. They felt, explains Humbert, "the garage should be as elegant as the rest."



From top: Poyet's own Paris apartment; the Beefbar in Paris; the Theodore chair with a walnut base and a burnished-bronze screen for the Invisible Collection.

