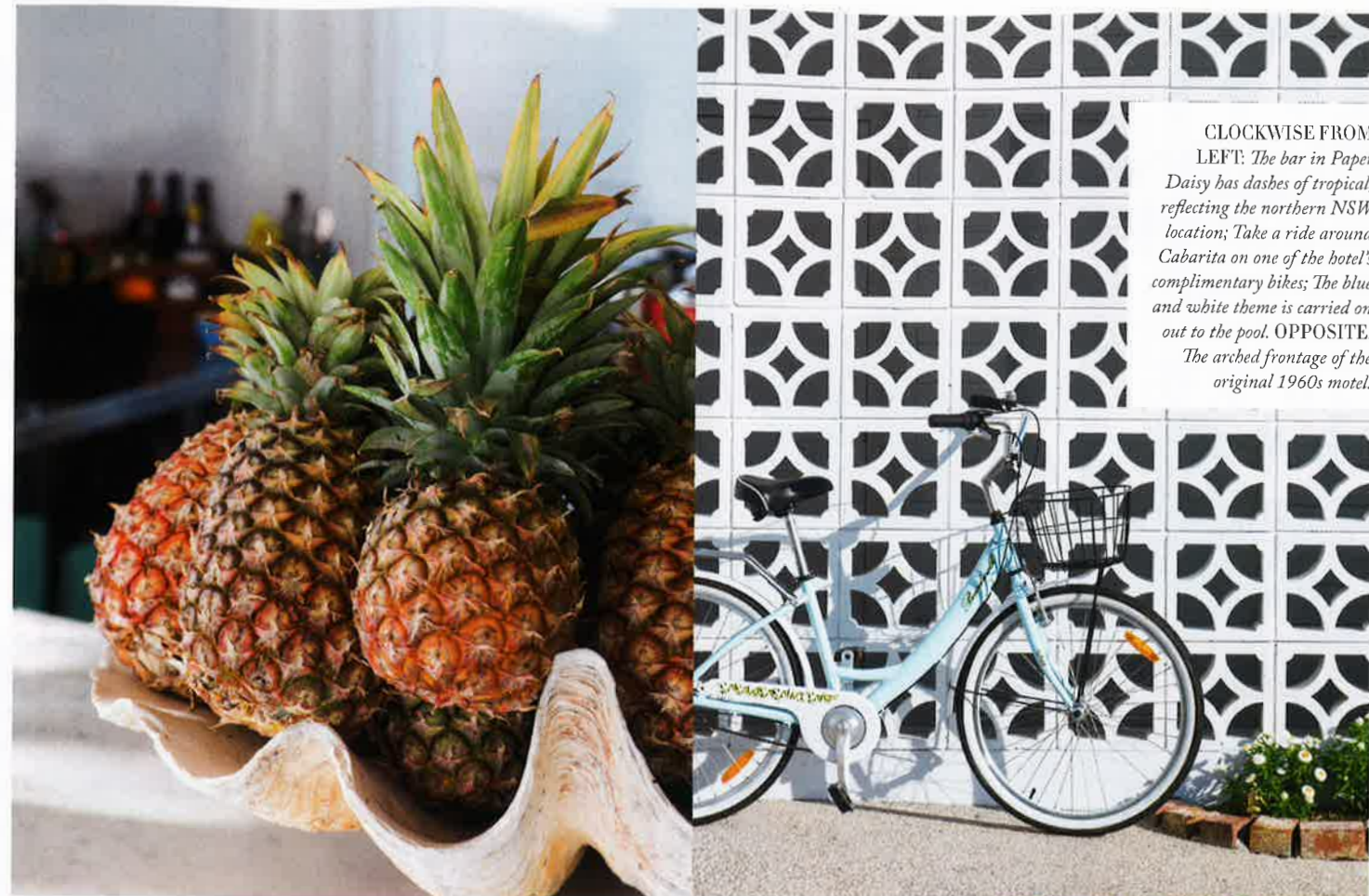


With designer Anna Spiro, two sisters have given the nostalgic charm of a 1960s Australian motel a contemporary twist to create a truly remarkable destination.

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SEA CHANGE



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: The bar in Paper Daisy has dashes of tropical, reflecting the northern NSW location; Take a ride around Cabarita on one of the hotel's complimentary bikes; The blue and white theme is carried on out to the pool. OPPOSITE: The arched frontage of the original 1960s motel.

Cabarita Beach on the New South Wales north coast is a bastion of idyllic seaside charm, the kind of place where, as you pass through, perhaps on your way to Byron Bay 40 minutes down the road, you recall carefree childhood holidays spent in seaside towns exactly like this. You can almost feel the sand between your toes.

It is exactly this haze of nostalgia that attracted the Bickle sisters, Siobhan and Elisha, to Cabarita Beach and, specifically, to The Hideaway motel, a low-slung 1960s edifice of arches and Besser Blocks located a lazy amble from the beach. They purchased the motel in December 2011 intending to use it as a holiday house for family getaways. "It was only two storeys back then," says Elisha. "It was really unassuming."

Eventually they decided to share it with others, appointing an architect to add another storey, complete with lofty high ceilings, and reposition the public areas towards the sea. While the resulting façade definitely sets the tone of the place – at once nostalgic and pleasingly contemporary – it's what's been achieved within that sets the property, Halcyon House (halcyonhouse.com.au), apart from anything else in the area, maybe even in the country. Working with designer Anna Spiro (her Black & Spiro storefront in Brisbane's New Farm is a Mecca for design lovers), the interiors are a riot of colour and texture and delightfully quirky elements. Each of the 21 rooms and two suites is decorated individually, from fabric wall panels in myriad prints (specialised craftsmen travelled from England to hang them) to bespoke bed heads to 'Halcyon Hangs': meticulously curated >>





CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT Paper Daisy's beautiful bar and lounge area, with brass palm frond light fitting. An eclectic mix of patterned fabrics are harnessed to great effect in the rooms. A bookshelf in Paper Daisy stays true to the tone of the place. OPPOSITE, One of Anna Spiro's Halcyon Hangs – lovingly curated collections of wall art.



clusters of art, from small canvases of floral still-lives and seascapes to organic black-and-white prints by American artist Wayne Pate.

Much of the furniture is vintage, from substantial dark wood sideboards to tables with quaint turned legs, married with pretty little sofas and slipper chairs upholstered in yet more patterned fabric. Siobhan and Elisha accompanied Spiro on trips to hunt out many of the pieces in the rooms, including to the fabled thrice-yearly Brimfield Antique Show in Massachusetts. "It's not exactly an economical exercise, but it was fun," laugh the sisters.

In the bathrooms and on the balconies that look out towards the water, exuberant blue and white tiles in geometric designs are underfoot, while details such as light switches are part of a brass theme that continues throughout.

The aesthetic reaches an exquisite crescendo in the restaurant, Paper Daisy, named after the flowers that bloom on the nearby headland and which are scattered in terracotta pots around the property. "We all love the restaurant," says Siobhan. "It has a special feel to it." With its doors thrown open to the sea breeze, the space has an unfussy, beachy vibe. Inside, there is a blue and white theme, with overstuffed sofas anchored around a low coffee table stacked with design books and baskets of shells. Above all this is a statement light fitting of brass palm fronds. From here you can look out over the French cafe-style chairs, eclectic mix of tables, and more Halcyon Hangs of vintage Willow-patterned plates, seascapes and portraits of anonymous women.

"This was a risk – Cabarita is Cabarita, not Byron," says Elisha. "But we believe in the area, we believe in what is happening here." It seems Cabarita Beach has more halcyon days to come. *IT*

