

SC&CO

Cesareo Design

The Art of Belonging

DOCUMENT

Creative Direction

VERSION

2.0

DATE

September 2026



Dear Leo,

You told us the studio’s signature isn’t a colour, a material or a style. It is a space that couldn’t belong to anyone else. We took that as a brief for this document too, so it doesn’t follow our usual template.

It reads your answers closely, names the tensions an identity for Cesareo Design has to hold, and then proposes three worlds the studio could live in, each shown at work on a homepage, a card and a caption, using your own photographs.

We have been candid about what each world risks. We end with a recommendation, but the choice is yours.

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HOW TO READ THIS

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The mockups use photographs from leocesareo.com. Project details, names and copy in them are illustrative placeholders.



/ What we heard

Your answers, read closely.

In your words

“We don’t believe the designer should be the protagonist. The client is.”

WHAT IT ASKS OF THE IDENTITY

The brand steps back so houses and their people lead: photography first, the studio’s voice second.

“Cesareo can use restraint, but it shouldn’t use neutrality as personality.”

WHAT IT ASKS OF THE IDENTITY

Colour and material are not only allowed, they are expected. Beige is not a strategy.

“Our signature isn’t a particular color, material or style.”

WHAT IT ASKS OF THE IDENTITY

No house look to lean on. The identity needs a fixed frame that stays recognisable while every project looks different.

“We do not aspire to be everywhere. We aspire to be invited somewhere interesting.”

WHAT IT ASKS OF THE IDENTITY

Selective rather than loud. The brand should read as an invitation, never an advertisement.

Who it should draw in, and turn away

RECOGNISE THEMSELVES

Curious, engaged and open to discovery

Value perspective over prescription

Care about art, craft and history more than status

Want a home that is theirs rather than impressive

Are willing to be challenged

SHOULD SELF-SELECT OUT

Want to reproduce an existing aesthetic

Want a formula, or the beige luxury look

See the home mainly as an expression of status

Need to know the ending before they begin

WHAT MAKES GOOD CLIENTS HESITATE, AND HOW THE BRAND ANSWERS

Cost, and uncertainty about cost

Explain phases and fees in plain language on the website.

Losing control

Show the process as a dialogue, with the client’s own objects in the work.

Expensive mistakes

Show drawings, samples and makers before anything is installed.

Not knowing what they pay for

Name the thinking: listen, edit, interpret, elevate.

From Leo Cesareo Design to Cesareo Design

TODAY



STRUCTURE

From an individual practice to a founder-led, studio-powered creative practice.

SCOPE

From interiors to interiors, furniture, objects, art, craft and collaboration.

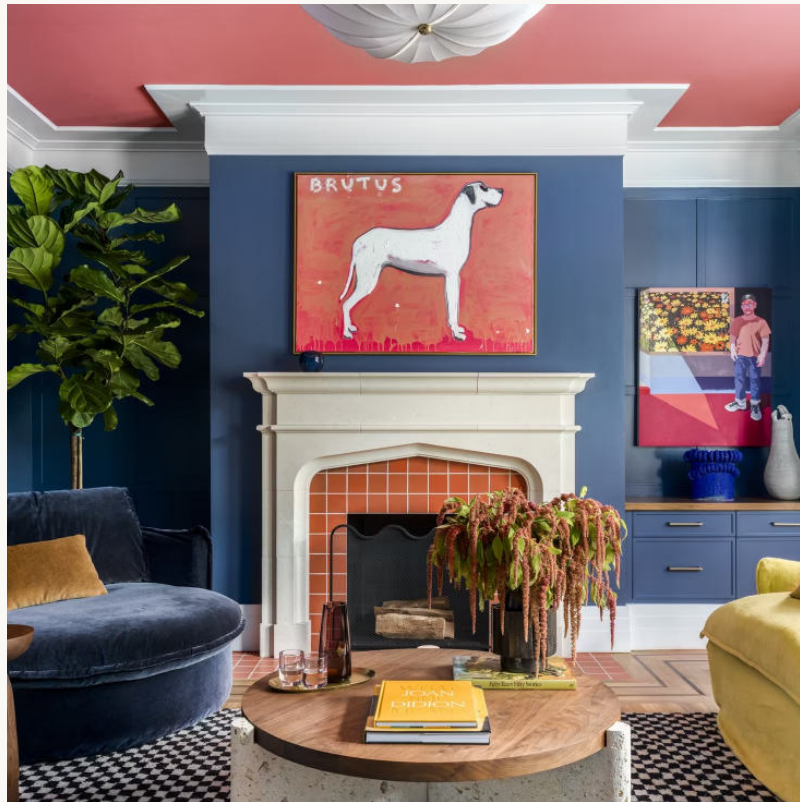
NEXT



EXPRESSION

Keep the elegance and restraint. Add curiosity, cultural depth, storytelling and wit.

What we saw on leocesareo.com



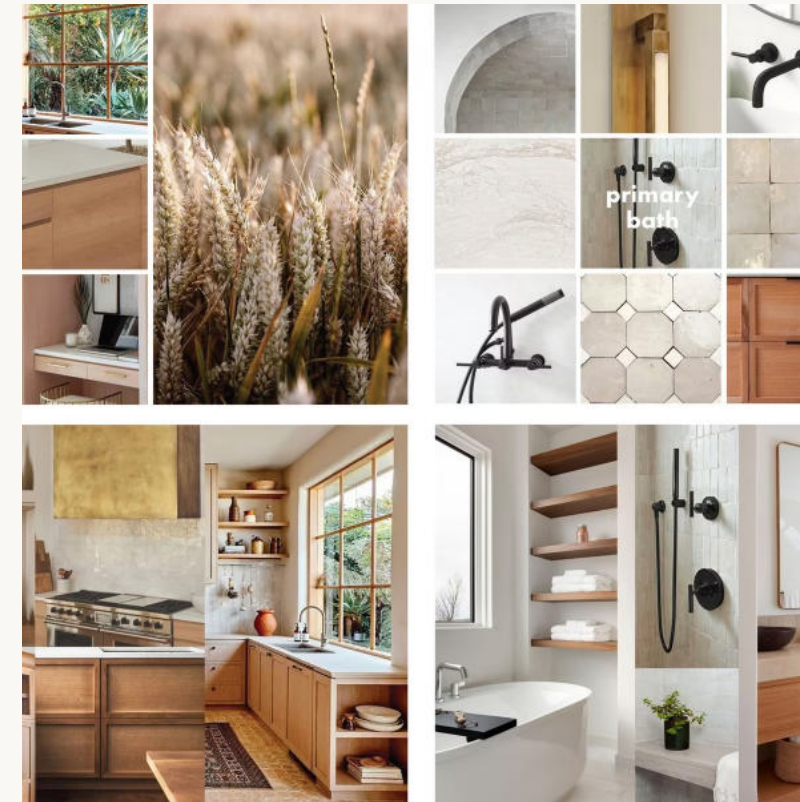
The best work is colour-confident and witty.

Navy walls under a coral ceiling, a painted hound over the fire, a chain for a chandelier. Nothing about it is beige.



The recent houses are far ahead of the older ones.

Presidio Heights, Valley Street, Lyon's Den and Prosper House set the bar. Renderings and older, neutral projects pull the average down.



The stories are missing.

Project pages are image grids with no place, scope, makers or narrative. The studio's differentiator is narrative, and the site says nothing.

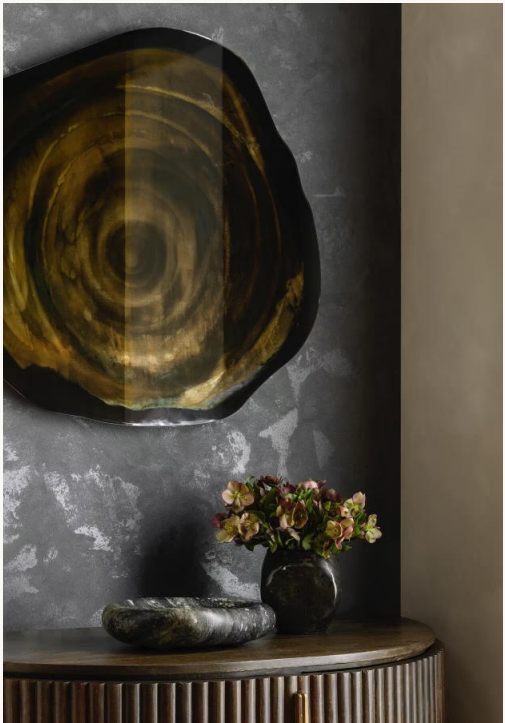


The Look Book is ahead of the website.

The 2024 Look Book already uses colour, moodboards and press with more personality than the site's template.

The best asset is already here

Keep: recent, professionally photographed houses with a point of view. Retire: renderings, phone snapshots and neutral work that could belong to any studio.



A photograph of a modern office space. In the foreground, a black leather office chair with chrome armrests and a five-star base is positioned on a polished wooden floor. To the left, a dark wooden desk holds a few items, including a pen holder. A large, arched window in the background provides a view of green trees outside. To the right of the window, a tall potted plant with long, thin green leaves stands next to a white wall. On the left wall, a framed abstract artwork is visible. The overall atmosphere is bright and professional.

//

The idea

One thought to build everything around.

THE INTERNAL IDEA

The Art of Belonging

Not a tagline. A test for every decision: does this help a home, a client or a collaborator belong?

1

A home that belongs to its people

A space that couldn't belong to anyone else. Their histories, collections, rituals and eccentricities, edited and elevated.

2

People who belong around the studio

Clients who return for what might come next. Artists, makers and architects who find a place for ambitious work.

IN ONE SENTENCE

Rooms that couldn't belong to anyone else.

How it should feel, over time



IN TEN SECONDS

Intrigued. Drawn in. Assured.

One arresting image and very few words. Confidence shown, not claimed.



IN A MINUTE

“I want to see more.”

Houses told as stories, each opening onto the next. Captions that reward reading.



LONG AFTER

Confident, worldly, capable.

Makers, press and process shown quietly. The sense of a studio you would trust with a risk.



Five tensions

What the identity has to hold at once.

Five tensions to hold

The dot marks where Cesareo Design should sit on each line.

Restrained



Neutral

Hold back on layout and type. Never on colour and material.

Rigorous



Austere

Precise grids and captions. Warmth comes from photography and writing.

Sophisticated



Solemn

Wit is welcome in words, captions and the occasional object.

Recognisable



Repetitive

A fixed frame of type, mark and colour around work that always changes.

Founder-led



Studio-
powered

Leo's lineage visible. The team and makers credited by name.

Eight rules for everything that follows

<i>01</i> The work is the display. Type is the voice.	<i>02</i> Colour comes from materials, never from a trend.	<i>03</i> One unexpected thing on every page.	<i>04</i> Every house gets a story, not only a gallery.
<i>05</i> Name the makers and the artists.	<i>06</i> Caption like a curator. Write like a host.	<i>07</i> Fewer projects, told more deeply.	<i>08</i> Show the process plainly. It answers the cost question.

IV
Raw
material

Finishes, type and photographs we start with.

The finishes you named, as a palette

Values are starting points for the identity stage, sampled to sit well beside the navy, sage and saffron already in the work.



Oxblood
#43090D
Signature ground



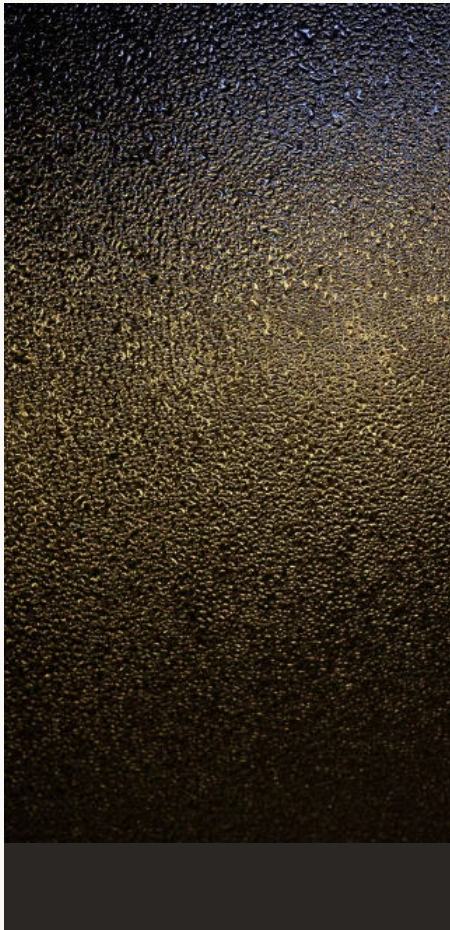
Polished nickel
#C4C6C2
Hairlines, foil, detail



Burnished brass
#A8834A
Foil, marks, accents



Calacatta Monet
#F1EEE9
Light ground



Smoked mirror
#2B2724
Dark ground



Walnut
#4E3426
Print stock, secondary dark



Oak
#B38B5D
Warm neutral

The Didone question

Cesareo

The Art of Belonging

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss
Tt 0123456789

REFERENCE

Heimat Didone

Your example. A contemporary Didone with sturdy hairlines, so it stays elegant at small sizes where classic Didones break up. It is a commercial typeface and would need a licence.

STAND-INS USED IN THIS DOCUMENT

Bodoni Moda

Open licence, closest in contrast

Playfair Display

Open licence, warmer italics

Gloock

Open licence, heavier, more graphic

SUPPORTING TYPE

Newsreader for reading, Instrument Sans for information.

Photography that already works



Details as much as rooms

Objects, joinery and art at close range carry craft better than wide shots.



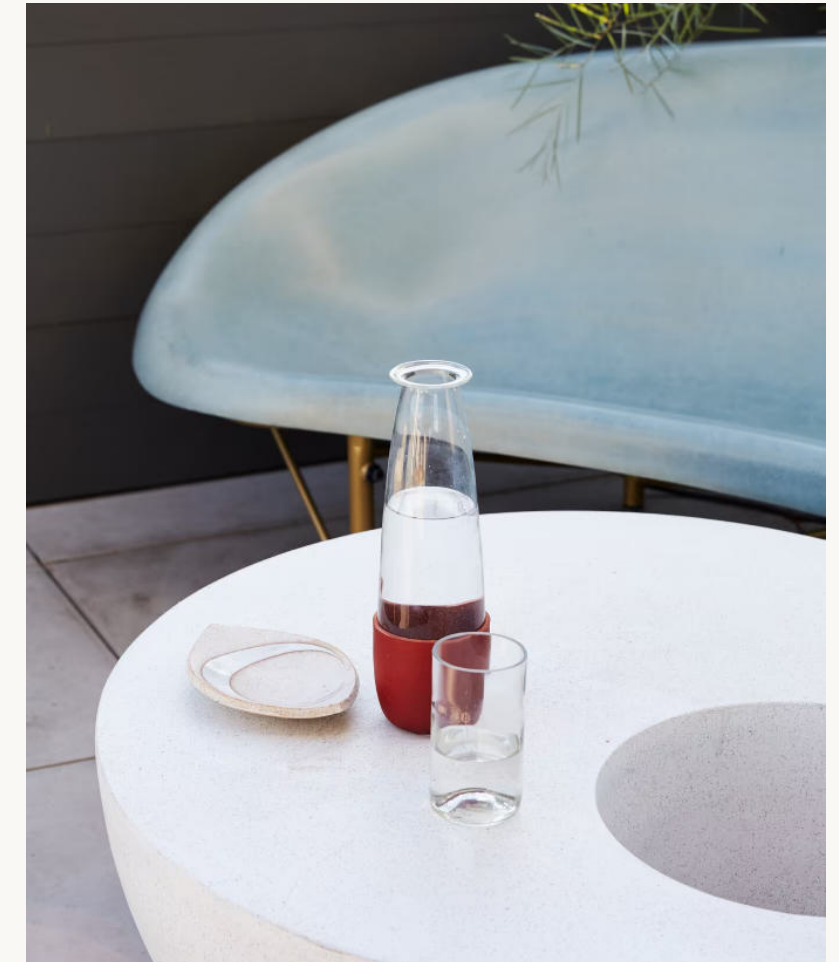
Thresholds and depth

Doorways and enfilades invite the viewer in, the Art of Belonging made visual.



Colour at full strength

No desaturated grading. The rooms are the palette.



Life, lightly

A carafe, a book, a dog: signs of people without staging them.

V
Three
worlds

Three places the studio could live, shown at work.

Three worlds



WORLD 01

The Host

A studio that makes you feel expected.



WORLD 02

The Director

Every room composed like a shot, every client cast as the lead.



WORLD 03

The Collector

A catalogue of houses and the things in them.

WORLD 01

The Host

A studio that makes you feel
expected.

WARM · SEDUCTIVE · ASSURED



The Host: character and system

WHO CESAREO IS HERE

The host of the best dinner in town: generous, curious about you, a little theatrical after dark.

THE FIRST TEN SECONDS

An oxblood welcome and one open door.

SIGNATURE MOVES

Oxblood as the room you enter: menus, cards, envelopes

Invitations instead of calls to action: “Come in”, “Write to us”

Brass-foiled wordmark on deep grounds

TYPE

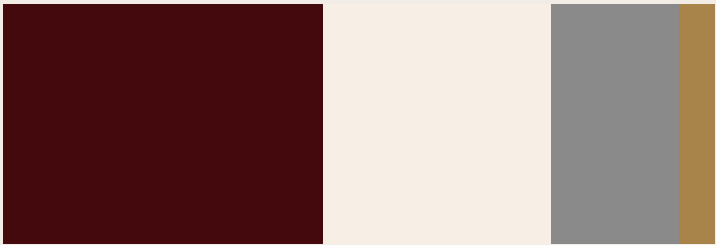
Come in.

Bodoni Moda + Newsreader for text

MARK SKETCH



COLOUR, BY SHARE OF A PAGE

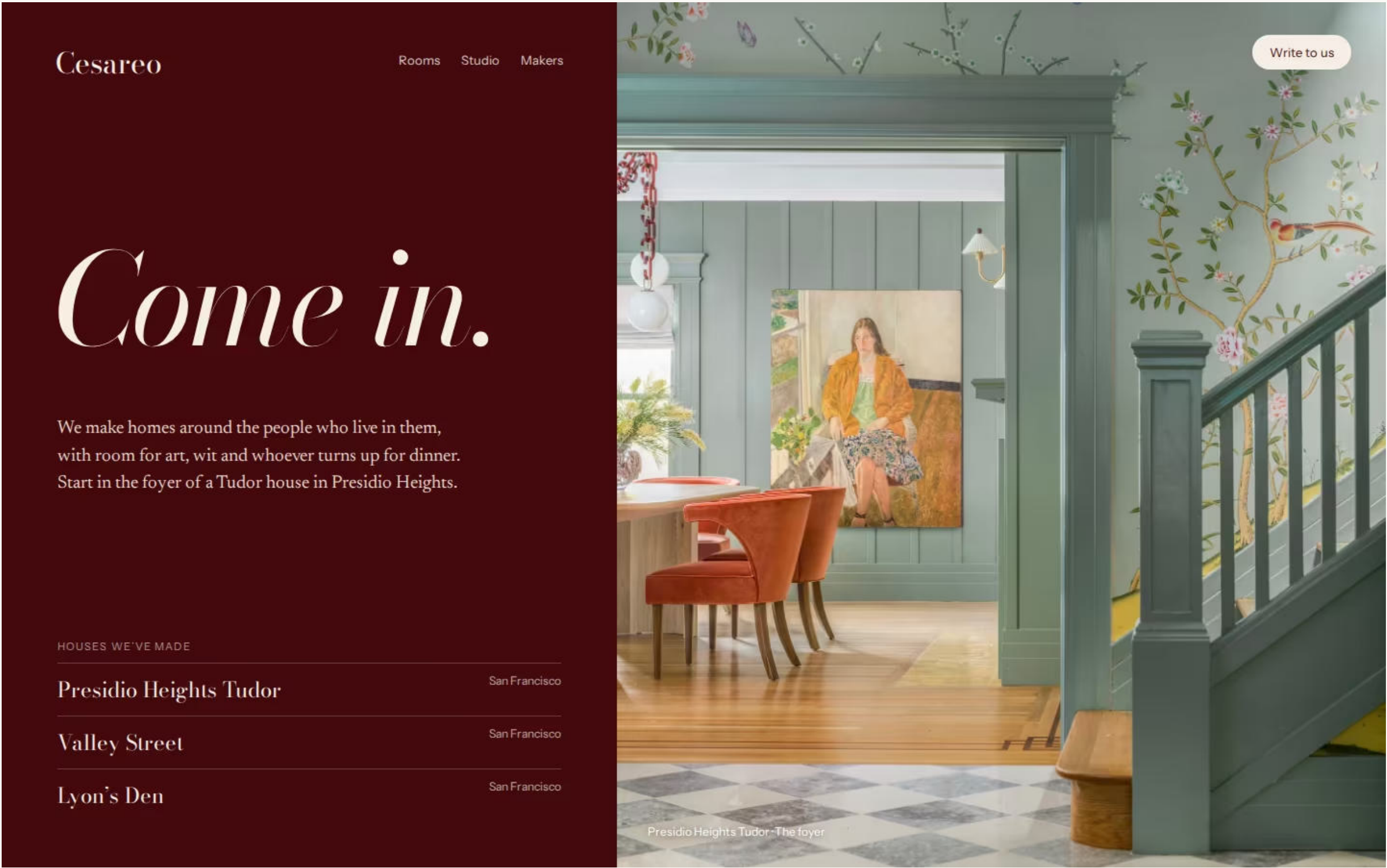


Oxblood 45% Ivory 32% Photography 18% Brass 5%

IMAGERY

*Doorways, thresholds,
tables set, evening
light.*

The Host: on the website



The Host: in the hand, and honestly



WHAT IT GIVES

- + Closest to the reference you named: oxblood with white type
- + Warm and seductive within seconds
- + The strongest print and packaging presence

WHAT IT RISKS

- Oxblood beside navy and coral rooms can clash. Photography must keep its own ground
- A hospitality tone tips into hotel branding if the writing gets glib

WORLD 02

The Director

Every room composed like a shot,
every client cast as the lead.

CURIOUS • UNEXPECTED • PRECISE



The Director: character and system

WHO CESAREO IS HERE

The director at the edit table: decisive and visual, telling you why this frame and not the others.

THE FIRST TEN SECONDS

A contact sheet with one frame circled in red pencil.

SIGNATURE MOVES

Contact sheets and red-pencil selections

Rooms introduced like scenes: INT. DINING ROOM, EVENING

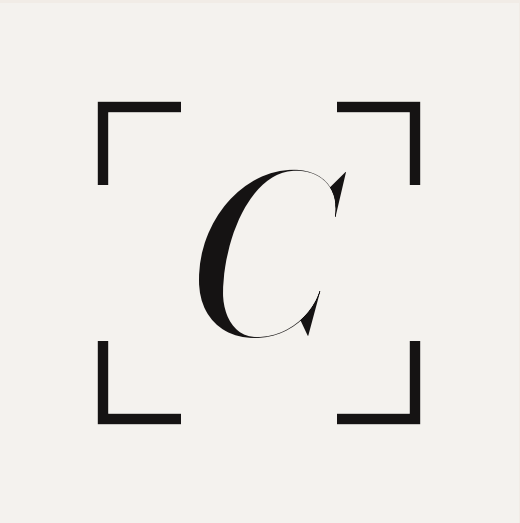
Cast lists of objects, artists and makers

TYPE

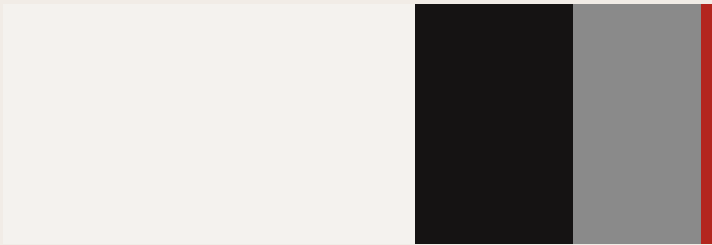
*Valley
Street*

Bodoni Moda + DM Mono for notes, Newsreader for text

MARK SKETCH



COLOUR, BY SHARE OF A PAGE

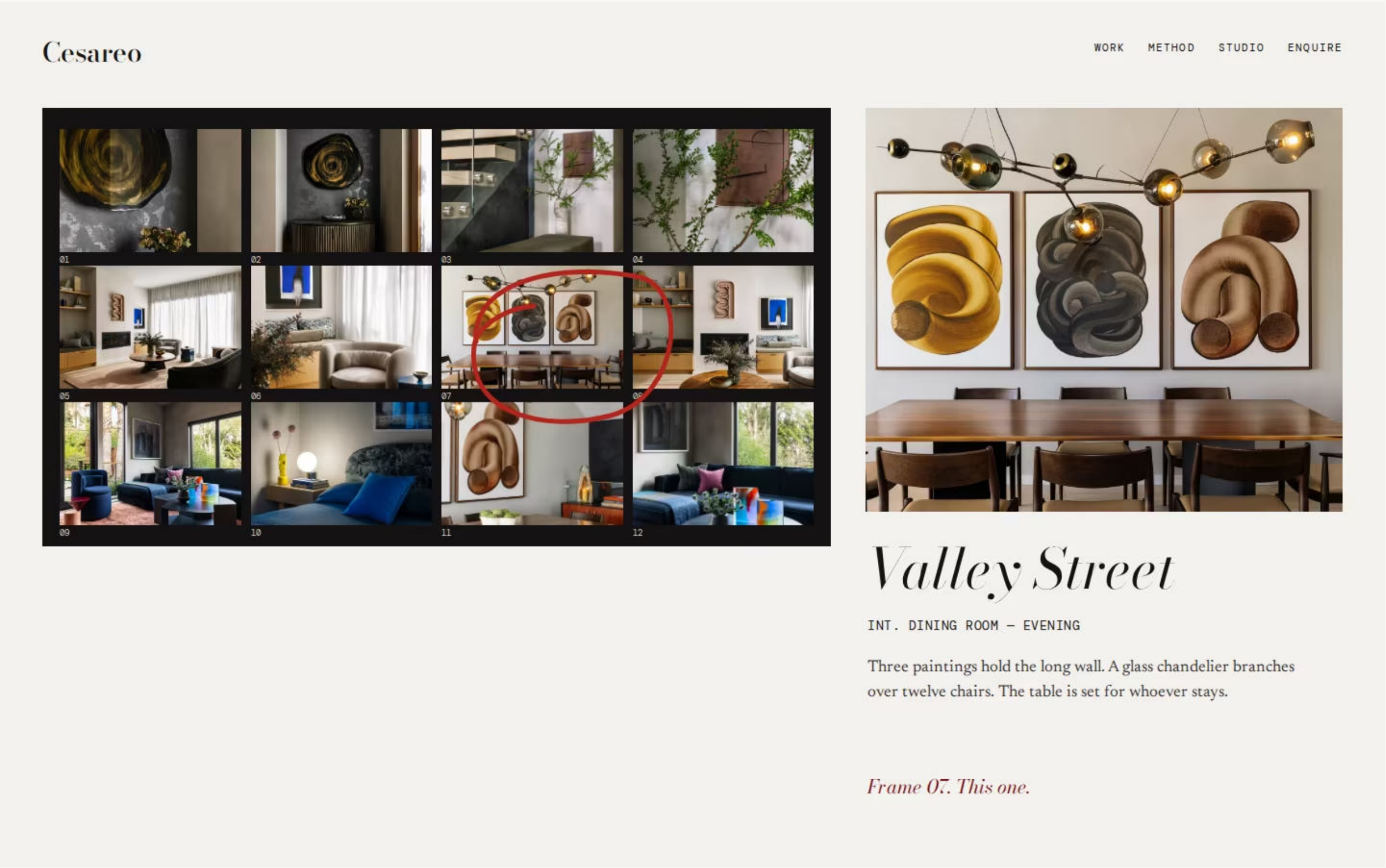


■ Paper 58% ■ Ink 22% ■ Photography 18%
■ Red pencil 2%

IMAGERY

*Sequences in the order
you walk through a
house; crops chosen in
front of you.*

The Director: on the website



ON THE WEBSITE

Contact sheets and red-pencil selections

Rooms introduced like scenes: INT. DINING ROOM, EVENING

The Director: in the hand, and honestly

Cesareo		
Sc. 01		INT. FOYER — MORNING A painted garden climbs the stair. The floor is a chessboard of grey and white marble. Through the door, a portrait waits in the sitting room. CAST: A HAND-PAINTED MURAL, A CHECKERBOARD, ONE PORTRAIT
Sc. 02		INT. LIVING ROOM — AFTERNOON Navy walls, a coral ceiling. Brutus, painted, keeps watch over the fireplace. Nobody sits in the chartreuse sofa by accident. CAST: BRUTUS, A VELVET SWIVEL CHAIR, A CHARTREUSE SOFA
Sc. 03		INT. DINING ROOM — EVENING An oversized chain drops from the ceiling. Sage panelling, rust chairs, an oval table. Dinner runs late. CAST: A CHAIN PENDANT, SIX RUST CHAIRS

WHAT IT GIVES

- + Tells a story no peer can claim: Leo’s film and world-building lineage
- + Shows the editing and the thinking, answering “what am I paying for?”
- + Witty without trying

WHAT IT RISKS

- Film references turn into a gimmick if overused
- Depends on sharp writing for every project, every time

WORLD 03

The Collector

A catalogue of houses and the things in them.

CULTURED · PERSONAL · WORLDLY



The Collector: character and system

WHO CESAREO IS HERE

The collector who knows the story of every object in the room and the name of whoever made it.

THE FIRST TEN SECONDS

An index of rooms, art and objects, each with a number.

SIGNATURE MOVES

Catalogue numbers and museum-style captions

Makers and artists credited by name

Material samples as part of the identity

TYPE

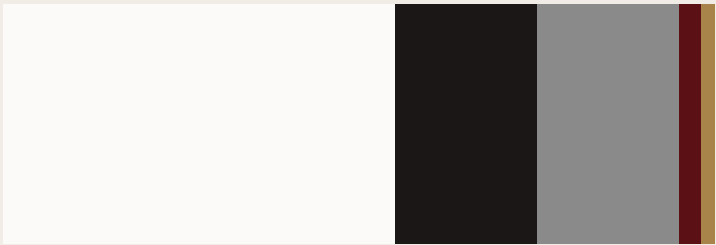
CESAREO

Bodoni Moda + Instrument Sans for captions

MARK SKETCH



COLOUR, BY SHARE OF A PAGE

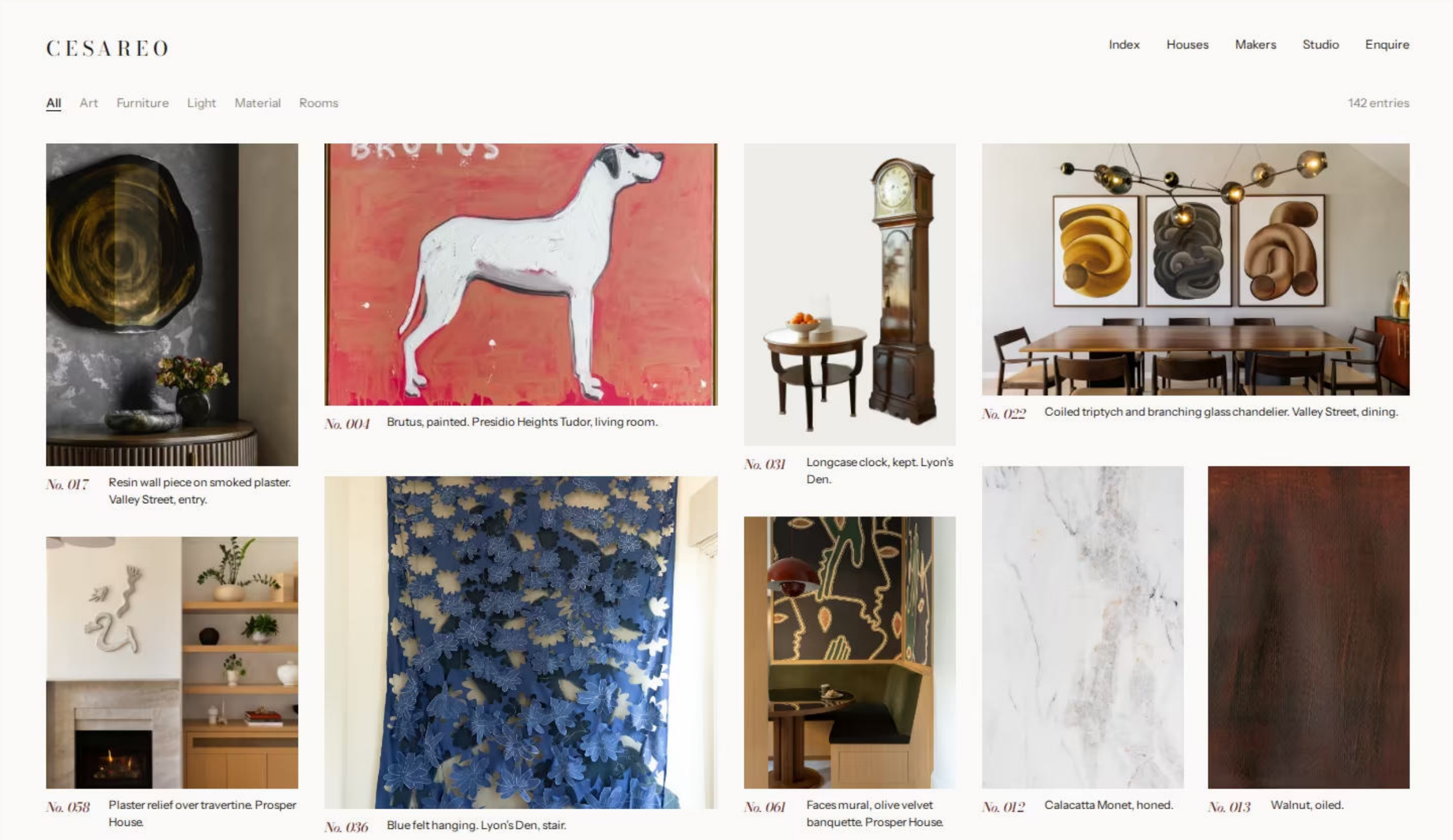


White 55% Ink 20% Photography 20%
Oxblood 3% Brass 2%

IMAGERY

Objects and details as often as rooms; material samples photographed flat.

The Collector: on the website

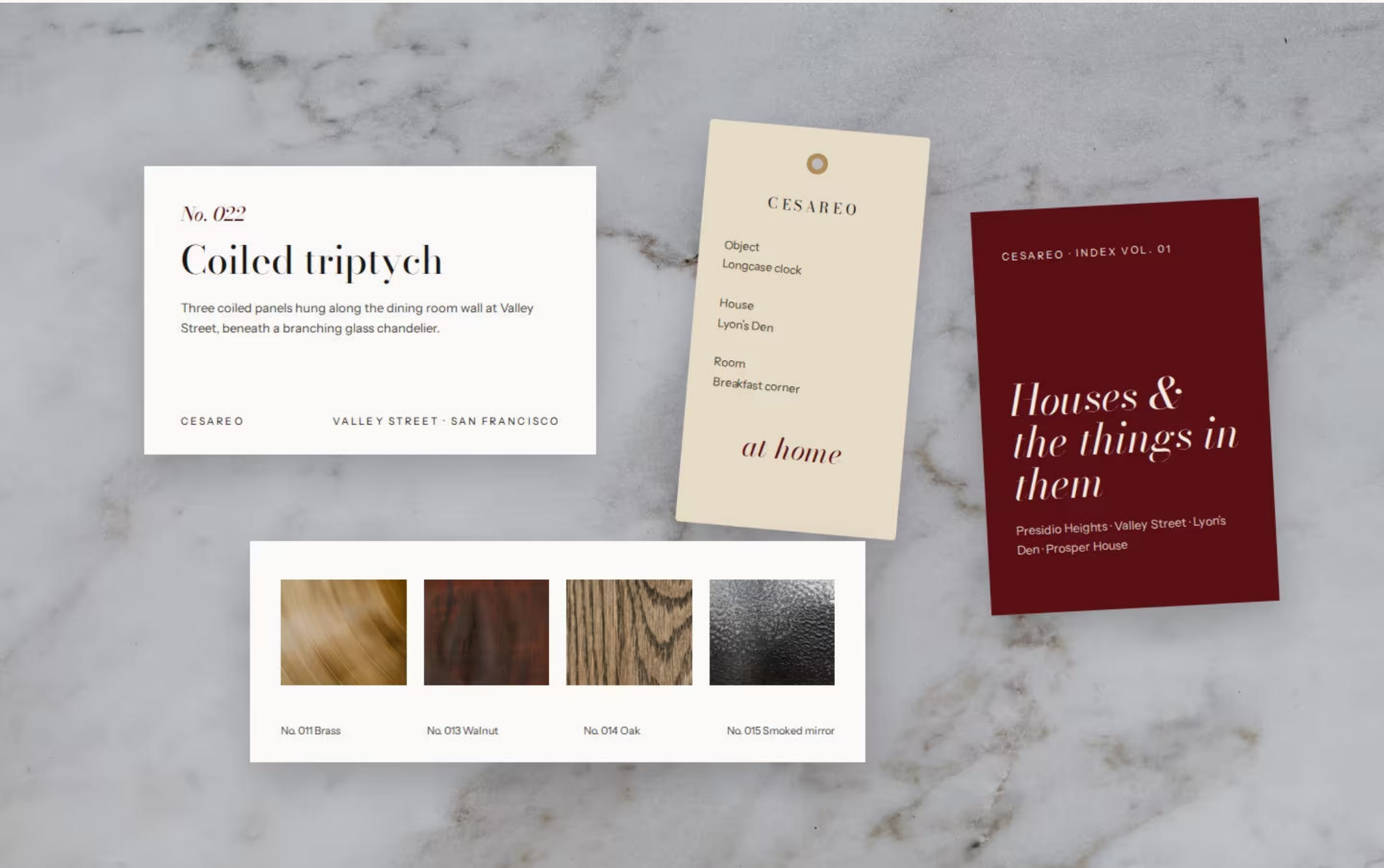


ON THE WEBSITE

Catalogue numbers and museum-style captions

Makers and artists credited by name

The Collector: in the hand, and honestly



WHAT IT GIVES

- + The best gallery of work, which is the website’s first job
- + Celebrates craft and the makers behind it
- + Scales naturally into furniture and objects

WHAT IT RISKS

- Can feel cool or museum-like without warm writing
- Needs disciplined content: object details and credits for every house



VI

Choosing

Side by side, and what we would do.

Side by side

Our scores, out of five. They are a conversation starter, not a verdict.

	The Host	The Director	The Collector
Intrigue in the first ten seconds			
Warmth			
Distinct from Bay Area peers			
Shows the work (the site’s first job)			
Room to evolve			
Easy to sustain week to week			

What we would do

The Host, with the Collector's captions.

The Host is closest to what you asked for, oxblood and white type, and to the idea of belonging. Its main risk, colour fighting the rooms, is solved by giving photography its own white ground.

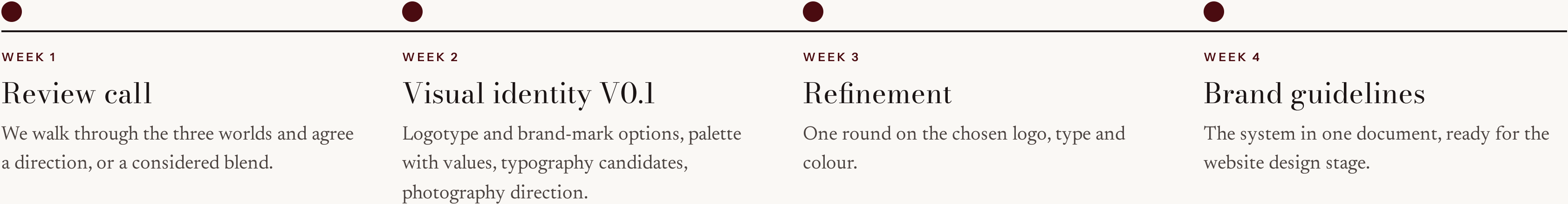
Borrowing the Collector's index and captions gives the website the strong gallery it needs and puts makers and artists on the page. The Director's red pencil is worth keeping for process pages and social.

TO DECIDE TOGETHER

1. Which world feels most like the studio you are becoming, not the one you are today?
2. How much oxblood feels right: a whole room, or a door?
3. Should wit live in the words, the images, or both?
4. What would you add, remove or combine?

Please send one consolidated set of comments from the studio, so we can move quickly and keep the direction coherent.

What happens next



We look forward to hearing which world feels like home.

SC&CO

Creative Direction V2.0 for Cesareo Design