

ITALIAN LIVING

GUILLAUME DE LAUBIER



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Where Florentine Heritage Meets an Indian Soul

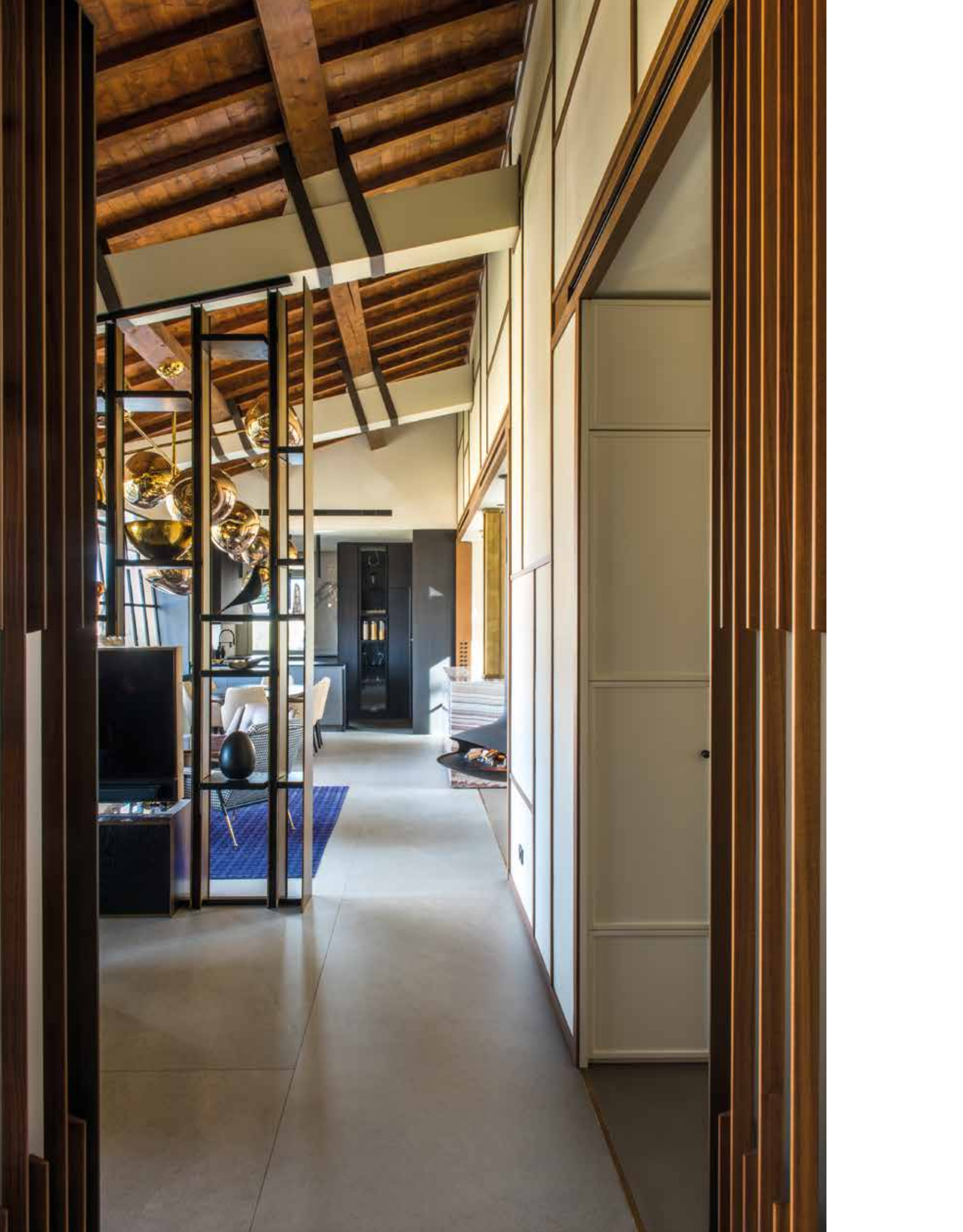
Nestled in the hills overlooking Florence, Villa Allegra has been restored to its former splendour through the vision of architect and interior designer Luigi Fragola, and the creativity of its Indian owners, Raoul and Shonan. Passionate collectors of contemporary Indian art, they have infused the house with a vibrant identity of its own, animated by the joyful energy of their large family, from whom the villa takes its name. The result is a compelling stylistic dialogue between Italian elegance and the exuberant, multicultural aesthetic of South Asia.

In the aftermath of the Covid pandemic, Raoul and Shonan decided to embark on a new chapter and began searching for a home in Europe, far from the bustle of Mumbai, where they usually resided. Having previously lived abroad in Singapore and New York, they had visited Florence only once before – “for two magical days,” recalled Shonan. Yet it was here that they chose to settle, first renting an apartment in Piazza del Carmine and then, almost naturally, embracing the city for its tranquillity, the surrounding landscape, its rich history, and the warmth and vitality of its people.

Their future home revealed itself in the form of a 17th-century villa perched on the Florentine hills, just a short walk from their children’s school and within easy reach of the city centre. At the time of purchase, however, the property was far from its former glory. Its original proportions had been lost when previous owners subdivided it into multiple apartments, and it required extensive restoration.

OPPOSITE

In the entrance hall, a tamarind-shaped cactus by The Wicker Story, designed by Priyanka Narula, pairs perfectly with the green walls and the multicoloured striped stairs carpet crafted by Indian artisans.



**OPPOSITE**

Lualdi wooden doors open onto the sitting room and the bespoke ash-wood library designed by Deniz Onel in collaboration with Borzalino.

ABOVE

Beneath Tom Dixon's golden Melt chandelier, armchairs by Tosconova and a marble coffee table by Borzalino enjoy the incredible view.

FOLLOWING

Another Tom Dixon chandelier presides over a Meridiani dining table in Sahara Noir marble, ringed by nubuck chairs by Borzalino.

Turkish by birth but Tuscan by adoption for more than two decades, Deniz Onel built her reputation on renovations rooted in local expertise following her studies at the Accademia delle Belle Arti. Particularly sensitive to lighting design, she also favours close collaboration with artisans and manufacturers throughout Tuscany. For the couple, the apartment was intended to serve as a home base amid a life spent travelling the world.

Wishing to preserve the spectacular views of Florence visible from every window, Douglas and Matthew requested a contemporary minimalist design. The project was subsequently named Skyline. Faced with the challenge of uniting two separate units, Deniz succeeded in preserving the original roof structure and timber ceiling, as well as the large sloping windows that run the length of the building.

Deniz also retained the existing flooring and introduced bronze detailing to mark the junction between the two former units. To conceal the heating and air conditioning system above the iconic fireplace, she used vanilla leather panels. The fireplace itself is a bioethanol model by Focus that does not require an extraction system.

Matthew immersed himself wholeheartedly in the interior design process, collaborating closely with Deniz in the search for exceptional materials. Together, they visited furniture workshops in Pistoia and marble sellers near Carrara to source the finest types of stone. These now appear throughout the home, most notably in the bathrooms with their sweeping views, in the open-plan living space with its backlit Botticelli onyx bar, and on the window-side surfaces inlaid with



LEFT

Seen from above, the large open space reveals its wide 1800s chandelier, once used in a theatre, and Mitoraj's mosaic table.

OPPOSITE

Two additional views of the same sitting room. Two large statues by Niki de Saint Phalle stand next to those of Mitoraj and a floor lamp by Do Vassilakis. Paintings by Hermann Herbert and works by Mitoraj fill the large wall.

Refined globe-trotters, Mitoraj and Sabatié divide their lives between Paris, the South of France, Switzerland and this *wilder corner* of Italy



**ABOVE**

Two views of the open-plan living space. The dining area is lit by a black Artemide floor lamp, while, in the foreground, two Sponge armchairs by Peter Traag for Edra frame the scene. The stainless-steel kitchen island is by Alpes Inox.

OPPOSITE

A wide view of the church, where the self-supporting steel structure allows the walls and ceilings, with all their traces of history, to remain untouched. Behind the library, where the organ once stood, is Otto's bedroom.

Built in 1382 for the Compagnia dell'Alma della Croce, together with its adjoining pilgrims' hospital, the church was enlarged during the 16th century and has led many lives. Founded as a place of care for the sick, solace for the condemned and burial for the poor, it was eventually deconsecrated. In the 1930s it became a Fascist boxing club, a chapter still legible today in the slogan painted on the former altar wall: *Credere, obbedire, combattere* – "Believe, Obey, Fight". After the Second World War it served as a warehouse before falling into disuse. By the beginning of the 21st century, pigeons had become its sole inhabitants.

Everything changed in 2014, when the Vitali-Klein family acquired the property, years after their first visit, when their son Otto was still a child. They embarked on a complete restoration, lasting more than two years. Working alongside architects Paola Sausa and Paolo Bertoncini Sabatini of Momus Architetti, they approached the project less as a renovation than as an act of stewardship.

Protected by Italy's cultural heritage authorities, the building could neither be altered structurally nor have its walls touched. The intervention therefore focused







OPPOSITE

Another view of the dining room with *Jadé Fadojutimi's Even an Awkward Smile Can Sprout Beyond the Sun* on the right and *L'éclat* by Danielle Hodson on the wall opposite the living room.

ABOVE

Levett's office features a seating area and a huge library filled with art books. In the background hangs the large *Burghers of Amsterdam Avenue* by Elaine de Kooning.

FOLLOWING

On the first floor, the staircase leads to an exhibition space framed by two iconic MacIntosh chairs. At the centre, on the table, a marble sculpture by Pio Fedi, *Il genio della pesca (The Genius of Fishing)*.



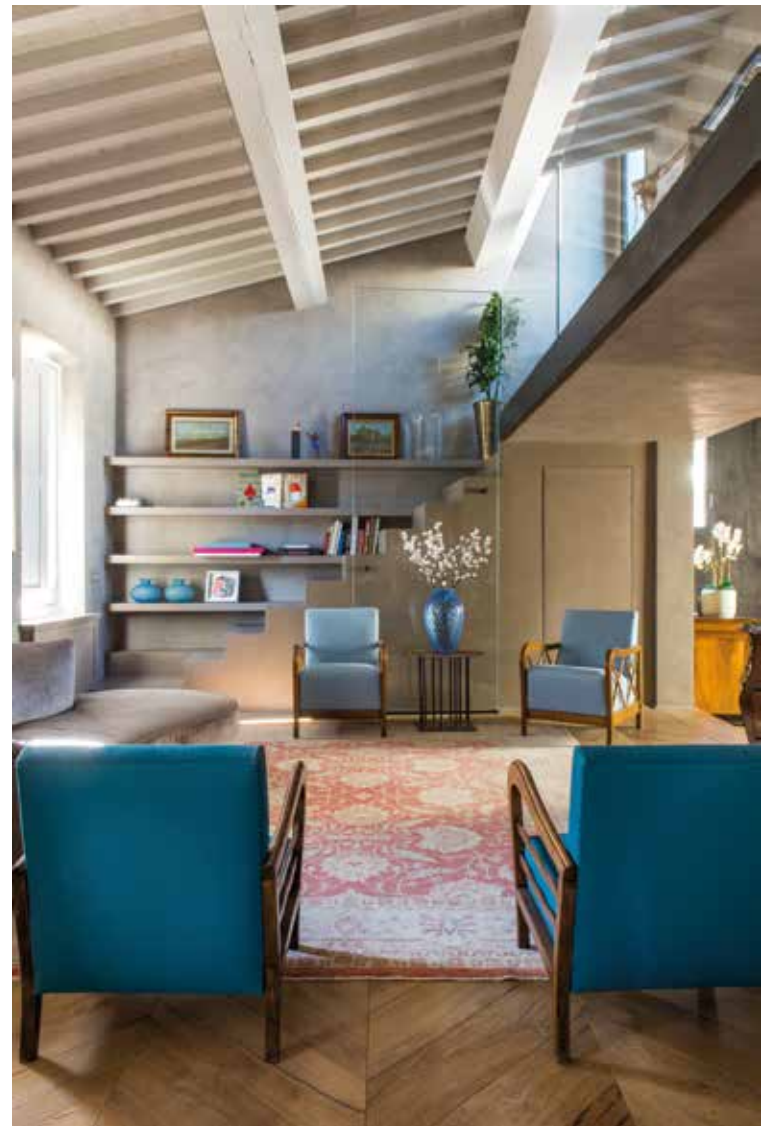


View of the suite of living rooms at Palazzo Daniele with a Driade sofa in the background. Ludovica Serafini and Roberto Palomba of PS+A Studio have chosen to preserve traces of the past, creating an exhibition passage that welcomes artworks from the Capo d'Arte residency, in collaboration with the Roman Villa Medici.



**OPPOSITE**

Shades of blue enliven the living-room, showcasing a striking black marble and mirrored fireplace. The two sofas are from Flair, the painting by Angelo Raffaele Marturano comes from Galleria Ad'Opera, and the armchairs were sourced in Parma's Mercanteinfiera antiques fair.

**ABOVE**

Original 1950s armchairs inherited from the owner's Italian great-grandmother.

The result is a timeless *expression* of *Italian elegance*, preserving the historic fabric of the building while introducing colour, texture and *stylish furnishings*



A Living Cabinet of Curiosities

In Milan's trendy Brera neighbourhood, Jacopo Etro's home reveals itself as far more than a private residence. It is a cabinet of curiosities, a living archive where memories, craftsmanship and souvenirs coexist in perfect harmony. Every room reflects the sensibility of a collector guided not by trends, but by emotion, culture and an instinctive understanding of beauty. The atmosphere is intimate yet theatrical, layered with stories gathered across decades and continents.

Located in one of Milan's elegant residential districts, directly opposite the church of Santa Maria Incoronata, Jacopo Etro's duplex penthouse enjoys wonderful views over the surrounding gardens and the church. An intimate manifesto of a refined collector, the residence expresses the cultivated elegance and poetic universe that Etro developed during decades as the creative director and owner of the family company. Here, family heritage, artistic curiosity and cosmopolitan sensibilities converge in a richly layered interior.

To redesign the apartment – connecting its different levels and creating a more coherent spatial structure – Etro turned to architect Piero Castellini, a close family friend with whom he has long enjoyed collaborating. Soft off-white tones define the reception rooms, while richer shades, including peacock blue in the guest bedroom, bring depth to the private spaces. High ceilings and abundant natural light provide the perfect backdrop for the extraordinary collections amassed by this inveterate globetrotter. As Etro explains, "Whenever I travel worldwide, I always stay two extra days to browse flea markets and antique shops." Among his enduring passions are anatomical studies of hands and feet, Chinese headwear, family gouache paintings, leather-covered trunks and unusual sculptures reminiscent of the Grand Tour or the early 20th century.

OPPOSITE

A photograph by Nobuyoshi Araki, a butcher's hand sculpture by Fabius Tita, and two glove moulds displayed on a Tibetan trunk covered with tiger skin.