

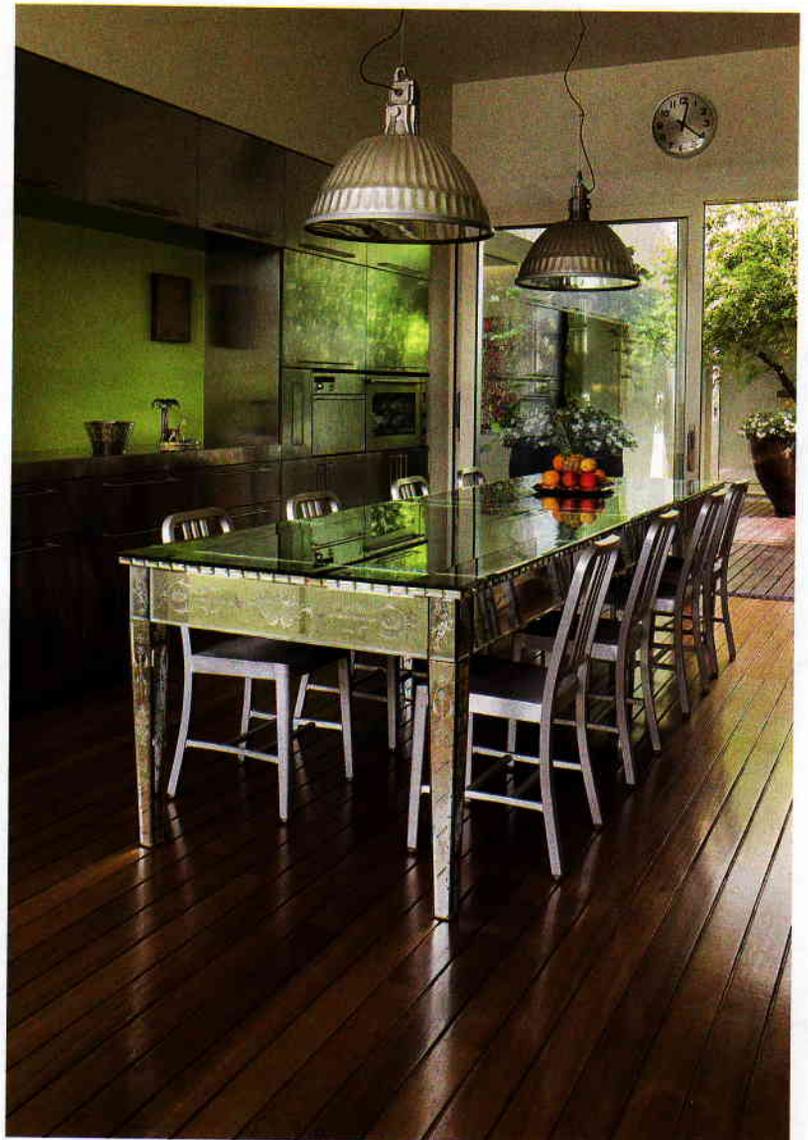
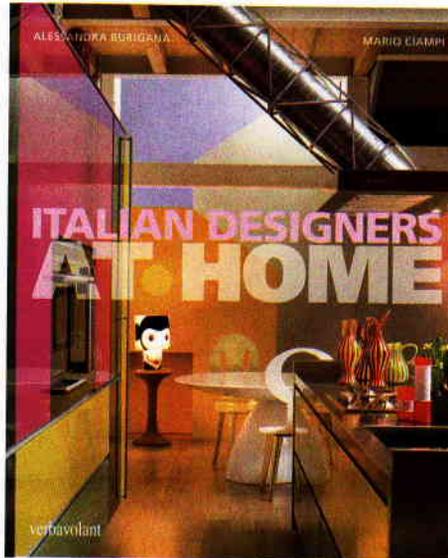
□ italian designers at home

Designers make their way into other people's homes every day, through the lamps they set alight, the sofas they sinuously seduce us with, the eye-catching accessories they fashion. What a treat it would be, then, to turn the tables (and the chairs, lamps and bookcases) and see how the other side lives. *Italian Designers at Home* does just that, escorting us on a walking tour through the personal spaces of the mavericks whose style savvy has penetrated our domestic universe.

Architectural photographer Mario Ciampi and interior design writer Alessandra Burigana team up to provide affectionate and thorough portraits that illustrate how each featured designer's milieu is governed by his or her philosophy while simultaneously influencing their creativity. Still, what makes each of these 23 featured homes special is that which lives between the walls: a cocktail of "culture, design, creativity, personal history, memories, interpretation and exploration," writes Burigana.

Every house has a story, and in this case, each designer does as well. Whether architect, ceramic artist or furniture innovator, these pros wax poetic on their working principles and tastes: "A house is the stratification of personal memories," muses architect Mario Bellini. "Furnishing should not invade one's life, or complicate it," declares famed industrial designer Ettore Sottsass. "I am only interested in the quality of the space where I live, where I move."

Ciampi's well-styled photos dramatically throw open the doors to these dominions of genius. Forgive the occasional repetition—the same room shot from only slightly different angles—he manages to capture the spirit of his subjects and their surroundings in a way that's undeniably sincere. Each profile opens with a portrait of the designer, in some cases wearing a pensive gaze, in other cases, smiling warmly, a favored dog on lap. The subsequent photo spreads emphasize wide shots of sleek living rooms and plush libraries, of country kitchens and tranquil bedrooms. Most telling, though, are the background elements captured by



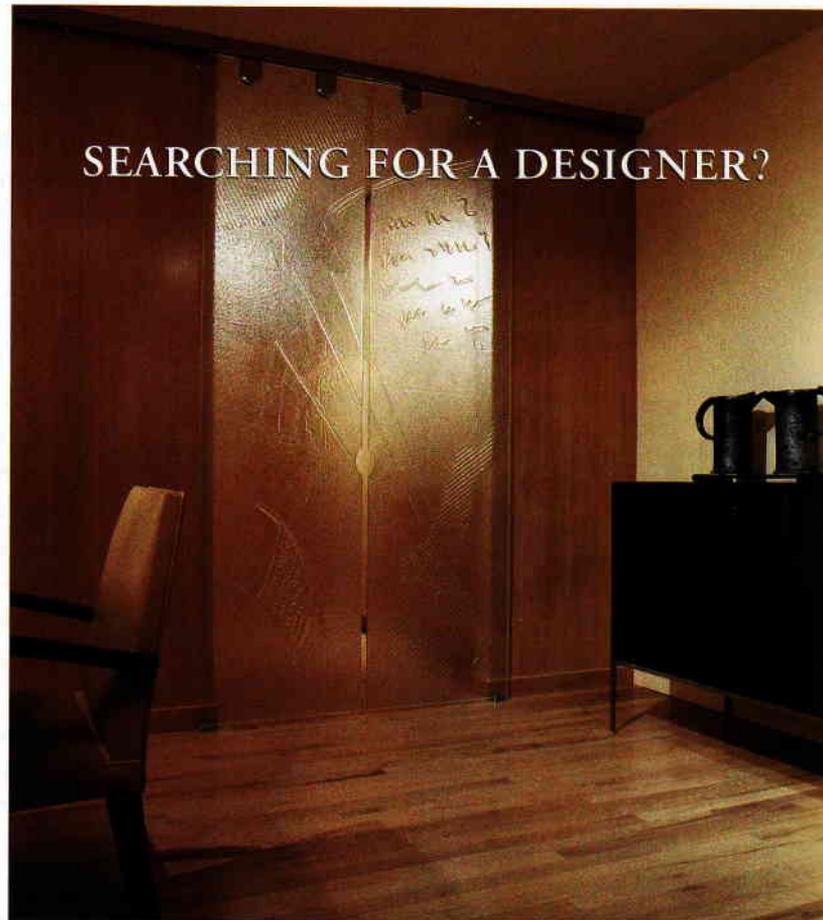
the camera: architectural details like coffered ceilings, Romanesque arches, 17<sup>th</sup> century friezes and 15 foot shutters (what else to expect from the palazzos that these mostly Milan-based trendsetters seem to favor?). There are even delightful glimpses of the outside world, of churches, gardens and courtyards, caught from an open balcony window or an ajar front door.

Best of all is Ciampi's attention to the telling minutiae that can so easily fall under the radar, but in this case does not: artfully arranged collections culled from their owners' travels and whimsical fancies: rubber boots worn by Japanese, a mummified peregrine falcon or a Mexican wind god

Residences indeed include Renaissance palazzos, such as the bookshelf-lined, velvet-draped Bologna abode of 84-year-old industrial designer Dino Gavina. But the unexpected finds a home here, too. Despite the grandeur enveloping him, Gavina chooses to think inside the box, quite literally. "My bedroom is inside a cube [I built] in the center of a large, 16<sup>th</sup> century room," he relays. "I liked the idea of sleeping as if I were in a compartment on a passenger train, in a small and cozy space."

The individual is everywhere. Take housewares designer Anna Gili's industrial loft on the outskirts of Milan, a world where walls are painted fuchsia, stair balustrades are formed from sheets of saturated tangerine and lemon glass and playful animal forms dominate. Ceramist/set designer/architect Antonio Annichiarico's lovely Apulian farmhouse is completely different, a medley of stone and mosaic which, somber and sunlit at the same time, evokes its history as a Byzantine monastery.

Replete with discoveries, serendipities and insights, *Italian Designers at Home* is deliciously satisfying, but leaves us wanting for more □ *JoAnn Greco ~ Italian Designers at Home, Alessandra Burigana and Mario Ciampi, 240 pages, \$65/hardcover, Verbavolant*

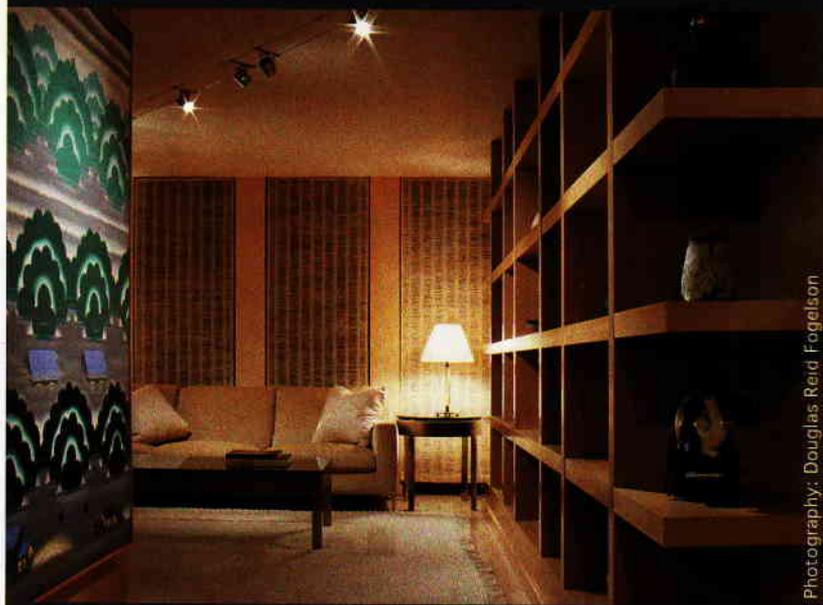


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