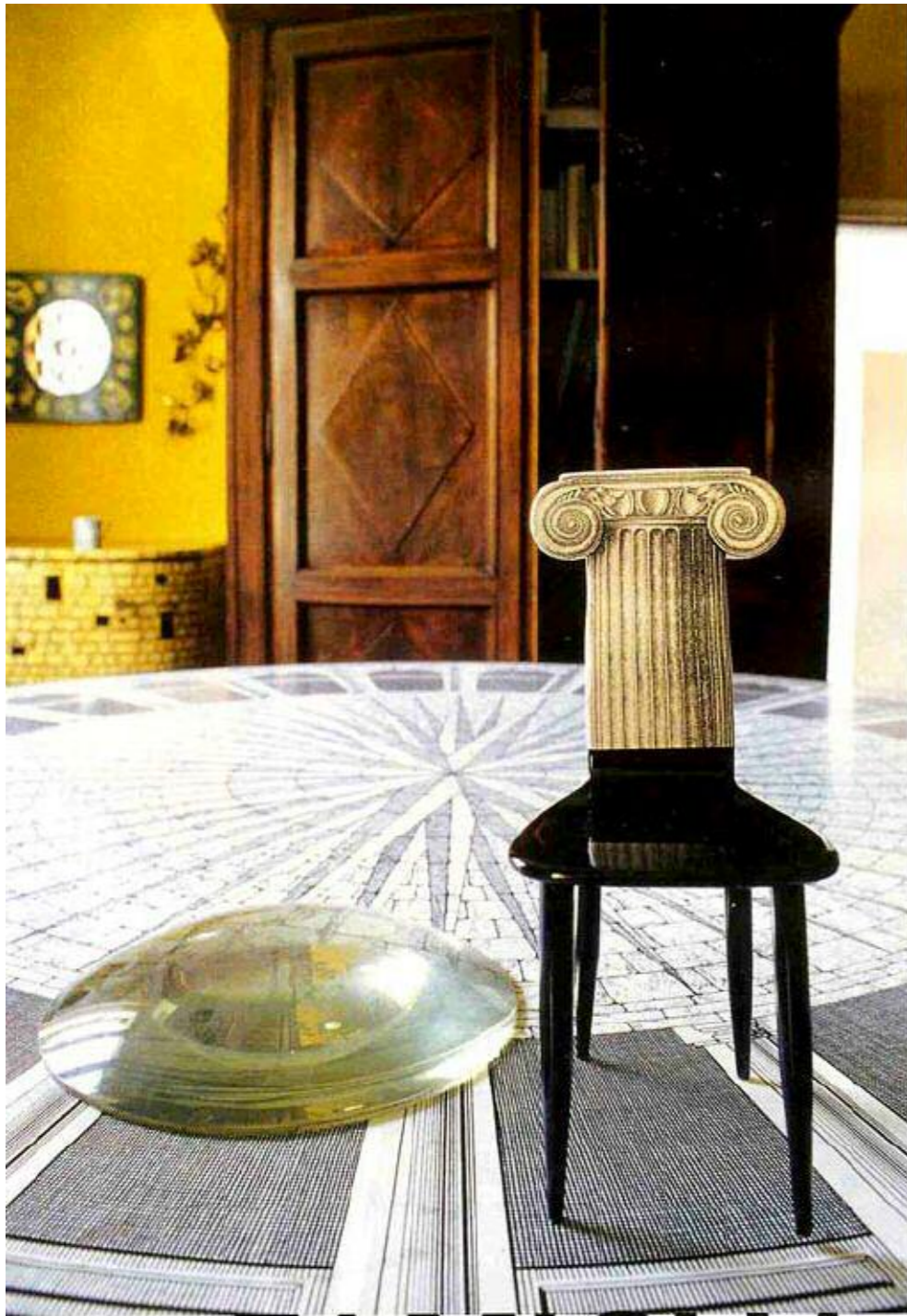


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FAMIGLIA FORNASETTI

They dazzled in the 1950s and they shine once more. The lavish designs of Italian artist Piero Fornasetti come to life in the Milan palazzo of his son Barnaba, who carries on the family name with his own designs and variations on his father's famous themes.

PHOTOGRAPHER: GUY HERVAIS PRODUCER: BIBI GEX



The many faces, LEFT, of artist and designer Piero Fornasetti's lady leitmotif, refashioned by his son Barnaba Fornasetti into tiles, eyes peeping through giant keyholes in the vanity, and glassware, ABOVE, from the 'Tete-a-Tete Collection' designed with Nigel Coates. BELOW: "the idea was irony," says Fornasetti.



IN CONTRAST WITH the classically-styled bedroom of Barnaba Fornasetti's guest house in Milan (see pages 128–137), this statement black and white-tiled bathroom is all about 21st Century Fornasetti, where platinum-enamelled twin washbasins and inky lacquered units work together to create a very rich and graphic space.

Converting the tiny eight square metre former kitchen of his famous family's house, Barnaba designed the room as an ensuite to the bedroom, reinventing the signature Piero Fornasetti motif of the female face for the newly designed tiles. Taken from the 'Themes and Variations' series of plates, the face of diva Lina Cavalieri is captured in 20 different formats: winking, moustached, multiplied in a bunch of grapes, framed in a triangle, or as the face of a clock. To match the tiles, the hand-thrown washbasins have been enamelled with platinum and set on

a lacquered wood vanity with Cavalieri's face peeping through over-sized keyholes at the front. "The idea was to create something with irony," says Barnaba

Tiles feature the face of opera singer Lina Cavalieri, born in 1874 and billed 'the most beautiful woman in the world.' Piero Fornasetti created 500 variations of her image for his products.

Fornasetti. "And also to stimulate fantasy in a place designed for relaxation and meditation. It's a Fornasetti look."

Within the high-gloss backdrop of the bath surround, vanity unit and black-tiled floor, the Fornasetti language continues as the scale and context of objects are artfully reworked. The 'Il Bacio' (the kiss) fabric used for the blinds is a 2004 Fornasetti design, repeated here with a chequerboard pattern of noses and lips. With the glassware,

part of the 'Tete-a-Tete Collection' of objects designed with British architect, Nigel Coates, the lady of the tiles finally finds a male companion. **CLAIRE BINGHAM**

DESIGNER Barnaba Fornasetti. **TILES** from Ceramica Bardelli (20 variations available, also in white, 20 x 20cm). **WASHBASINS** 'Ifattiamano' by Master. **TAPWARE** 'T Cross Collection', by Bongio. **LIGHTING** Fornasetti from Antonangeli. **GLASSWARE** 'Tete-a-Tete Collection', by Fornasetti and Nigel Coates of Branson Coates Architecture. **BLINDS** 'Il Bacio' fabric, designed by Fornasetti in 2004, available from Luciano Marcato. Details, last pages.

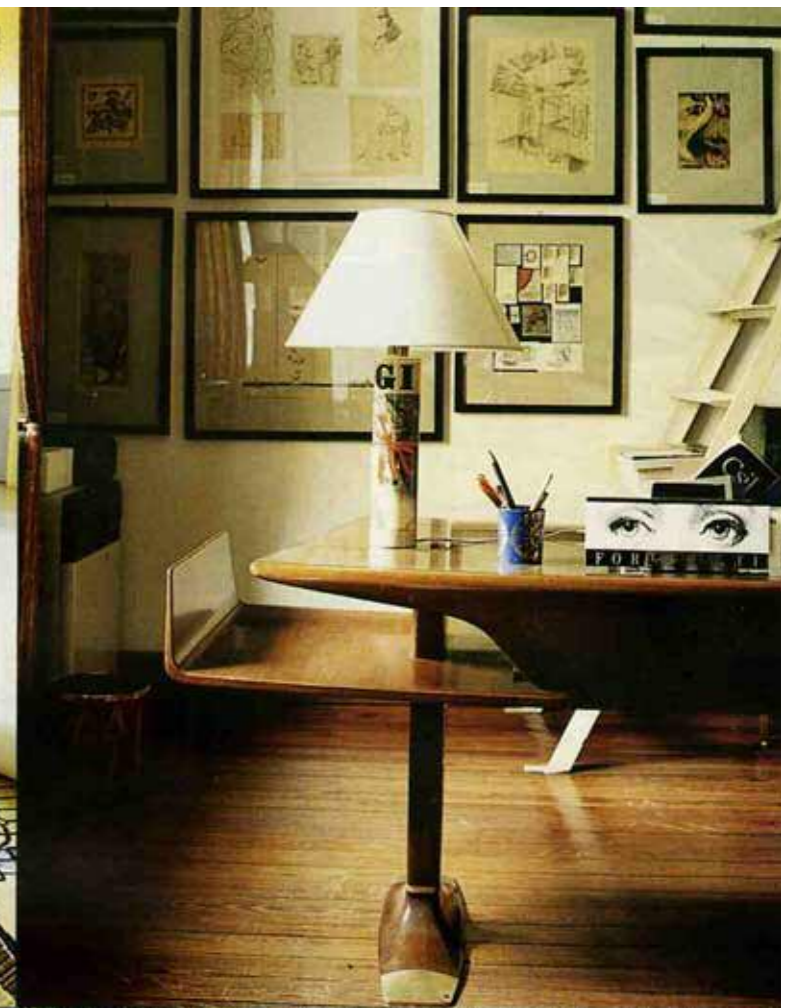
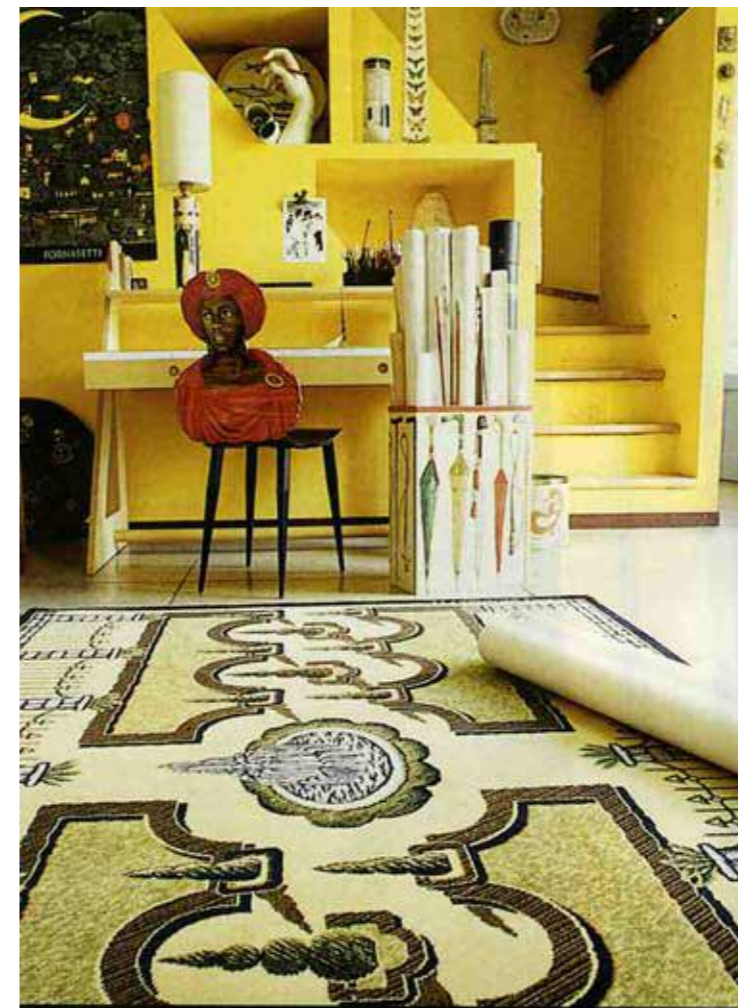
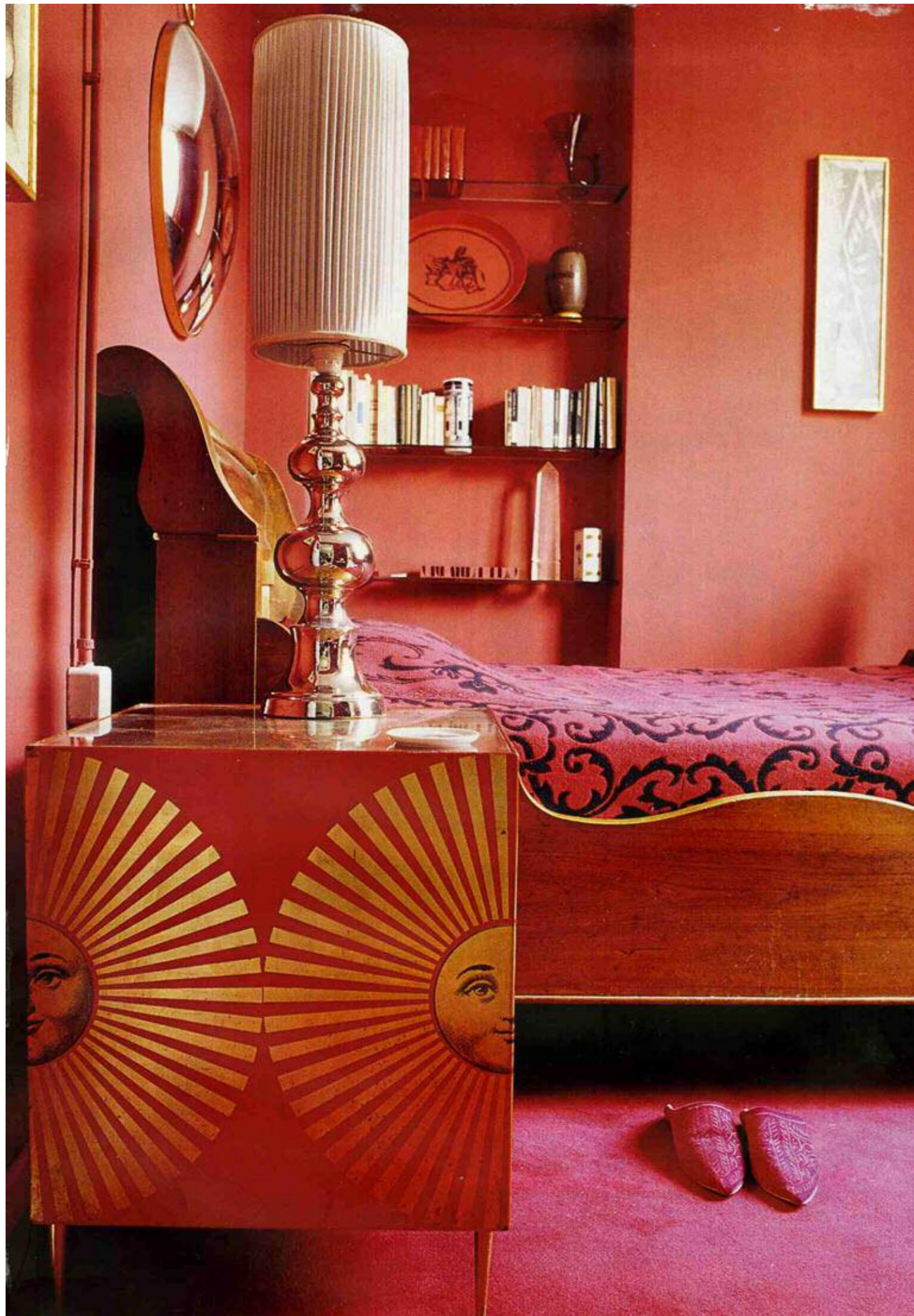


In the guest house kitchen, OPPOSITE, behind the table, is an early Piero Fornasetti painting on wood with a handmade frame. The busts are 17th century figureheads. THIS PAGE, ABOVE: the guest house bedroom's wrought iron beds, decorated by Piero Fornasetti, were brought from the Lake Como villa. The coffee table is a cassapanche (bench) reinvented by Barnaba with the 'Piazza con Obelisco' motif. In the window is a collection of Austrian Biedermeier glasses. BELOW: the kitchen is a prototype by Strato Cucine, with Fornasetti butterflies on the doors and 'Ultime Notizie' floor tiles by Ceramica Bardelli; their newsprint-and-butterfly motif matches the table and chairs from Atelier Fornasetti. Details, last pages.

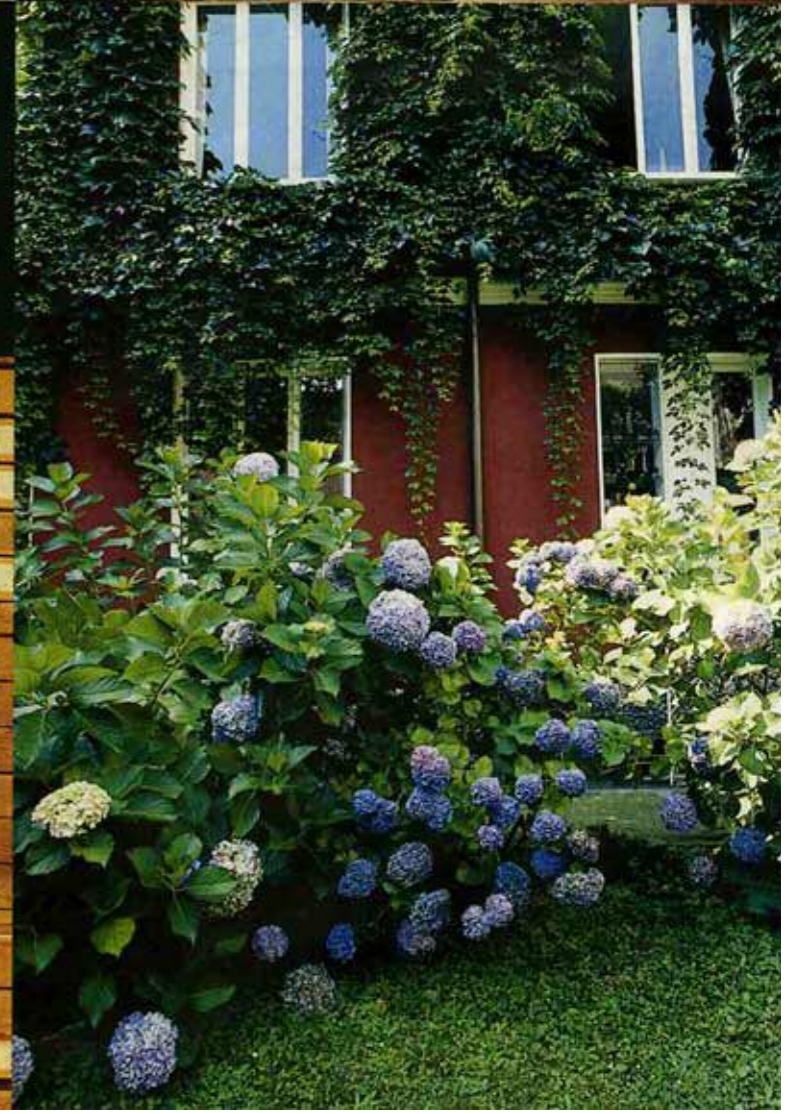
"It could be deemed as art, but it is also artisan. It's everything and nothing all at the same time. Fornasetti is a style that many, many other designers in fashion and other fields take inspiration from. Everyone knows Fornasetti. He's not so famous as perhaps other designers may be – in many cases the majority of people don't know of Fornasetti, but his style is everywhere."

In terms of the house, it certainly is. Carrying on his father's habits in more ways than one, Barnaba admits to being a bit of a hoarder. "I am a fetishist of objects," he laughs. "For someone else this house could look like a museum, but to me it's my home. It's a place where I love to stay and I'm surrounded by the things I love. "Surprisingly, my father adored the concept of minimalism, Zen culture and the essence of things. Yes, he loved to decorate, but it was to decorate only the most essential, linear and minimalist forms. He used to say, 'A chair can be decorated all over, but first of all it must be a chair. It has to be comfortable'. The decoration is something in addition to deliver another message, but fundamentally the design must remain an object. It also sits well with modern-day design. "What is more striking in a rationalist, clean environment than a Fornasetti piece? Decoration, in my opinion, is necessary for a modern man's psyche. Decoration colours life a little and mitigates squalor in this sometimes harsh world. After all, we're surrounded by decoration in nature ... just look out the window." **CLAIRE BINGHAM**





In the canary yellow office, **ABOVE LEFT**, is the 'Giardino all 'Italiana' rug by Barnaba Fornasetti and his handpainted, lithographed 'Moro' chair with a prototype umbrella stand from the 1950s. **ABOVE RIGHT**: in another office, part of Baranaba's graphics studio, is a stunning 1950s desk by Gariboldi. Behind the timber desk are sketches and paintings by Piero Fornasetti. **BELOW LEFT**: detail of the Fornasetti drawing archives in the graphics studio. **BELOW RIGHT**: the courtyard is overlooked by both the home and guest house. **OPPOSITE**: the blue library where Barnaba Fornasetti spends much of his time researching and designing, looking through books and listening to music. The 'Paralume' lamp with Fornasetti butterfly shade is from Antonangeli.





In Barnaba Fornasetti's office, **PREVIOUS PAGES, LEFT**, is his 1998 'Riga e Squadra' desk, decorated with a trompe l'oeil compass top. On the desk is an over-sized lens and a miniature of Fornasetti's limited edition 'Ionic' chair; **RIGHT**: the Imperial red and gold room takes inspiration from the family's Lake Como villa. Fornasetti designs include the 1960s lamp and 1950s dressing table with sun motif, now a re-issue from Atelier Fornasetti. On the 19th century walnut bed is a Sardinian embroidered wool cover. **THESE PAGES**: the original print room of Piero Fornasetti, now Barnaba's graphic studio and archive for the Fornasetti drawings. The print on the wall is *Sun over Jerusalem*. Details, last pages.



"DECORATION, IN MY OPINION, IS NECESSARY FOR A MODERN MAN'S PSYCHE. DECORATION COLOURS LIFE A LITTLE AND MITIGATES SQUALOR IN THIS SOMETIMES HARSH WORLD."

DECORATION IN FULL glory: the 19th century Milanese palazzo of Barnaba Fornasetti retains the weird and wonderful magic of his father, the Italian design legend Piero Fornasetti. Most famous for his 'Themes and Variations' series of plates decorated in black and white with the face of Lina Cavalieri. Piero believed she represented the vision of the perfect classical beauty.

Piero Fornasetti was a painter, sculptor, an interior decorator, an engraver of art books and creator of more than 11,000 items, produced in his distinctive neoclassical and collaged and surreal style, before his death in 1988. This makes Fornasetti one of Italy's most prolific producers of objects and furniture of the 20th century.

Barnaba lives and works in his father's studio where he carries on the Fornasetti lineage, reviving and reinventing designs and creating new ones. "Everything is newly designed in a certain sense, but it's all based on my father's archive," says Barnaba. "I continue the works initiated by my father, adopting his decoration but changing the materials, depending on the item to be produced."

The house was built near the centre of Milan by Barnaba's grandfather, with later additions by Piero. Divided over three floors into an L-shaped plan, the interior of this late-1800s building is labyrinthine, where the present-day dynamic of Barnaba and his jeweller wife, Betony Vernon, mix with layers created by Piero. "It's full of him everywhere in terms of furniture and his spirit," says

Barnaba. "But physically the building has changed a great deal, in the sense that my father's atelier has become the place where I live." This consists of the blue library, moved from a parallel room on the second floor to the first, and on either side, two rooms: Barnaba's canary yellow-painted office with the 'Riga e Squadra' desk, designed by Barnaba in 1998; and on the other side, the red and gold bedroom, redecorated about 10 years ago based on an interior at the Fornasetti family house at Lake Como. Below this, on the ground floor, is the current graphics studio where Piero and his craftsmen once printed lithographs, first with hand rollers and later with an electrical press.

The most dramatic of the changes is the recent renovation of his father's original living and dining room on the other arm of the L-shape, into a guest house comprising three rooms – a bedroom, bathroom and kitchen with glass sliding doors opening out to the courtyard garden. With a top-to-toe Fornasetti interior, kitted out with trademark motifs such as the dancing butterflies adorning the kitchen and the sun and moon faces in the bedroom, the idea behind creating the guest house (available by invitation only) was to dedicate a space for someone visiting Milan to stay in an apartment decorated with Fornasetti. Barnaba explains, "It's like a showroom in a sense, with the same objects and designs as my father originally created." It's a style that is out of style, beyond fashion and fashionable at the same time," he says. "It's not only design, but decoration too.

