



bright ideas
DESIGN FALL 2010



BARNABA FORNASETTI, ABOVE, AND PIERO FORNASETTI, RIGHT, BOTH FANS OF THE TROMPE L'OEIL.

THE SON ALSO RISES

"If you wanted to," says Barnaba Fornasetti, "you could easily live in a Fornasetti world." As the only son of Piero Fornasetti, he knows of what he speaks. Often referred to as the "designer of dreams," Piero was nothing if not prolific. The application of his fanciful patterns and simple, classically inspired illustrations knew no boundaries, and his fertile imagination conjured up objects, clothing and furniture, including the iconic Trumeau-bar, a combination sideboard, bar and bureau, originally designed with the architect Gio Ponti and still in production today. The Fornasetti archive, which holds about 13,000 pieces — some of which are shown in "Fornasetti: The Complete Universe," out this month from Rizzoli — is said to be one of the largest of its kind. After Piero's death in 1988, Barnaba took over the dream factory, which by then was something of a nightmare. "When he died, the company was drowning in debt," says Barnaba, who like his father, was born an artist, not a businessman. But his creativity has served him well. Today he heads a team of 20 working out of his home and atelier in the Città Studi neighborhood of Milan, in a house built by Piero's father. The laboratory for his father's wildest creations is now Barnaba's treasure box.



ONE OF PIERO'S ILLUSTRATIONS FROM THE RIZZOLI BOOK. BELOW RIGHT: A FORNASETTI TRIPOD TABLE.



AN INSTALLATION IN ROME. ABOVE: AN EARLY PIERO SCARF. BELOW: THE LITOMATRICE BUREAU, COVERED IN LITHOGRAPH PLATES.



ABOVE: AT ROUBINI RUGS, IN NEW YORK. LEFT: BARNABA'S VESPA DESIGN. BELOW, HIS OFFICE.



BARNABA'S RECORD COLLECTION INCLUDES MINA, ABOVE, AND ZAPPA.



GONZALES DROPPED BY THE HOUSE AND PLAYED THIS RED PIANO.

HIS OWN BEAT

Fornasetti has been fascinated with music since he was a child despite never having learned to play an instrument. "My dad once asked me if I wanted to study piano," he says. "I have always been a rebel, trying to do the opposite of what he told me." He has, however, designed a Fender Stratocaster. "A client asked me to decorate it," he says. "But I liked it so much that I decided to keep it to myself, and I did another one for him." And occasionally he likes to put on the D.J. hat for his friends, a talent that he says runs in the family: "My father was a D.J. *ante litteram*, mixing images and creating new visuals." Barnaba's record collection is a mix of everything from rock to electro to the work of the piano prodigy Gonzales. "He came over once and played the red piano upstairs. He is truly a genius!" Fashion is another of his passions, starting with his collection of vests: "I think I have around 40 of them — all Fornasetti, obviously." Lately he has been collaborating with the former Ferré designer Liborio Capizzi on limited-edition couture creations, "using a dead stock of Piero's scarves that I found."



LEFT: JULES THE CAT IN THE GARDEN IN MILAN. ABOVE: PIERO AND BARNABA IN THE '50S. RIGHT: A NEW FORNASETTI CANDLE.



FACE FORWARD

"The architects who live around here might not even know who Fornasetti is," Barnaba says. "But when they see that face, they immediately recognize it." The face he refers to is that of the opera singer Lina Cavalieri, who provided the "theme" for Piero's famed Tema e Variazioni motif, an icon of 20th-century design and the Fornasetti signature. (The variations number more than 350.) Barnaba continues in the family tradition, bringing forth new designs like La Matrice di Fornasetti, a series of furniture and objects covered in Piero's original zinc lithographic plates (presented last April in Milan at the gallery Nilufar), or the hand-painted Lux Gstaad chairs, created for a Swiss chalet. And he is forever finding unexpected modes of expression — in Fornasetti radiators, a fully functioning Vespa and the interiors of the Parisian restaurant L'Éclairer, with its drunken monkeys, stacks of playing cards, urns, cake stands and bright red lip bar stools, an homage to Piero's 1950s design for the Milanese pâtisserie Dulciara.



BELOW: THE FORNASETTI DESIGN STUDIO. RIGHT: THE ZEBRA "STIPO," FROM 2003.



ABOVE: A RARE RAY MANZAREK INTERPRETATION OF "CARMINA BURANA" ON VINYL.



HIS FENDER STRATOCASTER. RIGHT: ON THE DECKS. BELOW: A DRESS MADE FROM DEAD-STOCK SCARVES.



PORTRAIT: MARCO PRATALI; BOOK COVER: FROM RIZZOLI; VESPA: MASSIMO ZARUCCO; AT ROUBINI RUGS: VALERIA MANZI; STUDIO: GUY HERVAIS; OFFICE: HUGH FINDERL; ALL OTHER PHOTOGRAPHS FROM BARNABA FORNASETTI.

ABOVE: A LIMITED-EDITION VASE. RIGHT: AN INSTALLATION AT BARNEYS. BELOW: THE NEW FORNASETTI BOOK FROM RIZZOLI.

